

Anti-logging activist's arrest: DAP submits motion
Malaysiakini.com
October 27, 2010

DAP's Bandar Kuching parliamentarian Chong Chieng Jen has submitted an emergency motion to the Dewan Rakyat, calling for debate on the arrest of a prominent indigenous rights activist in Sarawak.

The emergency motion, submitted under Standing Order 18(1), states that the matter is of public concern.

Lawyer Nicholas Mujah (*right*) and six others - Iban longhouse heads Philip Bakat, Neli Nimpang and Sadun Atun and villagers Bawi Atman and Numpang Suntai - were arrested last week for allegedly setting fire to a timber camp in Sebuyau.

The fire destroyed the workers' quarters and other property belonging to Royal Billion Sdn Bhd, a logging contractor for Quality Concrete Holdings.

At a press conference at the Parliament lobby today, Chong said that, a few days before the fire, Nicholas and several others had erected a blockade in the vicinity.

This was to prevent the Quality Concrete Holdings from logging on land gazetted under native customary rights, he said.

Chong (*left*) said the police have abused their powers in arresting the lawyer and the native leaders.

"The rights of Ibans and their land have been violated. It has affected their living. The police should be protecting the people, but it looks like they are being used by politicians to mistreat the Ibans," he claimed.

Dispute over logging

Quality Concrete is said to be partly-owned by Raziah Mahmud, the sister of Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud.

The firm has been issued Forestry Department licence for logging 3,305 ha of land.

Contesting this, the residents of the six longhouses have claimed that the area was gazetted as native customary land in 1956. Nicholas has been assisting them in the dispute.

Chong said the company has been raking in millions of ringgit from logging, while the natives have only received RM250 per family in compensation.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/146549>