

**Uncontrolled Illegal Logging Could Pose Higher Losses**  
**Bernama**  
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PETALING JAYA, Feb 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysia stands to lose between RM800 to RM900 million annually if illegal logging is not controlled, said Transparency International (TI) Malaysia president Datuk Paul Low Seng Kuan Wednesday.

"Although an estimated RM800 to RM900 million in losses due to illegal logging are reported annually, TI believes that the problem is still under control in Malaysia.

"Even though the number has dropped from 419 cases in 1993 to 24 cases last year, TI, the Forestry Department, and the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry view the problem seriously," he said after the launching of the Forest Watch and Public Awareness Campaign on Forest Conservation at Sunway Pyramid here.

He said through the Forest Watch project, everyone can now monitor the forest and track illegal logging activities at will, through simple, easy-to-use Google techniques.

"The Forest Watch Project is developed to engage the public as the eyes and ears of the forest through the use of Google Earth Geospatial Technology (satellite, imagery, aerial photography and GIS 3D globe)," he explained.

"The public can then assess and report irregularities through it's new website at [www.timalaysia-forestwatch.org.my](http://www.timalaysia-forestwatch.org.my)," he said.

Low said those in rural areas who do not have internet access, could do their part by calling or writing in to TI, the Forestry Department or the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission director of investigations, Datuk Mustafar Ali said the commission received 88 complaints on illegal logging activities last year.

"But the complaints were incomplete, hence we need more tip-offs on these illegal activities as we believe there are many cases and incidents that went unreported," he said.

He said tighter procedures and more pro-active measures by enforcement agencies are needed to curb such activities.

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas said measures have been implemented to reduce and eliminate the occurrence of illegal logging.

"The main reason for illegal logging despite stringent enforcement is the high demand for timber and shortage of supply from Permanent Forest Reserves and State Land as well as the existence of illegal wood-based mills still in operation.

"This is further exacerbated by well organized syndicates using advanced communication

tools and 'tonto'," he said in his speech, read by Peninsular Malaysia Forestry Department director-general Datuk Dr Abd Rahman Abd Rahim.

Embas said the ministry is in the final stage of revising the National Forestry Act to incorporate new provisions for higher penalties including imprisonment and strict liability in terms of burden of proof.

The ministry has also established a 1NRE Enforcement Team comprised of various enforcement departments to conduct integrated enforcement operations.

"The main focus is to identify hotspots throughout Peninsular Malaysia that have the potential for incidences of illegal logging activities," he said.

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