

Date Published	Friday 02 October 2020
Media/Source	The Borneo Post Online https://www.theborneopost.com/2020/10/02/awg-tengah-timber-industry-players-reminded-to-be-serious-about-reforestation-catch-up-plans/
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Awg Tengah: Timber industry players reminded to be serious about reforestation catch-up plans



Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan

MIRI (Oct 2): Timber industry players are reminded to be serious in coming up with catch-up plans, particularly forest planting, or risk having their license terminated, said Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan.

He stressed that this was vital in ensuring that the industry would not rely solely on natural forests.

“We want this industry to be sustainable, which is why the government introduced the forest planting programme.

“Sarawak is the first state in Malaysia to have its own ordinance to develop planted forests. This is so that we do not rely fully on timber from natural forests and for this industry to remain relevant,” Awang Tengah said in his address at the Sarawak Forest Department Excellence Service Award (APC) held at Imperial Hotel here on Thursday night.

“I know progress for forest planting is a bit slow — that’s why we have given warnings to them (timber industry players) to be more serious by coming up with catch-up plan to implement forest planting.

“If not, maybe we will end their license and look for those who are more serious in implementing this programme, because this is our source for timber industry in Sarawak,” he stressed.

Awang Tengah, who is also Second Minister for Urban Development and Natural Resources, said the government is committed in ensuring that the development of planted forest achieves the quality and target set, which is one million hectares by 2025.

He said an estimated of 100,000 people in the state relied on the timber industry, be it upstream or downstream, management and others related to it.

Touching on the landscape forest restoration programme, he said it was implemented systematically to sustain forested areas and ensure that they were well-managed, in line with the government's efforts for a greener state.

In urban areas, the Forestry Department was urged to collaborate with local councils for campaigns to make the city area greener through landscape forest projects and gazettement of areas as urban parks.

"This is to ensure that any 'balding' areas will be planted with trees, so that not only our rural areas have forest, but our city will also be green," he said further.

He added that in terms of sustainable forest management, Sarawak was way ahead as it is equipped with high-tech equipment compared to counterparts in other states.

"I'm proud to say that the Sarawak Forest Department usage of technological equipment is the benchmark for other forest agencies, in aspects such as enforcement and research," he said.