

Giving enforcement more bite

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NREB enforcers may be given firearms as they face similar threats as their Forest Dept counterparts

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KUCHING: The state government will consider equipping Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) enforcement officers with firearms when they are on the ground.

Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem said this might have to be done considering that NREB enforcement officers were exposed to similar threats as their counterparts in the state Forest Department.

“If it is effective, why not so that we can create a better enforcement. You (enforcement officers) must have proper police training on use of weapons,” he said in his speech at the NREB 20th anniversary dinner and Chief Minister’s Environmental Award 2014 at a leading hotel here on Monday.

On the government’s campaign against illegal logging and timber smuggling in the state, Adenan appealed to the public to be the ‘eyes and ears’ of the authorities.

“I appeal to everybody, I cannot do this alone. I want your help to get rid of illegal logging and smuggling of timber in our beloved state. I need your help, I need information. You tell me where it is. Write to me or write to the authorities concerned.

“If the authorities concerned do not take any action, you tell



Adenan going through the Coffee Table Book entitled 'Two Decades of Environmental Stewardship in Sarawak' after launching it at the event. Also seen are NREB controller Peter Sawal (left) and Assistant Minister of Environment Datu Len Talif Salleh (right). — Photo by Muhammad Rais Sanusi

me about it and I will make sure they do something about it,” he elaborated.

Adenan, who is NREB chairman, reiterated he would not allow illegal loggers and timber smugglers to

continue with their activities “like nobody’s business”, because if the activities were left unchecked, the

state would one day not have any more forest.

All that the public needed to do,

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Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem, Chief Minister

he pointed out, was take pictures with their mobile phones, get the location and date of illegal logging and smuggling of timber and report the matter to the authorities with all the information gathered.

“We have underestimated the problem. All this while, we were pretending that we didn’t know anything when the problem was there staring us in the face. We cannot have that kind of attitude anymore with regard to illegal logging and with regard to the environment.”

During his flights all over the state by helicopter, he said he could see how the rivers were polluted and how illegal logging was conducted, adding it was never too late for the authorities to stop the menace.

“Because of this thing going on, we have a very bad reputation internationally. I won’t be surprised if one of these days, our buyers will refuse to buy timber from us because we have mismanaged our forests and that will be the end of our timber industry.”