

Mohamad Rayan, Palembang 07 March 2011

Reading the news “Illegal logging in Musi Banyuasin rampant on Jakarta Post 28 January 2011” did not surprise me. Merang project had been advocating the danger of illegal logging in the Merang Forest for sometime.

The Merang Production Forest is part of the Merang Peat Swamp Forest area (MPSF). MPSF is a critical part of the forest in South Sumatera due to the still relatively intact

forest cover and the large below ground carbon storage of

peat,

its hydrology, biodiversity, home for Sumatran Tigers and endangered Sinyulong Crocodiles as well as

acting as a bufferzone to

the protected areas of Sembilang National Park in South Sumatera and Berbak National Park in Jambi.

Our project in the Merang Production Forest where the illegal logging is rampant had also made the video of illegal logging with DWTV on 13 January 2010. The journalist was shocked at the scale of the illegal logging. This is crazy!!! Joachim told us. How could be this going on?

Joachim and our team were stuck in a small canal in Tembesu Daro River, Merang in Musi Banyuasin district of South Sumatera Province because the illegal loggers were drifting its 1000 rafts of its illegal logs. Each raft has three chopped big trees of a half meter or more in diameter.

When we asked the raft captain, who the Cukong of the loggers is, he said Mr.X, the Cukong. This is the paradox of fighting illegal logging in Indonesia. All the intelligence is available of what, who, where and how of the illegal logging industry. The intelligence or information

of alleged players in the law enforcements, in the forestry office agencies and Cukong is all known. One comprehensive survey done by Muham
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ah Palembang University in late 2008 have identified and named the cukong.
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alan river which meets Musi River without worry of being stopped by law enforcers.

When we met illegal loggers who were gathering their illegal logs to the canal and ready to let them float to the river, DWTV crew filmed and asked questions on their activity. They owed money to C
ukong (illegal logging financier) for Rp 16 million rupiah. They have to log the amount of woods equalled to or more to Rp 16 million. They have 5 months to finish the illegal logging work.
They get Rp. 200.000 per cubic metre of woods.

Joachim, DWTV reporter asked my colleagues, how you would stop illegal logging. Both answered the corruption in the illegal logging industry should be stopped but the reporter still not happy, how could the illegal logging happening in the big river without anybody or official stopping it.
It is an illegal industry controlled by Cukong and backed up by alleged corrupt police and officials. All the loggers, floaters, canal gatekeepers to the alleged corrupt police in Palembang receive the bribe from Cukong.

The canal gatekeeper is one of the links in the illegal logging chain. The gatekeepers get the fee for every raft of illegal logs passed. The drifters of the raft are done by a special team who is expert in floating and pulling the illegal logs. The drifters are depending on the efficiency of the loggers to

do
its jobs. The loggers are depending on Cukong for the funds. The Cukong is normally the owner
of
illegal
or
legal
chainsaw
factories along Lalan River. The Cukong bribe
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the alleged law enforcers, officials and
even
village leaders.

Encountering the illegal loggers is a daily occurrence for the local people. They have no hope on any measures taken so far by the government. They believe as long as the Cukong with the money is still freely disbursing its bribes to some alleged police officers and some alleged forestry officers, there will be no solutions. In the golden triangle of the illegal logging, the actors are the government officials, Cukong and poor communities. The Cukong is exploiting the poor communities and pay bribes and fees to the alleged corrupt police and corrupt officials.