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Hamden (third left) and Jack (third right) show the MoU signed virtually with FRIM representatives (on screen), witnessed by Abang Johari (centre) and others.

CM: Time for S'wak to have 'Big Data' for planted forests

Jacqueline Raphael

MIRI: Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg has called upon all companies holding the Licence for Planted Forest (LPF) to not work in isolation, but to share their data for the betterment of industrial forest development in Sarawak.

In line with this, the Chief Minister suggested that it was timely for Sarawak to have its own 'Big Data' for planted forests, with the Forest Department as its custodian.

Opening the Industrial Forest Plantation Seminar 2020 here yesterday, Abang Johari said research and development (R&D) were one of the key initiatives in the implementation of industrial forest plantations.

"I know some big companies have their own activities - some are very advanced, but unfortunately, they are not willing to share the crucial data. Perhaps this is due to the competition mentality among LPF holders.

"If you want to succeed, you have to change the mindset of working in silo and keeping information to yourself. You are not competing with each other, but competing with other countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia (and) China as well. We are just small players in this global industry and (we should) opt to rely on one another," he said.

Abang Johari emphasised that R&D in industrial forest was a long-term and continuous effort;

hence commitment from both the government department and the LPF holders would be vital.

"Commitment means working together, provision of sufficient funds and resources, and sharing of information and data in order to get the desired results.

"Perhaps this is the right time to have Big Data on forest plantation in Sarawak. Forest Department will be the custodian of this data and will facilitate the information sharing among the industries," he said.

Abang Johari added that information such as R&D findings were crucial in producing better quality timber and timber products as well as increasing productivity of forest plantation.

He said industry players had embarked on their respective R&D programmes which required time, money, dedication and collaboration of many parties, for the past 20 years.

"We can only have sustainability and profitability if we care about the quality of what we plant and for that, we must invest in R&D to look after our plantation well. Aggressive plantation development is only possible if it is based on scientifically sound and reliable research.

"To carry out R&D, one could not work alone. Collaboration and knowledge-sharing are equally important for fruitful outcomes," he said.

At the event, Abang Johari also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on collaboration between the state government through the Forest Department Sarawak,

with Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and the LPF holders.

The LPF holders are Ta Ann Holdings Bhd, RH Forest Corporation Sdn Bhd, Polima Forest Bintulu Sdn Bhd, Billion Venture Sdn Bhd, Shin Yang Forestry Sdn Bhd, Limba Jaya Timber Sdn Bhd, Bigwood Sdn Bhd, Immense Fleet Sdn Bhd, Subur Tiasa Forestry Sdn Bhd, Tanjong Manis Resources Sdn Bhd, Samling Reforestation (Bintulu) Sdn Bhd, Daiken Sarawak Sdn Bhd and Sarawak Planted Forest Sdn Bhd.

"With this MoU signed today (yesterday), a strengthened collaborative R&D will be formed through the establishment of a working group between all the LPF holders," said Abang Johari.

"This is indeed an excellence strategy by the Forest Department in strengthening collaboration in R&D related to industrial forest plantation.

"This MoU will go beyond tree breeding and I was informed we will have an intensified breeding programme that is already well structured by the Industrial Forest Research Centre of Forest Department Sarawak," he pointed out.

Also present were Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan, Transport Minister Datuk Lee Kim Shin, Assistant Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Datuk Sebastian Ting, Telang Usan assemblyman Dennis Ngau, Forest Department director Datu Hamden Mohammad, and its deputy director Jack Liam.