

Headline	Pandemic not stopping Forestry Dept from catching offenders		
MediaTitle	Borneo Post (KK)		
Date	15 Sep 2021	Color	Full Color
Section	Home	Circulation	18,290
Page No	3	Readership	54,870
Language	English	ArticleSize	237 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 1,321
Frequency	Daily (EM)	PR Value	RM 3,963



Pandemic not stopping Forestry Dept from catching offenders

KOTA KINABALU: The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown have not stopped the Forestry Department from ensuring the sustainability of Sabah's forests.

Chief Conservator of Forests, Frederick Kugan, disclosed that even when the lockdown SOPs required 70 per cent of the Sabah Forestry Department staff to work from home and with the lockdowns in the timber industry, his team was still able to ensure that no one takes advantage of the situation.

"We have managed to prevent poaching, encroachment, illegal felling and many other forest offences. We caught people of high social standings, even politicians to farmers struggling to make ends meet," he said at the launch of the two-day Best of Both Worlds (BOBW) 2.0 2021 Webinar at the Sabah Forestry Department headquarters yesterday.

The webinar is co-organised by the Sabah Forestry Department, Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and the Sabah Environmental Education Network (SEEN).

Kugan also said the global pandemic has turned the world topsy-turvy.

"It has led to a dramatic loss of human lives and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and we are all living in the new norm. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating: tens of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme



Frederick Kugan

poverty, while the number of undernourished people could increase by up to 800 million by the end of this year," he said.

Kugan pointed out that millions of enterprises face an existential threat while nearly half of the world's 3.3 billion global workforce are at risk of losing their livelihoods.

Informal economy workers are particularly vulnerable because no income means no food, or, at best, less food and less nutritious food, he lamented.

"Our healthcare workers are being stretched to their limits. Many are suffering mental, physical and emotional stress. The global economy is sluggishly emerging from a deep rut, hopefully being driven by countries with recovering economies.

"Education is also highly impacted during this pandemic. In developing countries, online distance learning is showing the imbalance of the internet coverage, which has been biased towards populous areas in what telcos term as 'economically viable' decisions.

"Some of you may have heard or read the story of a young

undergraduate in Sabah who attended her examinations up in a tree where the internet reception was better. Her situation is not unique, I am sure there are many such stories all over the world," he said.

According to him even in areas with excellent internet reception, poor families are not able to provide handphones or tablets for their children to attend online classes, let alone pay for internet data.

Recently, here in Malaysia, it was reported that school dropout rate is increasing among the B40 families. This may result in intergenerational poverty within the B40 society in the future, he stressed.

"How does our environment fare during lockdowns? What will happen to conservation? One consequence of note is that the lack of funding may threaten to undo decades of conservation work.

"As nations channel their supplementary or emergency funds into healthcare and into reviving their economies, environmental and conservation issues may be relegated to the back seat of the bus.

"Likewise, large corporations, the major funders for many conservation organisations, may follow suit. In short, funding for the environment and for conservation work is in danger of being forgotten. Today, with international travel bans and border restrictions in place, many conservation projects around the world are either on-hold or in damage-control mode," he said.