

Federal-Sarawak govt tie-up in forest inventory sought

September 27, 2018, Thursday



Dr Xavier (fourth left) is given a lion dance welcome at Miri airport.

MIRI: The federal government is looking forward to cooperating with the Sarawak state government in reforestation and compiling a consolidated national forest inventory as Malaysia upholds sustainable forest management in addressing international environmental concerns.

Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister Dr Xavier Jayakumar said this is critical as the country moves forward on the international stage for carbon credit rating and green commodity export.

“Malaysia is now on reforestation mode, not deforestation mode, and we want to inform the world.” Dr Xavier hoped the state government will agree to the federal government’s move, pointing out that forestry is under the jurisdiction of the state as it has already started the forest inventory procedure.

He believes the state will benefit in a big way from this programme which he is eager to start next year, with drones to expedite the forests inventory which could translate into green bonds in international carbon trade.

Dr Xavier was speaking at a press conference at Miri Airport after a briefing by Sarawak Forest Department officials on the reforestation efforts which had already been carried out in small parcels of the vast area of the state.

Dr Xavier is in Miri to attend the 12th Heart of Borneo (HoB) tri-partite meeting between Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia on Sept 26-29.

The minister said the proposed reforestation programme in Sarawak would have to be carried out in zones due to the vastness of the state and the federal government will assist with funding in Budget 2019 for reforestation programme next year.

He also said he intended to start the forest inventory in Sarawak where forestry is under the jurisdiction of the state, and hoped to start discussions on species and related areas under this programme with the state next year.

Dr Xavier said Malaysia has to spend a lot of money abroad to counter the negative publicity on oil palm industry and having a national forest inventory and robust reforestation programme is the way forward for the country.

“Currently, we have three Forest Acts – in Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabah – and the inventory documents may differ and the ministry is working with the two states to have one book of inventory together with the three appendixes under one roof,” he said.

Malaysia would be working with influential international NGOs on sustainable forest management and carbon credit trading plans, he added.

He pointed out that Sarawak can play a role as reforestation has already been undertaken with a Japanese partner and the Japanese ambassador has met him on the proposal to harvest the timber from this initiative.

With Malaysia in the tropics as the most prolific oxygen production belt for the world, Malaysia can jump into the carbon credit trading bandwagon, working with agencies in Norway and Japan, he suggested.

Malaysia, a signatory of Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in the Earth Summit in 1992, currently has 52 per cent forest cover as opposed to the mandatory 50 per cent forest as stipulated.

“Norway has about USD500 million each year which we can benefit from by selling our green commodity,” he said.

Indonesia is currently the Asean leader in carbon trading with green bonds.

Meanwhile, Dr Xavier, who is also a PKR vice-president, was given a rousing welcome by Pakatan Harapan leaders and members in northern Sarawak led by Miri MP Dr Micheal Teo Yu Keng and Pujut assemblyman Dr Ting Tiong Choon.

He was accorded a lion dance welcome upon his arrival.