

## JAKARTA SEEKS HELP OF THREE COUNTRIES OVER LOG SMUGGLING

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Forestry Minister M. Prakosa will visit Malaysia, Singapore and China to seek a solution to the smuggling of logs from its forests to those countries.

Prakosa said he would initially visit Malaysia and Singapore early next month to urge both countries not to accept illegal logs from Indonesia.

"We shall discuss the issue immediately in bilateral talks with the governments of Singapore and Malaysia, as more than 50% of illegal logs are smuggled to those countries," he said, as quoted by The Jakarta Post yesterday.

The minister said he would get trade information from Trade and Industry Minister Rini Soewandi.

On Monday, Prakosa accused Singapore of serving as a laundering base for smuggle logs from Indonesia before the commodity was exported to other countries.

He lamented that of the countries approached by Indonesia on the issue, Singapore was the most unco-operative.

Singapore had yet to respond to Indonesia's request despite being repeatedly urged to stop accepting illegal logs, he said.

He said Indonesia wanted to get as many countries as possible to agree not to accept illegal logs from Indonesia.

Malaysia and China signed memorandums of understanding with Indonesia last year to prohibit companies in their countries from accepting the smuggled logs.

However, the Indonesian Wood Panel Association claimed that China and Malaysia had flooded the export market with cheaper plywood made from logs taken illegally from Indonesia.

It also said Indonesia's plywood export had plunged by 15% in the first quarter of this year. – Bernama.