

“Smuggle to illegal logging” is ASEAN Forest Crisis

“South East Asia” is called as the land of plentiful natural resources but World Resources Institute exposed that Cambodia, Vietnam, and Malaysia have been ranked as the most decline of forest in the world in recent fifteen years. It is because of various factors such as structural development, forest-to-be-industry area, and land for economic plants, especially rubber tree. Illegal logging also leads to a decrease of forest. Although ASEAN state members are trying to solve this problem for long time, it does not succeed.

In May 2016, the Prime Minister of Lao PDR, Mr. Thonglun Sisulid, urged the law of eliminating illegal logging. The point is that related government officials must strictly monitor and arrest a violator, also report an advancement of working. Moreover, they must prohibit the exportation of timber that does not comply with the Ministry of Industry and Trade’s standard.

While other sides criticize that government may not achieve the elimination of illegal logging due to fearless of related local politicians. Therefore, it leads that “Lao PDR” becomes the center of illegal logging in ASEAN and have valued over millions baht a year.

Cambodia cannot also manage because illegal logging is relevant to politics. When considering all factors like forestry concession for planting economic trees in 2013, including an expansion of structure causes that “Cambodia” becomes the most decline of forest in the world.

Otherwise, voluminous “timber” from both Lao PDR and Cambodia have been relocated along land and marine boundary to “China” and “Vietnam”. They will take those timbers into the process of furniture transformation to be a domestic equipment and exportation. Revenue returns to countries. For example, Vietnam will import timber from Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Malaysia, and Thailand to transform and export to EU, USA, and Japan.

Illegal logging is not emerged in only Lao PDR and Cambodia, but also Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Myanmar, including Thailand. Government of each country tries to find a resolution. Lately, on 6-8 December 2016, agents from 8 member states participated in the workshop to share knowledge of illegal logging joint-management at Jakarta.

Indonesia is the first country that signed Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) under Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) with EU. This agreement has an important condition that logging between Indonesia and EU must comply with EU Timber Regulation (EUTR). The commodities must not related to any illegal logging. However, other countries prepare to join

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that agreement, especially what the definition of “legal/illegal timber trade” in their own countries is.

In 2004, Swedish Environmental Secretariat Office of Asia held the workshop “timber trade”. The conclusion of this meeting showed that the resolution of illegal logging is a complicated international point; for instance, each country differently defined legal/illegal logging, including the lack of staffs monitoring and arresting violators. Hence, even though the above is over 10 years, the point is still the problem.

In 2007, ASEAN member states held the conference “ASEAN Criteria and Indicators for Legality of Timber”. The conference designated a way for related Forest Management Enterprise (FME). FME must severely follow the forest law such as legal tax and logging for trade, responsibility to society, also compliance with CITES.

Director of Australian Policy and Strategy Institute, Frontier Security, John Coyne, disclosed that ASEAN member states more emphasize resource scarcity by finding a way to manage natural resource in their own country. Furthermore, coordination with neighboring countries is a challenge because resource is related to policy of economic movement, including political, social, cultural issues in region. Nevertheless, although each country popularly knows that smuggling to do logging is illegal and is a national problem, this problem has not been raised its importance up.

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