



KERATAN AKHBAR

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### Govt mulls stiffer penalties under Forestry Act

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Those found guilty of unlawful possession of forest produce or carrying out illegal logging may soon have to pay a fine 10 times more than the current amount.

Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister Datuk Dr. A. Xavier Jayakumar said yesterday the government was currently mulling a heavier penalty for such offences to deter

irresponsible individuals from conducting their illegal activities.

He said a bill to amend the National Forestry Act 1984 would be tabled in Parliament by next year, if all goes well.

"Individuals without licence or permits who take any forest produce from a permanent reserved forest or reserve land currently only have to pay a fine between RM100,000 and

RM500,000. We intend to increase the maximum fine to RM5 million.

"We are also looking at increasing the minimum jail term from one year to five years," he told a press conference after attending the 76th National Land Council Meeting.

Xavier said another proposed amendment was to increase the punishment for illegal trespassing, with the fine to be increased from

RM10,000 to RM30,000 and a prison term from three years to five years.

He said the ministry has discussed the matter with the states and that the National Land Council has also agreed for the amendments to be made to the act.

"We want to strengthen several provisions and impose higher fines for those who break the law."