

# Indonesia Admits Damage to Forests from Illegal Logging

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JAKARTA, Indonesia — A large portion of Indonesia's forests have been damaged through illegal logging, and other nations must tighten controls to stop importing this wood, a Cabinet minister said Thursday.

**"Total losses from illegal logging in Indonesia amount to US\$600 million per year, which is equivalent to four times the annual government budget for the forestry sector,"** Forestry Minister Muhammad Prakosa said in a statement issued Thursday.

Until now, illegal logging has gone mostly unchecked in Indonesia, despite repeated assertions by foreign donors and environmental groups that **the country's virgin rain forest could vanish by 2005.**

**The Forestry Ministry in Jakarta has agreed, under international pressure, to impose a nationwide ban after acknowledging that about one-third of Indonesia's 120 million hectares of forest already has been destroyed. The ministry said efforts to curb illegal logging have been derailed by corrupt local authorities, rampant smuggling, and military units that often are involved in the practice.**

**Indonesia said it urged other countries attending a meeting in Jakarta last week not to accept illegally logged timber.**

Twelve countries attended the meeting of the Asia Pacific Task Force on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in Jakarta, which is sponsored by the World Bank and the U.S. government. They include Cambodia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam.

## ***Emphasis Added***

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