

DR Congo to scrap illegal China logging contracts

KINSHASA: Congolese authorities told AFP on Wednesday, 13 July, they would annul three logging contracts awarded to China last year in what Greenpeace had called a violation of Congo's own logging moratorium.



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The August 2015 attribution of three licences covering 650,000 hectares (2,500 square miles) to Chinese-owned firms Somifor and Fodeco was made public on Tuesday by environmental group Greenpeace.

In response, Environment Minister Robert Bopolo Mbongeza told AFP that "we will annul these three illegal contracts", adding however the government had received no payment for the licences.

Bopolo had said earlier this year that the government was mulling whether to lift its 2002 freeze on new logging licences in order to reorganise the sector and cut down illegal logging of precious timber.

Democratic Republic of Congo is home to more than 60% of the dense forests of the Congo basin, the world's second largest tropical rainforest after the Amazon.

Illegal logging is a major problem in many developing countries including Congo, where poverty and decades of instability have put enormous pressure on natural resources.

Source: AFP

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