

Brazil Cracks Down on Amazon Deforestation with US\$ 276 Million Fine

Contributed by Edison Bernardo DeSouza
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Brazil has taken a pro-active approach against the Amazon deforestation and has started punishing those who destroy the Brazilian rainforest. This is what reveals an article by Folha de S. Paulo daily newspaper, published this Friday June 6.

According to the article, the logging Company Ghetal, owned by the Swedish entrepreneur, Johan Eliasch, and doing business in the Amazon, will be fined 450 million Brazilian reais (approximately US\$ 276 million) by the IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources).

Ghetal is being accused of commercializing and transporting noble trees in the forest reserve region of Manicoré, in the state of Amazon, an area of 699,809 square meters (7,532,681 square feet), which corresponds to 230 thousand trees.

According to IBAMA, Ghetal did not comply with Brazilian legislation for environmental protection, and disrespected their agreement with the IBAMA Institute.

The penalties were announced following the completion of the investigation taking place since 2007. The process was expedited by the new Minister of Environment, Carlos Minc, due to huge national commotion caused by the deforestation issue in Brazil. Recent reports have indicated that most of the deforested areas are owned by foreign citizens.

The Swedish entrepreneur is married to a wealthy member of the society in Brazil, Ana Paula Junqueira, who is also president of the United Nations Association in Brazil (ANUBRA).

Johan Eliasch, who is a personal adviser for British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, shocked Brazil, when back in 2006 he revealed himself as the owner of 160 thousand acres of land in the Amazon Forest.

On interview published by TimesOnline.co.uk, March 19. 2006, Mr. Eliasch stated: "In theory you can perhaps buy the Amazon for US\$ 50 billion (£28.5 billion): It would be a very quick payback because a hurricane like Katrina will cost them a similar amount in payouts."

According to the INCRA (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform) attorney general, Carlos Alberto Salles, the investigation against Ghetal will continue. Currently Ghetal holds the title of 57 land property corresponding to an area of 121 thousand acres.

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