

Barama restarts plywood operations

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Barama's Corporate Head, Neil Chand, CEO Clement Ooi and Agriculture Minister Robert Persaud (L-R)

Barama Company Limited (BCL) has restarted plywood production seven months after it shut down operations following damage to its boiler at the Land of Canaan, EBD, location.

Head of Corporate

Affairs Neil Chand was part of a three-man team, including CEO Clement Ooi, which met Agriculture Minister Robert Persaud at his office on Friday to brief him on the status of the company's operations.

"We're happy today to report that we've resumed plywood production effective June 1, 2011 which has been in keeping with our plans that were approved and supported by government," Chand said.

At the time of the closure some 280 workers had been laid off. Chand was Friday unable to say how many were rehired but noted that the factory does not require much technical skill and the company has kept its recruitment policy open.

"We're also happy to report that with the new set up of the plywood operation we anticipate a 50 percent increase in output per month. Prior to the shutdown we were doing just around 1,600 cubic metres per month, with the new set up we expect to do 2,400 cubic metres per month," Chand said.

Persaud, meanwhile, said he was happy the company was able to meet the restart timeline and the news of increased productivity which should satisfy local demands and possibly exports. He added that the government will also be looking at other outstanding issues such as BCL's working of its forestry concession.

“Our major concern too is the utilisation of the forest area that you have and that for us is a burning concern because we expect that there will be optimum utilisation of that area too. We have a minimum allowable cut and even in some areas we are seeing it’s below that,” Persaud noted.

Government had fined the Malaysian-owned company over US\$96M several years ago for the underutilisation of its concession and logging in others.

Ooi said they were committed to working closely with the government to resolve the issues and add value to the company’s products.

Damage to the boiler had been blamed on workers’ negligence.