

Potential rural power option

Solar energy needs to be fully explored for economic usage, says Len

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KOTA SAMARAHAN: Although blessed with sunshine almost all year round, solar energy has yet to be fully explored and utilised to generate power in Sarawak.

Assistant Environment Minister Datuk Len Talif Salleh said this was because the technology had not been fully developed to make solar-generated power economical to the people.

He said rural areas that were not connected to the state grid could opt for solar energy.

"Research and development in solar energy need to be further encouraged to find ways to make it economical.

"Researchers and academicians need to convince us in the government to give you more funds to do your work in developing green technology like solar," he said when officiating

at World Hybrid Technologies and Energy Conference here yesterday.

Held at University Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), the conference is part of the ongoing Unimas International Festival of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEMFest) 2013. Unimas and Asia Pacific Society for Solar and Hybrid Technologies held the two-day event.

Themed "Excellence in Industrial Education", the conference among others, will explore the aspects of education needed in hybrid technologies and energy sector and also explore the hybrid energy decade, the period of time we live in now, which is the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Malaysia's energy plan was targeted at increasing the power of renewable system from 500MW this year to 2,000MW by the year 2020, and eventually to be doubled by 2030.

The aim is to reduce carbon emission by 10% in 2020 and 20% by 2030.

"This means that 42 million and 145 million tonnes of carbon dioxide will be avoided from the power generation sector by 2020 and 2030, respectively with expectation of a minimum of RM2.1bil savings of external cost to be generated to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions," he said.

Len said the renewable energy sector was expected to create an economic spinoff as well.

A minimum of RM70bil of renewable energy business revenues is projected to be generated from renewable power plants operations, which will generate tax income of about RM1.75bil to the government by 2020.

"A minimum of RM19bil worth of loans is estimated to be generated for renewable energy projects, which will provide banks with more sources of revenues," he said.