

Adoption of renewable energy crucial in S'wak

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**VIABLE SOURCE:** According to Paismanathan, biomass is considered the most the viable resource as the energy it contains comes from the sun, apart from solar and wind generated energy.

**KUCHING:** In an ongoing bid to spur economic activities, Sarawak is well underway in attracting energy intensive industries to invest in its regional activities in its regional corridor namely the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE).

To recap, Sarawak's fuel mix in 2009 showed that 53 per cent of energy consumption was derived from gas and 34 per cent from coal. Greenhouse gas emissions in Malaysia had increased substantially from the beginning of the 1990s to the end of 2010.

However, with electricity generation being the single largest and fast growing contributor to the carbon dioxide emission in the country, Sarawak would need to consider adopting sustainable energy resources to meet its growing electricity demand, said ABB Malaysia Sdn Bhd (ABB) vice president, Paismanathan G to The Borneo Post.

"As electricity demand is anticipated to grow by an estimated five per cent within the next few years, a sustainable energy development can only be derived by both energy efficiency (EE) and renewable sources of energy," he added.

According to Paismanathan, biomass was considered the most the viable resource as the energy it contained came from the sun, apart from solar and wind generated energy.

Despite the uncertainty that had arisen as to the long-term availability of biomass-to-energy resources, he noted that it was

extremely crucial for Sarawak to look at the EE aspect of biomass when the state brought in energy intensive industries to carry out their activities.

“We seriously need an EE masterplan for process industry in Sarawak and also one specific for aluminium smelters,” noted Paismanathan.

At present, the main focus in the study of biomass as a renewable energy (RE) source remains in the scope of how to utilise biomass residues in the form of palm-oil residues such as fibres, palm-kernel shells (PKS) and empty fruit bunches (EFBs). Residues in the form of fibres and PKS are already utilised to some degree for various purposes, while EFBs are under-utilised – representing a major biomass-to-energy potential.

“The EFB needs to be characterised in order to obtain fuel analysis so the potential users would have confidence in it. Standardisation of methods to describe and analyse bio-fuels is an important task in developing co-firing and bio-fuel combustion in general,” said Paismanathan.

On a separate note, while fibres were mostly used for electricity and steam generation for the mills own needs, PKS had discovered a market in the cement industry where it had a high market value in areas close to cement producing plants.

Paismanathan observed that in order to cater for the unpredictability in fuel supply as well as to counter low efficiency of boilers used to burn biomass, it was recommended that the biomass should be used in existing thermal power plants such as Sejingkat and Mukah.

Nonetheless, necessary modification was necessary for these boilers to cater for the multi-fuel sectors. Hence, more focus should be done in preparing the ground for the implementation of a large-scale co-firing of biomass in coal-fired power stations.

Paismanathan further added that among the challenge that biomass is facing is finding further application in other areas. “That create uncertainties on the long term fuel supply of one were to build a plant based on biomass and this should be taken into consideration,” Paismanathan pointed out.

Despite doubts raised in relation to the full advantages of biomass, Paismanathan affirmed that biomass should be a sector that Sarawak must tap into as it was poised to be the most reliable source of an alternative renewable energy.

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