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Green energy is Sabah's goldmine

SABAH with its abundance of natural resources is a reservoir of renewable energy and offers strong prospects of contributing significantly to both the state and nation's transformation into a high value-added economy.

But, more importantly, it offers a workable solution to the unending power woes of consumers, opined Institute for Development Studies ED Mohd Hasnol Ayub

"Sabah's equatorial location is excellent for solar energy while its widespread tropical forests can provide large quantities of biomass.

"In addition, the depth of the waters surrounding much of Sabah as well as its tidal flow offers a prospect for the development of ocean renewable energies.

"From a long-term perspective, renewable energy is a practical option for Sabah," he told participants at the "Greening of Sabah: Renewable Energy Options for the

Near Future" seminar in Kota Kinabalu.

Hasnol also pointed out that the sector could become a major player and source of regional energy supply as well boost economic growth thus creating numerous jobs.

"There are large untapped opportunities in this sector. The private sector should allocate its resources into this segment and carve a niche market for themselves," he said adding that the federal government's adoption of green technology in 2009 as the country's economic driver would further catapult Sabah's role.

Meanwhile, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Musa Aman who officiated the seminar said Sabah's insatiable demand for electricity is expected to pick up considerably given the state's aggressive ongoing economic development programme and its commitment to exploiting renewable energy resources and diversifying, thus, moving

away from oil dependence.

Musa said the government is looking into new renewable energy that is derived from the wind, solar, tidal, geothermal as well as from plants as future energy sources for Sabah.

"We also expect to swiftly develop non-hydroelectric or renewable energies to increase their share of the global energy mix in the future.

He added that to this end, the state had drafted programmes for the development of renewable energy and the implementation of the renewable energy policy.

Sabah's gross domestic product grew by an average of 4% a year between 2006 and 2012, while electricity demand increased at an annual average of about 8% to 10%.

Musa said based on the trend, Sabah expected electricity demand to continue growing at about 7.7%. Sabah's east coast electricity supply is mostly dependent on diesel plants.

"The completion of the Kimanis Power Sdn Bhd and SPR Energy (M) Sdn Bhd power projects next year are (also) expected to stabilise power generation, generating 383MW and increasing the state's total generating capacity to approximately 1,400MW," he said.

Off-grid renewable technologies especially from non-hydro electric sources, Musa said, will be one of the pivotal solutions to providing a sustainable and cost-effective alternative to meet the state's power demand as Sabah's economy expands.

He said that it is the government's hope that Sabah will attract more investors in the renewable energy sector and become a notable destination for biomass, geothermal, micro-algae and other investments.

Meanwhile, federal Minister of Energy, Green Technology and Water, Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili has promised lesser power outage occurrences in Sabah. Will this be possible? — *FreeMalaysiaToday.com*