

PALM OIL DIESEL TO BE 'FUEL OF FUTURE'

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MALAYSIA'S palm oil diesel has the scope and potential to replace diesel as a commercial fuel, the Prime Minister said today.

"Palm oil diesel has all the properties to be an alternative fuel of the future.

"Malaysia could in future be an 'energy farm' with crude palm oil being converted to methyl ester which will replace diesel," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said when opening the

palm diesel pilot plant at the Malaysian Palm Oil Research Institute (Porim) this morning.

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The preliminary findings indicate that the energy farm is viable and attractive on economic and energy balance considerations.

The Prime Minister said that as this was the first palm diesel pilot project in the world, "Malaysia is placed as a pioneer, producer and user of palm oil as a

BANGI, Sat.

source of energy".

"This plant is not only another milestone in the history of Malaysia's research and development, but it also provides far-reaching implications to our industrialisation programme, national defence and the economic development of the country as a whole."

It is estimated that the petroleum reserves will be depleted within the next 20 years.

He pointed out that in the event of international oil supply being cut off the country would face a major crisis and Malaysia should, therefore, be prepared with an alternative source of energy.

Tests conducted on motor-vehicle engines and generators have proved palm oil to be as satisfactory as diesel fuel.

Dr Mahathir said preliminary field trials had been successful.

Methyl esters can be used without any modification of the engines. Twenty taxis used in a pilot project experienced:

- smooth running;

- easy starting;
- great reduction of black smoke from the exhaust;
- no loss in power; and
- no increase in carbon deposit in the engine as compared with petroleum diesel.

The Prime Minister said that all the preliminary field evaluations had been conducted in preparation for the exhaustive field trial involving 200 vehicles and other diesel engines.

The vehicles will run for a minimum period of two years or cover 300,000 kilometres as required by engine manufacturers after the pilot plant is operational.

The vehicles include automobiles, lorries, buses, Land Rovers, motor-boats, tractors, water-pumps and locomotives.

In conjunction with the palm oil diesel project, Porim is also testing an Elko engine from West Germany designed specifically for the use of methyl esters.

For this project, Porim, Mitsui and Elko are jointly carrying out research to examine palm oil diesel's suitability for the engine.

The Prime Minister said the joint venture involving Malaysia, West Germany and Japan would provide solutions to energy and environmental problems.

Several engine manufacturers will also be involved in the exhaustive field trials.

Some of the engine manufacturers are Daimler Benz, Volvo, Hino, Isuzu, Mitsubishi, Fiat, Ford, Caterpillar, Kubota, Nissan, Toyota and Komatsu.