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Mahathir-Energy

GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE PROMOTING RENEWABLE ENERGY

KUALA LUMPUR, July 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will continue to advocate the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency as the fifth fuel in its fuel diversification strategy.

He said that as a country generating considerable amount of biomass waste, notably in the palm oil and wood industries, Malaysia had vast potential for substantial recovery of energy from these wastes.

He said greater energy use efficiency would not only help reduce wastage and improve the competitiveness of the country's industrial production but would also facilitate sustainable growth through the maximisation of resource utilisation.

"A recent study completed by the government has shown that the renewable sources of energy available in the country have a technical potential of about 36 million tonnes of oil equivalent. It is a huge resource that would be wasted if not adequately tapped," he said in his keynote address at the Malaysian Electric Power Forum 2001 here.

Dr Mahathir said most of these resources were biomass waste generated by local industry that also faced problem in disposing them with minimal negative impact on the environment.

The country's energy currently comes in the form of oil, coal, gas and hydropower.

Dr Mahathir said that being new growth industries, renewable energy and energy efficiency offered far greater potential for entrepreneurial and technological development than the conventional energy business.

He said Malaysia could quite easily assume leadership position in the export of new technologies and consultancy services in this new field if the country could nurture a successful industry early.

He said the government had achieved rural electricity coverage of more than 93 per cent in the country.

"With almost universal coverage in peninsular Malaysia, our priorities for the RM856.6 million allocated in the Eighth Malaysia Plan will be the rural communities in Sabah and Sarawak," he said.

He said the establishment of the Energy Commission last May was meant to increase the effectiveness of regulatory supervision of the energy sector, particularly the electricity supply industry and its gas supply sub-sector.

Dr Mahathir said one of the principle areas of responsibility of the body would be the planning of capacity adequacy in the electricity industry.

The commission, he said, would be entrusted with the task of calling for bids for new planting-up programmes and be responsible for the promotion of research and development as well as new and renewable sources of energy.

Dr Mahathir also said that the country's power plants had reduced their dependence on oil from 85 per cent in 1980 to a mere eight per cent while natural gas usage increased from one per cent in 1980 to more than 71 per cent in 2000.

He said although progress and economic growth were important national priorities, the government had been careful in ensuring that they were not pursued at the expense of the environment.

-- BERNAMA

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