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Max: Solar holds the next best Sabah potential

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KOTA KINABALU: Science, Technology and Innovations Minister, Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili said solar energy could be the main alternative to oil for Sabah in the future.

He said the Ministry (Mosti) is also looking at wind, nuclear, wave, thermal (potential) "so that we can dismiss them if they have no future in Sabah". "But I think at the end of the day we are looking at solar as a major solution."

At a media conference after launching Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) Research Directory, he said Mosti is giving more emphasis to alternative energy - which used to be just another Research and Development (R & D) project - "in the light of the energy crisis, even though oil prices have gone down".

Present at the launching held at UMS' Borneo Marine Research Institute, were Vice-Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Kamaruzaman Ampon and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) Prof Dr Rosnah Ismail.

Mosti has also taken note that the administration of new US President Barack Obama is going big on green energy, particularly as Malaysia is already indirectly linked with some of the networks there in the R & D. "So we are going to prepare for that also," he said.

Other R & D projects initiated by Sabah (UMS) and Sarawak, Mosti would prioritise biodiversity, climate change, oceanography, and the social sciences.

He said Mosti has also been charged by the Federal Government to look at the needs of Sabah and Sarawak on the science and technology side. To date it has forked out RM12million from the Science Fund for funding for R & D, as well as innovation.

"UMS has produced a lot out of R&D. A section of it by the Marine Institute, is ready for Intellectual Property (IP) registration and commercialisation. This is the kind of things that we are doing in Mosti. We are not only sponsoring research and development but also innovation.

"And we want this innovation to contribute to the economic growth sector or the livelihood of the people," he said, adding he was very impressed by what he has seen so far.

Waste as a power generator, is also big on



Ongkili launching the Research Directory. Behind him is Dr Kamaruzaman while Prof Dr Rosnah and Prof Datin Dr An Anton looks on.

Mosti's agenda. Ongkili cited principle wastage in the cutting down of one million oil palm trees a year. "We are looking at technology that converts stems of these trees to fuel - to ethanol or biodiesel."

With regards to infrastructure priority in Sabah, one of them is the Mimos Centre for Excellence. "As a start, we will set a branch of this, which would be located in UMS. We hope in the 10th Malaysia Plan they can have their own building, linked to UMS," he said.

Prof Dr Rosnah on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Mimos Berhad President and CEO Dato' Abdul Wahab Abdullah in Kuala Lumpur last November.

Mimos Bhd has agreed to set up the Center of Excellence in UMS in conjunction with a two-year research project to be undertaken by UMS ICT researchers focusing on the development of a semantic technology-based agent and multi-agent system.

With Mimos' collaboration, UMS hopes to introduce new and innovative approaches in a continuous effort to improve ICT infrastructure and research development.

Another infrastructure in line would be the Science Centre. "It was proposed as early as in the Eighth Malaysia Plan. But funding was not provided for."

When they acquired land for the purpose, the project would be included in the Ninth Malaysia Plan, starting off with RM34million, he revealed.

These infrastructures would at the same time cater to the training of researchers, scientists and engineers.