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Plantation firms have potentials to be major energy players

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 7 (Bernama) — Plantation firms such as Sime Darby, IOI Plantation and KL Kepong have huge potential to emerge as the country's large energy players given their abundance of raw materials for biomass energy.

"The big plantations guys in Malaysia will be the Petronas of the future, but it depends much on the incentives given and the framework set by the government," Malaysian-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry's General Manager Thomas Brandt said.

To this end, he said the Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) that will be implemented from Dec 1, 2011 is among the right moves that the government has taken to spur the renewable energy industry.

"Currently, a number of them are using the raw materials to produce energy for their mills," he said on the sideline of the International Greentech & Eco Products Exhibition & Conference Malaysia 2011 here, today.

Unfortunately, the technology that is being applied is 40-years old, says Guo Business Development's executive chairman, Stefan Petters.

He added that the industry was lagging behind in terms of technology, such as in bio-gasification and bio-refinery.

"If these developments are applied to the country's most strategic industry sector (it will be good)," he said, adding that palm oil was the highest quality vegetable oil and should be handled appropriately, including the waste. This is one way forward towards sustainability, he said.

Asked on what was stopping the plantation firms from using state-of-the-art technology to produce energy from biomass, Brandt said the availability of cheap electricity was somewhat a hindrance for the plantation sector to invest in new technologies.

Stefan noted that it would be a pity if locally available strength is not used to develop a technology leadership position.

"Because if that is left open, somebody will come in and get it. It is more beneficial for the country if it is done locally," he said.



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