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FRIM ready to produce biodiesel from trees

SETIU: The Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) has been successful in growing 6,000 'Jarak Pagar' (*Jatropha Curcas*) trees, and now, it is ready to plant these trees on a large scale.

The pilot project to grow these trees began in 2009. These trees are also known as the Barbados Nut trees, the Purging Nut trees and the Black Vonit Nut trees.

FRIM is planning to acquire a large piece of land from the Terengganu state government for the upcoming project.

Rosdi Koter, a research officer at FRIM, said Terengganu has close to 71,000 hectares of unused coastal land.

"The land is able to withstand extreme heat, and 99 per cent of the soil is fused with silica.

"This land is suitable for the cultivation of 'Jarak Pagar' trees

and Bintangor trees, which are capable of producing biodiesel," he said.

Through this project, raw materials will be gathered for the production of biodiesel, which will ultimately increase the income of the locals.

"These trees can be easily planted, and the saplings do not face any threat from pests and animals like wild boars.

"FRIM is willing to provide its expertise for the success of the project," he said.

FRIM stated that although Malaysia has the potential to become the world's largest biodiesel producer and the world's largest oil palm producer, many NGOs have criticised the idea of generating bio fuel from food sources like sugarcane and corn.

Hence, FRIM started research and development programmes in 2008 to find alternatives to palm oil with regard to the production of biodiesel from non-food sources.

The transfer of multi-feedstock technology in producing biodiesel had been carried out by FRIM and Xtract Tech Sdn Bhd, an entity under the postgraduate entrepreneurial training programme (FMBiosis), supported by the Malaysian Technology Development Corporation (MTDC).

This resulted in the establishment of a FRIM pioneer plant in December 2010, which has the capability of producing 20,000 litres of biodiesel every month.

B20, a multi-feedstock

compound, has been used by FRIM's vehicles, and it has enhanced the performance of engines in these vehicles.

Rosdi said FRIM has also used B5, another biodiesel compound, in diesel-powered vehicles. FRIM requires 120,000 litres of the compound every year.

"This has resulted in the reduction (in the usage) of fossil fuels by 6,000 litres every year. In addition, the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere has reduced by four percent every year (16,000 tonnes a year)," he said.

FRIM's projects with regard to the production of biodiesel are in line with the government's efforts to conserve the environment and enhance the country's green technologies. - Bernama