

Scientists urged to look into producing fast-growing trees

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KUCHING: Local scientists are asked to explore the possibility of producing timber species that can mature for harvest within five years.

Though he acknowledged that the task would be a challenge, Chief Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari said he was sure with the availability of advanced technology and a certain compound that can boost the growth of trees, coming up with such a species of timber is possible.

"I am sure the scientists of today can explore the possibility of increasing the growth rate of some of the indigenous timber species in Sarawak.

"Carry out an R&D (research and development) and try to identify the right stock of our indigenous trees that can grow fast, that have the strength, that have the fibre and using modern technology to reduce wastage for us to move forward in the industry, where we can harvest them within five years," he said.

The Chief Minister believes that if there are trees that can be harvested within five years, planters could plant them in cycles.

"If you have 20,000 acres of land, then within that land you can have a few cycles in every five years of producing products that are based on this timber.

"Maybe Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and other agencies should take the lead to explore producing trees that can be harvested in five years.

"If we can do that, then we can have an industrial forest as well," he said at the opening ceremony of a forum on forest landscape here yesterday.

Abang Johari said the state government might allocate land to plant these trees for the industries so the permanent forests and totally protected forests (TPF) would not be disturbed.

He added that once the state has that industrial forest, it would comply with the international standard and apply for certification from the world body.

"Once we have got all these, the market is yours," he pointed out.

The Chief Minister said the state government was prepared to give funds for any institution or agency to do such R&D.

This, he added, is for the long term.

"Our long term policy is to include a sustainable new category of forest, called industrial forest.

"If we can have that, Sarawak will be the first state, not just in Malaysia but in the world to have industrial forest.

"With the technology and full compliance with international standard, the future is there for us to explore," he remarked.

Abang Johari, who is also Resource Planning and Environment Minister, advised timber industry players in Sarawak to also enhance the usage of technology.

He said through new technology sawmills could reduce wastage, especially in timber fibre which could be used to make various kinds of timber products.

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