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Renewable, efficient energy the way forward

I REFER to your report "Trees to the rescue" (Malay Mail, June 29).

As a consumer advocate, I am pleased with the attention Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) is giving the environment. Its efforts should be commended and I hope other companies emulate its efforts.

I see TNB's biomass projects in Jengka, Johor and Pahang as admirable renewable energy (RE) projects.

By investing heavily in the projects, the utility company has made a clear statement that it is committed to sustainability programmes.

What is also interesting is the projects' operations of the generation, transmission and distribution divisions were certified Halon-free. This must some kind of a record.

Recently, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak struck the right chord when he said Malaysia could show other developing countries that economic growth and carbon

emissions need not correlate, and ambitious actions on climate change was proof that the economy and the environment could prosper collectively.

I welcome the prime minister's stand on encouraging the use of clean vehicles and the construction of energy-efficient structures.

The promotion of RE, energy efficiency (EE), and green buildings augurs well for our future.

A recent article quoted data from the Energy Commission's Demand Side Management Unit showed attractive savings could be achieved by adopting EE models of consumer products like lamps, refrigerators, air-conditioners, fans and TVs.

The data showed savings of 25 per cent and more for these appliances, and that the extra cost of the EE models could be recovered quickly.

Savings of such a figure is nothing to

scoff at. With sufficient awareness, I am sure consumers will be happy to adopt EE practices. We could help Malaysia save on subsidies for electricity generation from natural gas, while preserving the environment as well as play our part to help the country achieve its goal of reducing carbon intensity by 40 per cent.

The energy savings information from the Energy Commission shows that the highest monetary savings are from air-conditioning.

Air-conditioners work on the principle of removing heat from a confined space, so it makes sense to stop heat from entering the space in the first place.

Roof insulation, especially for low-rise buildings, is one of the cheapest ways to achieve this. Adequate insulation may even eliminate the need for air-conditioning.

I wonder why our houses are not built with the necessary insulation as, due to climate change, air-conditioning is

now a necessity.

This especially applies to low-rise houses of the low-income group which cannot afford air-conditioning and is forced to suffer heat stress. Insulation could also help the wealthier reduce energy use from air-conditioning.

In Scandinavian countries, building regulations require roof insulation with a minimum thickness of 250mm to 300mm. A thickness of 50mm to 100mm would be sufficient in our climate.

I hope the government agencies concerned ensure that the necessary regulations are in place to ensure that residential, commercial and industrial buildings have adequate roof insulation in their initial design and construction to reflect the country's energy efficient goals.

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