



Asean well-positioned to become global RE leader, says expert

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RICH NATURAL RESOURCES

Asean well-positioned to become global RE leader, says expert

KUALA LUMPUR: The Asean region is well-positioned to become a global leader in renewable energy (RE), driven by its rich natural resources and increasing commitment to sustainability.

Prof Dr Tiong Sieh Kiong, director of the Institute of Sustainable Energy at Universiti Tenaga Nasional, said countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia benefited from abundant sunlight, making solar power a crucial resource for the region's energy transition.

Laos, meanwhile, relied predominantly on hydropower, with 49 out of its 57 power plants dedicated to this renewable source, Tiong explained in a recent opinion piece.

He said there is strong geothermal energy potential in the Philippines and Indonesia, both situated along the Pacific Ring of Fire, while wind energy adoption is growing in coastal areas of Vietnam and Thailand.

Furthermore, Indonesia holds considerable promise in bioenergy, particularly through the conversion of agricultural waste into power solutions was rural areas.

Asean has set a target to raise the RE share in its energy mix to 23 per cent by this year, with a longer-term goal of achieving net-zero emissions between 2050 and 2060.

However, Tiong said structural challenges remained, as high capital costs for renewable infrastructure — solar farms, wind turbines, and hydroelectric facilities — continued to be a major barrier.

He said transitioning from fossil fuel-based systems required complex and costly upgrades to existing infrastructure.

Tiong emphasised that reliance on foreign technologies, limited domestic innovation and fragmented energy policies across member states had slowed momentum.

He said policy inconsistency was a major impediment, adding that while some countries are progressing, others remain reliant on coal and gas, undermining regional integration.

To address these challenges, Asean is pursuing collaborative initiatives such as the Asean Power Grid and the Trans-Asean Gas Pipeline, which aim to enhance cross-border energy sharing and regional energy security.

The upcoming Asean Energy Sector meeting in 2025, themed "Asean Powering: Bridging Boundaries, Building Prosperity", will focus on fostering unified strategies and integrated energy markets.

Tiong highlighted the importance of regional financing mechanisms, including green bonds and RE certificates, to support projects in less-developed markets.

He said by pooling resources and harmonising regulatory frameworks, Asean could boost RE deployment at scale.

In Malaysia, Tiong said the government backing for RE was gaining momentum with RM300 million allocated under the 2025 Budget to the National Energy Transition Facilitation Fund to increase the share in the RE power mix to at least 70 per cent by 2050 — up from the current 27 per cent.

He said Malaysia's RE focus included large-scale solar, net energy metering, hydroelectric expansion, and the development of biomass, biogas and hydrogen energy technologies.

He also said Sarawak's efforts in pioneering hydrogen energy underscored the country's broader diversification strategy.

Overall, Tiong said the future of RE in Asean appeared promising, bolstered by abundant natural resources, growing climate change awareness, and international commitments to sustainable development.

"By investing in RE infrastructure, fostering technological innovation, and enhancing regional cooperation, Asean holds the potential to emerge as a global leader in RE, advancing towards a cleaner and more sustainable future for all its members," he said.



Prof Dr Tiong Sieh Kiong