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Eucalyptus the timber of the future

JEMPOL: Rapid-growing tree species like batai and eucalyptus will be encouraged in “community plantations” to ensure timber sustainability and a constant source of income for the B40 group. The plantations will also reduce dependence on permanent forests.

Community plantations will be created to benefit various quarters, especially the B40 group where idle land, even in small sizes, can be optimised.

“Similarly, the buy-back guarantee can help increase the income of the B40 group consistently,” Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Dr Mohd Khairuddin Aman Razali told *Bernama* after launching the state’s community plantation programme in Batu Kikir, here yesterday. The project involves 20 participants.

Mohd Khairuddin said that since 2016, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia had conducted various studies to determine species that could be cultivated and harvested in less than six years. Eucalyptus plantations are expected to be able to meet future demand for timber.

“The export of eucalyptus timber last year recorded RM3bil but for the last six months, the value halved to RM1.49bil due to the Covid-19 pandemic,” he said.

Malaysia, on the whole, exported RM22.5bil worth of wood-based products last year, with furniture making up the highest export at RM9.14bil followed by plywood products (RM3.40bil) and sawn timber (RM3.37bil).

Eucalyptus trees produce wood that is heavy, strong, durable and solid, making it the most valuable source of timber in world. Eucalyptus is a high-quality raw material for pulp, paper and energy.

“A total of 822 species of eucalyptus are reported to be found in Australia, New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines. They are used for the production of pulp and paper, charcoal, and as landscape trees and oil paste. They grow fast, reach heights of up to 100m and are said to be the highest flowering plant in the world,” he said.

Mohd Khairuddin said the community plantation programme was also aimed at increasing the supply of wood species, which were declining, and raising the income of the B40. — *Bernama*