

UPSKILLING TALENT IN GREEN ENERGY SOLUTIONS



The recently announced National Energy Transition Roadmap outlines Malaysia's approach to navigating a just energy transition to address the energy trilemma of ensuring energy security, affordability and sustainability.

Apart from readying the energy industry to make the leap and shift accordingly, continuous talent and human capital development is another pertinent aspect to focus on to ensure that Malaysia has adequate human resources over the years.

While transitioning into the cleaner energy space has opened various job opportunities, PETRONAS, as a global energy corporation, has admitted that venturing into new growth territories, especially renewables, introduces its own unique challenges.

"We at PETRONAS find ourselves compelled to source talent diversely, ensuring a well-rounded skill set is at hand to grapple with the multi-layered issues inherent to the energy domain.

"Our aim is not solely about overcoming today's challenges posed by the energy trilemma. With the right talent in place, we're determined to pioneer enduring solutions that address some of the world's most pressing concerns," PETRONAS senior vice-president, group human resource management, Farehana Hanapiyah said during the Energy Asia conference this year.

Empowering underprivileged communities through job opportunities

Realising the need to ensure a sustainable flow of talent into the renewable energy sector, PETRONAS also takes an active role in revitalising Malaysia's energy industry through continuous development and collaboration with partners.

SOLS Energy Sdn Bhd — an industry leader in the green energy sector — is a prime example of how the nation's leading energy company intends to reinvigorate the local energy industry through industrial partnerships.

As the only solar company in the country that is backed by PETRONAS, SOLS Energy is committed to empowering the local community — especially the underprivileged — by providing them with job opportunities within the solar installation industry.

With almost a decade in the domestic renewable energy space, SOLS Energy initiated its Solar Academy in 2012. The academy aims to train youth, namely from the Orang Asli and Orang Asal communities, in rooftop solar equipment installation.

"One out of four youth from underprivileged backgrounds do not have the opportunity to be gainfully employed as they have not completed formal education or obtained their end-of-secondary-school certificate, which is generally considered the minimum qualification required to find decent employment in the Malaysian job market.

"Over the last decade, we have trained more than 600 students in our legacy programme — known as the SOLS Solar Academy.

"Most of the communities we reached out to can see the value in developing skills in a growing industry," said SOLS Energy co-founder Raj Ridvan Singh.

He added that SOLS Solar Academy has also structured a system whereby the students gain daily allowances when they start their practical training before transitioning to a salary when they obtain their apprenticeship. Upon graduation, they are guaranteed a job.

The academy emphasises its apprenticeship



Raj Ridvan Singh: Most of the communities we reached out to can see the value in developing skills in a growing industry

and mentorship aspects. Teacher Raj, as he is fondly known, shared that 40% of the team and the entire installation team are Solar Academy graduates.

Ultimately, by empowering underprivileged communities, SOLS Energy aims to provide a pathway for low-income youth to move into the middle-income bracket.

Providing energy access in rural areas

On a related note, Teacher Raj highlighted that SOLS Energy employs many people from the Orang Asli and Orang Asal communities, so it was only natural to close the loop by providing energy access to these same communities that it has worked closely with.

"In Malaysia, there are more than 550 off-grid villages with tens of thousands of homes.

"By working with PETRONAS and other sponsors, we have to date deployed home solar systems in 1,550 homes in Perak, Pahang and Kelantan. We recently announced that for each home that installs solar equipment with us, we will equip one off-grid home with a home solar system. Since the announcement, we are at 400 homes and counting," Teacher Raj shared.

Enabling a just energy transition

Looking ahead, SOLS Energy believes there is mass potential in the domestic renewable energy market as over 99% of residences do not have solar systems.

"We see ourselves as enablers for as many people as possible to go solar by offering attractive ownership practices and financing solutions.

"We started with the goal of providing well-paying green jobs and, moving into the future, we see this as an even more important function we need to play. We must ensure the transition the nation takes is done in an equitable way by involving communities that would otherwise be left behind," Teacher Raj added.

SOLS Energy is committed to raising the bar in employment practices in the renewable energy industry.

"With the training capacity we have created, we are well placed to play a meaningful role in delivering the upskilling needed to cater to the demand for cleaner energy solutions.

"More than that, with our focus on working with low-income groups, we can enable a 'just transition' that will include the most vulnerable in society," he said.

PETRONAS welcomes collaborations with those who share their commitment to innovating effective solutions for the ever-evolving energy sector.