

Ecer To See M'sia-Korea Kenaf Partnership

BACHOK: The East Coast Economic Region (ECER) will see the formation of a partnership between local firm Symphony Advance Sdn Bhd (SASB), and Korea's Samsung Cheil Industries Incorporated to develop and export kenaf polymer composite.

In a statement yesterday, ECER Secretariat said the two companies would seal the technical collaboration in an exchange of documents on August 22, to be witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Those who will be attending the ceremony include Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui; Kelantan Menteri Besar, Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat; and ECER Development Council CEO, Datuk Jebasingam Issace John.

Samsung Cheil Industries Incorporated is Korea's leading producer of fashion, chemicals and electronic chemical materials. Its major products are synthetic resins such as acrylonitrile butadiene styrene, polystyrene and electronic chemical materials for semiconductor and digital display.

SASB is a part of the AqilQisti Group of companies, with operations in media, technology, agriculture and aquaculture industries.

ECER Secretariat said kenaf has been introduced as a farm crop under the ECER because of the fibrous plant's huge potential. The plant can be processed into environmental-friendly paper, clothing, building material, car accessories and bio-composites.

Spearheaded by the National Tobacco Board, kenaf farming has also come to the forefront recently because the Asean Free Trade Area which takes effect in 2010, will see Malaysia reduce duties on tobacco imports, making tobacco farming here less competitive.

Under the ECER, the target area for kenaf is about 10,000 ha. It is expected to increase the income of 10,000 marginal tobacco farmers and create more jobs.