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Biomass power project draws Japanese interest

Japanese investors have expressed interest in investing in a 10-megawatt waste-to-power plant located in either Rayong or Samut Sakhon province, says Industry Minister Chakramon Phasukvanich.

The biomass project is due to start next year, he said, adding that it would cost 1.8 billion baht and was expected to help eliminate 500 tonnes of waste a day.

"The Thai government has issued a clear policy of promoting waste-to-power plants to help solve the problem of excessive garbage while producing power at the same time, Mr Chakramon said.

"We believe it's the best choice rather than dumping the garbage into landfills, thereby polluting the land with toxic substances."

He said Thailand produced 60 million tonnes of waste annually including general waste and industrial toxic waste.

About half the total annual waste is toxic, and the government plans to set up a toxic waste management estate to process 600,000 tonnes of it, doubling the capacity to 1.2 million tonnes in five years.

According to the latest Industry Ministry study of the toxic management plan, six waste estates would initially be set up covering all regions to reach the target of eliminating 90% of toxic industrial waste in five years.

The study found eight provinces as suitable locations -- Nakhon Ratchasima, Lamphun, Lampang, Rayong, Prachin Buri, Pathum Thani, Ayutthaya and Ang Thong.

The Industry Ministry will urge the government to revive relevant laws and regulations to allow private firms to transport some dangerous waste from one place to another place that has sufficient capacity to process the toxic waste in the near future, Mr Chakramon said.

Waste power plants are a global trend, particularly in the EU, which expect to switch to waste power plants in the near future, he added.

Japan's New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization will supply materials, machinery and technology for the waste power plants.

The investment budget will come from Japanese private companies interested in developing them.

"The Japanese environment minister talks to the Thai government from time to time about cooperating in the development of waste power plants," Mr Chakramon said.

"Japanese investors want the Thai Industry Ministry to facilitate their activities."

