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Main
News
Sports

Business
Features
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Editorial
Letters To Editor
Entertainment

Motor Sports
Business Monday
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ISLAND HAS MUCH UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

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By Terence Murrell

Barbados has the potential to produce electricity via alternative energy applications such as photovoltaics, solar thermal energy, biomass and Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC).

The island could also lower its air conditioning costs by installing absorption cooling, which would allow it to meet its air conditioning loads by using solar energy.

This would greatly assist Barbados in reducing its high energy costs, which in 2003 was \$125 million in fuel imports, up from \$101 million in 2002.

This view was expressed by Mark Thornbloom, a senior research engineer with the Florida Solar Energy Center, during an interview with Business Monday last week preceding a luncheon hosted by the Barbados Association of Professional Engineers (BAPE) at the Manor Lodge Complex.

Thornbloom was the feature speaker at the luncheon, where many aspects of renewal energy were discussed including wind, solar thermal, solar air conditioning and the conversion of sunlight into electricity.

Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) is a possibility. Barbados has a wonderful oceanic shelf with thousands of feet of depth that can be taken advantage of to generate electricity.

There are also possibilities in terms of biomass as an energy source. I guarantee that you could put in absorption cooling and therefore meet your air conditioning loads with solar, as well as some of your electricity generation with solar thermal, as well as photovoltaics, stated Thornbloom.

He further made the point that alternative/renewal energy is an area which needs to be studied in relation to Barbados. I can guarantee that they are benefits, but which ones are best for Barbados, that needs to be studied., he said. According to Thornbloom, Barbados has an excellent solar resource, therefore photovoltaics will work very well here. He also said that Barbados is currently putting the United States to shame in terms of flat-plate solar water heating.

It would be worth your while to consider also using solar energy for electricity generation. This could be done with the local utility or perhaps on an individual basis. The utility could look at using it as peaking energy. Because the electricity generation in Barbados is fossil-based, it matches very well with photovoltaics where the utility can keep a smaller spinning reserve and use the solar



Mark Thornbloom, Senior Research Engineer with the Florida Solar Energy Center, during his address at the BAPE luncheon.

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energy when the sun is shining.

He continued, **W**hen there is cloud cover the plant would power back up It is quite common to combine fossil generation with solar generation.

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