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Brace for power rationing

'Towers supplying electricity to Ranau on verge of collapse'

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KOTA KINABALU: Thousands of electricity users in Sabah's east coast may face power rationing starting at the end of this month or early April if disaster strikes.

Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd (SESB) chief executive officer Mohd Yaakob Jaafar said two of their towers in Ranau district, supplying 275KW of power to east and west coast Sabah, are on the verge of collapse due to soil movement.

From these towers, 200KW are for the supply, he said yesterday.

He said the soil movement at the location where the two towers are situated was more active than anticipated, and they had no choice but to ask for help from Tenaga Nasional Berhad, the state government and the Royal Malaysian Air Force (TUDM).

"Actually, our ground staff had already detected problems at these two sites in December and immediate rectification measures have been taken," Yaakob said.

"However, due to the active soil movement and sinking land surface, some parts of the tower at the bottom started to break," he said.

Prior to the breaking of these bars, SESB had already gotten contractors and put up measures

to get emergency restoration systems going, where a total of 12 temporary diversion towers were supposed to be built.

He said seven temporary towers have been constructed and SESB had asked to borrow five units of usable towers from TNB for the time being.

"We have also asked the state government for help to transport these towers here and TUDM has been tasked to assist," he said.

If all goes as planned, the first shipment of these temporary towers from TNB will arrive within the next couple of days, said Yaakob.

He said with these measures in place, and if nothing untoward happens to the existing towers, users do not have to worry about power cuts or rationing unless the worst case scenario happens.

He said SESB carries out routine checks and inspections on all their assets, some monthly and some annually.

"Often, temporary diversion towers are put up to prevent power outages, because in 2008, Sabah experienced an almost total blackout and we do not want this to happen again," he said.

Temporary towers are put up so that the replacement of the permanent electric towers can be done without disrupting power supply to users.



Holding things together: An SESB worker installing anchors to hold the broken metal together.