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Over 2,000 power theft ops

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KOTA KINABALU:

Over 2,100 operations have been carried out across Sabah since last year to crack down on illegal electricity connections in squatter settlements, with

authorities also pursuing court action against offenders.

“A total of 1,570 operations were conducted statewide in 2025, with 14 in Sepanggar and a further 536 operations have already been carried out so far in 2026, including nine in Sepanggar,” said State Works and Utility Minister Datuk Seri Dr Joachim Gunsalam (pic) in his Ministry’s winding-up speech.

He said more than seven landmark cases involving electricity theft and illegal electricity sales in squatter settlements, including those in Sepanggar, are currently being prosecuted in court.

“A total of 31 electricity theft cases had already been sentenced and 21 compounded over the past two years since the Energy Commission of Sabah took over regulatory powers in 2024,” he said.

He said the illegal connections had not only caused losses to utility providers but also contributed to power supply disruptions and electrical accidents.

“Operations were carried out in an integrated manner with agencies including the Immigration Department, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, the police and the National Registration Department,” he said.

On sentencing, Dr Joachim said cases that had been handed down punishments were made public to serve as a stronger deterrent to would-be offenders, on top of tougher penalties introduced during the drafting of the enactment.

Regarding the electricity supply policy for squatter areas, he said the approach was handled on a case-by-case basis as an interim measure only, pending permanent planning for the settlements concerned.

“Such a supply also requires approval from local authorities and the National Security Council,” he said.

He said one supply concept involved a third-party company managing infrastructure, distribution and bill collection based on a specially approved tariff, with a pilot project already carried out at Kampung Forest in Sandakan.

“A newer concept used utility supply through meter houses, where meters are installed in clusters to simplify billing and reduce the likelihood of illegal connections,” he said.

“This approach was piloted by Sabah Electricity at Kampung Selamat in Sepanggar and would be extended to several villages in the Sandakan district, including Kampung Delima in Sepanggar,” he added.

Dr Joachim said all these initiatives did not mean the government was encouraging the growth of squatter settlements, but were interim steps to help reduce the frequency of supply disruptions to legitimate premises in surrounding areas.



AT THE STATE ASSEMBLY