



ABB: S'wak's green energy ambitions on the right track

Sentiment	Positive	Frequency	Daily
Outlet Country	Malaysia	Outlet Language	English
Impressions	124,816	Circulation	62,408
PR Value	37,445	Page	20

Page Location



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KUCHING: ABB, a global technology company with over 140 years of history, is ready to play a role in advancing Sarawak's green energy ambitions through its expertise in automation, electrification, and digital solutions.

With a vast portfolio spanning electrical switchgear, distributed control systems, measurement analytics, and robotics, ABB brings a wealth of knowledge to energy sectors including oil, gas, chemicals, power, and water.

Its experience in hydrogen energy solutions further strengthens its role in Sarawak's renewable energy aspirations.

In 2022, Australia became the first nation to export liquid hydrogen, with ABB playing a crucial role in the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain (HESC) pilot.

The company provided engineering and project management support, overseeing the liquefaction of hydrogen at the Port of Hastings in Victoria before its shipment to Kobe, Japan.

Similarly, Sarawak has made significant strides in developing a hydrogen economy, with major projects centred around the Sarawak Hydrogen Hub in Bintulu and the Rembus Depot near Kuching.

The Hornbill Project, a collaboration between SEDC Energy, Japan's Eneos, and Sumitomo Corp, aims to build two hydrogen plants. Meanwhile, the Hibiscus Project, in partnership with South Korea's Samsung Engineering, Fosco, and Lotte Chemical, focuses on developing hydrogen derivative production facilities.

These initiatives are expected to produce up to 240,000 tonnes of green hydrogen annually, solidifying Sarawak's position as one of the world's leading clean energy producers.

ABB vice president of energy industries of Southeast Asia, Abhinav Hari Kumar, said Sarawak is progressing in the right direction and expressed confidence in the state's approach.

"The energy transition ambitions of the Sarawak government is very much in line with global trends. The goals of decarbonisation, cleaner energy, and economic growth through job creation are shared worldwide," he told The Borneo Post in an exclusive interview.

While acknowledging the complexity of the transition, he emphasised the need to capitalise on existing opportunities while investing in future energy solutions.

"Energy transition is not easy, but it is happening. The question is whether the pace is fast enough. We can always move quicker, but what matters is ensuring we capitalise on current opportunities while developing future energy sources."

"We have to be open for new solutions and work together to make this happen," he said.

Hari Kumar noted that Sarawak's renewable energy potential, strategically located in Borneo, has attracted growing



Hari Kumar (left) speaks to The Borneo Post.

interest from international partners.

"There is significant interest from Japanese and Korean partners in cross-border collaborations. The opportunity here is immense, with the potential for world-leading projects. It has been exciting to see what's possible," he said.

ABB's Role in Advancing Sarawak's Hydrogen Value Chain and Energy Efficiency

On ABB's role in Sarawak's green energy initiatives, Hari Kumar highlighted the company's ability to provide end-to-end solutions across the hydrogen value chain, from production and storage to shipping and re-gasification.

He noted that ABB's integrated offerings in automation, electrical products, and digital solutions could optimise plant design and reduce energy consumption, a crucial factor for large-scale hydrogen production.

He said this is where ABB can make a real impact by driving energy consumption as low as possible. Its technology and expertise could optimise processes and help hydrogen producers reduce costs while maintaining efficiency.

"That's where we think we can play a role," he said.

In 2023, ABB Malaysia Sdn Bhd signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation (MGTC) to accelerate energy efficiency efforts.

The MoU aligns with the government's target of achieving an average of 21 per cent energy savings by 2030 under the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR).

Hari Kumar also emphasised the importance of government vision and strong policy support, which he believes Sarawak already demonstrates.

"Different parties must come together to determine what's feasible. It's not just about adding renewables but also optimising current energy usage. For instance, carbon capture and storage (CCS) will play a huge role in the future."

"With Sarawak, we're looking to be a CCS hub. When you've got a hub, you have multiple emitters capturing carbon."

"When storing it underground, it's crucial to understand the quality of the carbon, where it's going, and use that data to drive legislative policies for proper governance."

"This process is complex, and that's where our digital suite comes in. This is what I mean by innovation," he said.

Closing the carbon capture gap

Hari Kumar highlighted carbon capture as a critical area that cannot be overlooked, especially for hard-to-decarbonise industries like cement and steel.

"Industries like cement and steel are essential for producing what we need, and it's difficult to eliminate their emissions entirely."

"That's why carbon capture will play a huge role. If we can capture those emissions, transport them, and store them underground safely — as done in Cleveland — it will be a game changer. We can't afford to ignore this gap," he said.

He stressed that this area will remain vital even as renewable energy adoption increases.

"Renewable energy can be intermittent, but industries like cement and steel need constant power. Safely capturing and storing emissions will be crucial. That's why ABB is heavily investing in carbon capture projects to accelerate progress," he said.

Hari Kumar noted that ABB is fast-tracking momentum with tools like CCS 360, a comprehensive platform for managing Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) projects. The tool provides a complete overview to ensure predictability, maintain availability, and deliver profitability in CCS operations.

Looking ahead, Hari Kumar said ABB's priorities in Sarawak include technology transfer, talent development, and fostering industry collaboration.

"In terms of Sarawak, I'm very excited. We want to bring our latest technology here, get the industry to collaborate, and solve these challenges together."

"We're committed to building local talent, leveraging our global experts, and working with universities to develop the next generation of energy leaders," he said.

Navigating energy transition

via collab, public trust

On the broader energy transition, Hari Kumar highlighted that shifting from fossil fuels to renewables must be a gradual and strategic process.

"Currently, 90 per cent of Malaysia's energy consumption is fossil fuel-based. We can't just turn off that tap overnight. Instead, we need to focus on decarbonising existing operations while gradually scaling up green energy sources," he said.

ABB has already implemented innovative approaches in other markets. In Australia, the company has integrated solar power into oil and gas operations, reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Similarly, projects in the region are bringing onshore green power into floating LNG operations, representing a new way of thinking about energy supply. In Sarawak, the focus is on hydrogen and hydroelectric power that leverages on the state's abundant natural resources.

Hari Kumar also highlighted the importance of public awareness in ensuring a smooth transition.

"Hydrogen is already part of the energy mix today. By 2050, its share could increase significantly."

"As its usage grows and proven designs ensure safety and reliability, public trust will follow. The key is consistent messaging and collaboration between governments, regulators, and industry players," he said.

Addressing public perception and acceptance of renewable energy, Hari Kumar noted that people are eager for greener solutions as the world shifts towards sustainability.

"The energy transition is not just an industry shift but a consumer-driven movement. Public trust will grow as renewable energy adoption increases," he said.

He also underscored the need for a unified approach to communication.

"We need to ensure a consistent message by working with governments, regulators, and industry partners. Bringing the public into these discussions as we scale up is essential."

"True collaboration — involving every part of the community — is key to making the transition a reality. Without that, we risk losing public confidence along the way," he added.