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Handover of electricity powers begin in Sabah

PUTRAJAYA: Brighter days are ahead for Sabah's power producer now that the Federal Government has agreed to a phased handover of regulatory power on Sabah's electricity supply and Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd (SESB) to the state government.

The state's Energy Transition and Public Utilities Ministry said the decision is part of the Federal Government's effort to honour the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63).

Phase one involving regulatory control over the state's power supply came into effect on Jan 3, while the second phase involving SESB is to be completed in 2030.

"This transfer of regulatory power will enable Sabah to plan and implement the development of power supply in the state independently," the ministry said in a statement yesterday, Bernama reported.

The Federal Government, it said, is also prepared to work with and guide the Sabah government if needed.

"With this handover, it is hoped that the Sabah government will always be committed to tackling the power disruption issue in the state and also meeting the increase in demand," the ministry added.

The statement comes following a special sitting of the Sabah assembly on Wednesday, which unanimously passed the Sabah Energy Commission Enactment 2023 (Amendment 2024) Bill, Electricity Supply Enactment Bill 2024, and Sabah Renewable Energy Enactment Bill 2024.

With that, Sabah took back full regulatory authority of its power supply and renewable energy after handing it over to the Federal Government 40 years ago.

In KOTA KINABALU, STEPHANIE LEE reports SESB chief executive officer Mohd Yaakob Jaafar as saying that SESB is not yet owned by Sabah.

He said Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) is still the biggest shareholder while Sabah only owns 17% of the company's shares.

"SESB has not been taken over by the state," he said in a statement yesterday.

Mohd Yaakob noted that it is only the control over the electricity industry in Sabah that has been returned to the state through the Energy Commission of Sabah (ECoS).

He added that SESB is committed to its vision and mission to provide stable and reliable power to the people in Sabah and Labuan at a rational rate.

Mohd Yaakob said SESB is managed by two entities – the Energy Commission of Malaysia

and ECoS.

The takeover of power management by the Sabah government is in line with various efforts to allow the state to be directly involved in the oil and gas industry in Sabah for the benefit its people, he added.

Meanwhile, the Sabah West Coast Smart Consumers Association applauded the return of power-regulating autonomy to Sabah, calling it a historic moment for the state and its people.

Its president David Chan said the issue of Sabah's electricity, oil and gas has been longstanding.

He believes the setting up of ECoS and gradual return of the SESB is timely and will eventually solve power shortage woes in the state.

"In time to come, I believe consumers will benefit from this change," he said in a statement yesterday.