

Headline	Unpaid RM8.3m bill leaves mall in darkness		
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Unpaid RM8.3m bill leaves mall in darkness

KOTA KINABALU — 1Borneo Hypermall suffered a blackout for the second time in three weeks after Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd (SESB) cut off its power supply yesterday because of an unpaid RM8.3 million bill.

A team from SESB disconnected power supply to the mall at 8.30am after the mall management failed to pay the outstanding amount.

The mall trimmed RM700,000 off its electricity bill on June 27 after the first power cut incident a day earlier.

“SESB has cut off the electricity to 1B (mall) after the management still failed to clear its bill. Notices had been issued to them several times,” an SESB spokesperson said.

The action prompted a group of about 30 people to hold a peaceful protest yesterday. They held up placards calling for empathy from SESB and pleaded with the government and their elected representative to intervene and protect their livelihood.

An employee for an international franchise label said her company has been paying management fees on time and pleaded with the company and the government to take that into consideration.

“It is not fair that our livelihood is affected because of someone else’s negligence. We have done our part, but we are still being punished for it. Please consider us too, our jobs are at stake,” the woman, who declined to be named, said.

On June 25, SESB threatened to cut the power to the largest mall in East Malaysia after it failed to

settle its debts of RM9.3 million accumulated over a year.

When no payment was made two days later, SESB disconnected the power to the building’s chillers, affecting the central air conditioning of the mall, but leaving the lights on, “for the sake of the employees”.

After negotiating, SESB reconnected the electricity supply at about noon when the management settled the current monthly bill of about RM700,000.

“However, since then, no payment has been made,” said the SESB source.

It was learnt that the mall’s management was in talks with SESB to settle a portion of the bill.

The mall’s operations director K.K. Tham criticised SESB for going public with the issue and affecting its potential investors.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal said the state government would not interfere.

However, he urged the mall to pay the fee in instalments so as not to affect SESB’s operations in Sabah.