



13 JAN, 2026

Round-the-clock renewables could support data centres in Malaysia – IRENA

Borneo Post (Kuching), Malaysia



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ABU DHABI: Round-the-clock (RTC) renewable energy (RE) solutions could support growing power needs of Malaysia's data centres, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

IRENA director of engineering Dr Ibraheem Almansouri said the concept is highly relevant for sectors that depend on uninterrupted power, such as data centres, because no specific RTC project has been announced so far.

"RTC solutions can enable such facilities to be located more flexibly, leveraging lower-cost RE while maintaining reliability," he told Bernama on the sidelines of the IRENA Assembly held in conjunction with Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week 2026.

RTC solutions refer to a continuous 24-hour supply of clean electricity achieved through a combination of solar and wind power, energy storage, and smart grid management.

Dr Ibraheem also said Malaysia is a strategic market for the group, reflecting its growing electricity demand, strong industrial base and rising need for reliable and affordable power supply.

"We are already engaging in projects that require firm and reliable renewable power supply, including private off-take arrangements, and we remain committed to expanding our footprint in Malaysia," he said.

It was reported last November that Malaysia's data centre market is on track to become one of Asia-Pacific's largest, with total capacity expected to more than quadruple beyond 2026.

Demand is currently driven by cloud computing and data storage, with artificial intelligence (AI)-related workloads expected to accelerate growth further.

He also said the group recently signed power purchase agreements (PPAs) and memoranda of understanding in Malaysia, and is participating actively in competitive auctions alongside local developers.

"We are deploying large-scale RE projects, including at the gigawatt level, to support economic growth, sustainability objectives and reliable power supply," he said.

He was referring to Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company's (Masdar) first Malaysian project announced in December,

following a PPA signing to develop a 200-megawatt (MW) floating solar photovoltaic (PV) project at Chereh Dam in Pahang.

The project will be developed by a Masdar-led consortium with Malaysian partners Citaglobal Bhd and Tiza Global Sdn Bhd, with the PPA signed with Tenaga Nasional Bhd. The Chereh Dam facility is expected to become Southeast Asia's largest floating solar project when operational.

On the steps Malaysia needs to take to move towards RTC solutions, Dr Ibraheem said the main challenge lies not in technology but in institutional readiness, particularly the mindset of grid operators and planners.

"The success of the RTC project in the United Arab Emirates was driven by strong alignment across the ecosystem, including close coordination between the developer, the procurer and key national stakeholders.

"This level of coordination, shared vision, and commitment is essential, as RTC projects cannot be implemented in silos. They require collective effort and buy-in across the entire energy value chain," he said. — Bernama