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B. Grimm urges faster Asean energy integration



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KUALA LUMPUR: The groundwork for Asean energy integration has long been laid, but sharper focus and faster action are needed to propel renewable energy to the next level by harnessing each member's strengths, said B. Grimm Power Public Company Ltd.

B. Grimm, a multinational conglomerate rooted in Thailand for 147 years, has a strong footing in Asean, with operations in the Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos.

B. Grimm chairman and chief executive officer, Datuk Seri Harald Link, pointed out that Laos has vast hydropower resources, while Malaysia has abundant solar power potential, both of which should be tapped further by establishing a stronger interconnected grid from diverse sources.

"When you look at the Asean grid, each country has different strengths. Laos, for example, is the only country in the region with abundant hydropower potential. So, it makes sense for Laos to capitalise on that by exporting electricity to Thailand, Malaysia and even Singapore, and earn revenue in the process. But for that to happen, the grid needs to be in place, and the interconnections must be upgraded," he told Bernama recently.

The interview was held after Link was awarded the Sri Sultan Ahmad Shah Pahang (SSAP), which carries the title "Datuk Seri", in conjunction with the 66th birthday of the Sultan of Pahang at Balai Mahkota, Istana Abdulaziz, on July 28, 2025.

The Thailand-Peninsular Malaysia interconnection was established and has been in service since June 2002, with a 300 MW capacity and was constructed to connect Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia via a grid-to-grid 300 kV HVDC overhead transmission line.

The existing interconnection spans around 110 km from a substation in Khlong Ngae, Thailand, to Gurun East in Malaysia, which Link described as being "a very old line."

Commenting on Malaysia's role in pushing for an interconnection grid upgrade, Link highlighted that Malaysia's Energy Transition and Water Transformation Ministry (PETRA) is pushing hard for the interconnection grid upgrade. "B. Grimm has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with TNB, which will purchase hydropower from Laos through us to Malaysia, but that MOU is waiting for the Asean grid or Thailand-Malaysia grid to be upgraded," Link said.

In 2023, TNB signed deals with three major energy players in Thailand to develop regional infrastructure for RE.

TNB, through its subsidiary, TNB Power Generation Sdn Bhd, partnered with B.Grimm to look into opportunities for collaboration for the development of renewable power projects in Southeast Asia.

Across Asean, B. Grimm's footprint is visible; it operates solar farms in the Philippines and Vietnam.

B. Grimm built the largest solar farm in Southeast Asia in 2018, alongside a distribution network. In Cambodia, B.Grimm partnered with Chinese state-owned contractors and constructed a second solar farm. In Laos, B.Grimm operates three hydropower plants, contributing to the country's RE mix.

On the Asean energy mix, Link has proposed to build many hydro plants in Laos and set up a grid to transmit that power, even to Malaysia. "It makes more sense to buy the power rather than generate it locally if you don't have the resources yourself. At the same time, I would also strongly develop solar farms, because solar energy is something Malaysia has and it's free," he added.

All in all, Link reckons that the Asean Economic Community Plan should bring real benefits to the member countries, with the free movement of people and money, as well as no territorial conflict.

"Like in the European Union (EU), citizens didn't care if they were in Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, or France; they could move freely, find jobs, and live wherever they wanted.

"Lesser developed countries received central funding. Portugal, for example, used to be very poor, but received a lot of money from Brussels. You might get the occasional disagreement, but nothing destructive.

"The European Union has been a great peacemaker. Asean should aim for the same. So yes, I truly believe these unions, whether Asean or the EU, bring real benefits for every single person," he concluded. – Bernama