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KUALA LUMPUR: Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) has called for deeper regional cooperation among Asean utilities to harmonise regulations, modernise grids, and strengthen collective efforts towards a just and sustainable energy transition.

TNB president and chief executive officer Datuk Megat Jalaluddin Megat Hassan said Asean's power sector has two noble objectives, namely to support the energy transition while ensuring the region's economies continue to grow sustainably.

"Asean has two noble objectives. One is to address the energy transition while making sure that the economy powered by the power sector will continue to grow.

"The second objective is that while growing, we have to address sustainability," he told Bernama in an interview on the sidelines of the Asean Energy Business Forum 2025 here.

Megat Jalaluddin said all Asean member states have made firm commitments to the energy transition, including Malaysia through its National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR), with TNB playing a key role as the main industry driver.

"Tenaga Nasional, as the main player in the industry, will fully support this so-called NETR as a national objective, and we believe that the objective provides clarity on how we want to move forward," he added.

Megat Jalaluddin said Asean countries can leverage existing collaborative platforms, such as the Heads of Asean Power Utilities/Authorities (HAPUA), to strengthen joint system planning.

He noted that the first key step the region needs is to establish Asean collaboration on power industry system planning.

"With this platform, Asean can achieve the trilemma objectives of ensuring security of supply, affordability, and sustainability," Megat Jalaluddin said.

He noted that modernising the regional power grid would require collective technology adoption and innovation sharing to create economies of scale.

"We can start thinking about how we use artificial intelligence (AI) for the power industry, and these AI-driven tools can be developed and shared across the Asean region," he said.

However, Megat Jalaluddin cautioned that regulatory differences remain a major challenge.

"Each country has its own regulations. So, the first key element of the challenge is that we will have to harmonise the regulations among Asean countries," he said.

Megat Jalaluddin added that defining projects of common interest, encouraging cross-border investment confidence, and establishing a single commercial hub for power trading are essential next steps.

"We have to have concurrence that if we can plan for a project, for example, the Asean Power Grid, that shares the same interests with other countries, then the project can proceed. Otherwise, it will not go through," he said.

He also noted the need to create a conducive investment climate to ensure funders and investors are confident of long-term returns, regardless of where they invest in Asean projects.

On financing, Megat Jalaluddin said there is no scarcity of funds for Asean energy projects, but issues of affordability and equity must be addressed.

"We are not seeing any scarcity of funders. But it is a question of who is going to pay for it. The costs of energy are not the same across Asean, so it is more about who can pay for the energy, especially green energy," he said.

Megat Jalaluddin added that a just energy transition must be established, in which the population of Asean would be accorded equitable participation in the process. — Bernama