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## Power supply in Sabah to be more stabilised by mid-year

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Sabah can expect a more stabilised electricity supply after the completion of a 100 megawatts (MW) Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) by middle of this year.

Located on 3.8 acres of land at Dam Road in Lahad Datu, the BESS, consisting of 188 units, also has a 400 megawatt-hours (MWh) which could strengthen Sabah's power grid and supply reliable power to consumers.

According to Energy Commission of Sabah (ECoS) Chief Executive Officer Datuk Ir. Abdul Nasser Abdul Wahid, the BESS project in Lahad Datu can be considered one of the largest in Southeast Asia.

"The BESS project is important as it could enhance Sabah's grid capacity which is currently below 30 per cent.

"With the completion of this project, we can increase the reserve margin or generation reserve margin to at least 25 per cent," he said during a two-day visit to critical energy related projects in the East Coast from Feb 17 to 18.

Among the projects visited are the BESS project in Lahad Datu, Biomass power plant in Kunak, Serudong power plant in Tawau, and Libaran power plant and Ulu Sibuga PPU both in Sandakan.

Abdul Nasser said the BESS project by Elopura Power and Sabah Electricity began early this year and is expected to be completed by June 30 this year.

The whole project cost below

RM700 million with each battery unit costing around RM2 million, he said.

"The life of the battery is around 21 years but we have designed the battery in such a way that when it starts to degrade through time, it could still generate 100mw/400mwh for 21 years," he said.

The BESS is also environmentally friendly as it uses solar energy, a move which would see Sabah moving towards cleaner energy solutions as it reduced the use of diesel.

The project also complied with both international and local standards, including the Sabah Grid Code with a factory test scheduled in February 2025, said Abdul Nasser.

"The use of batteries is not something new as this technology is proven and has been successfully used in Sarawak and Singapore for several years.

"Once this project is completed, it will be the largest BEES project in Southeast Asia, although not the first but the largest," he said.

Meanwhile, Abdul Nasser said to stabilise Sabah's power grid, ECoS has rolled out a series of interim fast-track measures which includes extending diesel power plant operations and renting additional diesel generator sets (gensets) to keep up with rising electricity demand.

Among the solutions is the extension of operation of the Libaran power plant in Sandakan, which is operated by Independent Power Producer

(IPP) Eden Inc. under Stratavest Sdn Bhd.

The 45MW power plant has been in operation since 1998 and will continue using medium fuel oil under a contract extension for two years until 2027.

"The extending operation of the Libaran power plant is one of the fastest interim solutions we can implement as the power plant is already in operation. It allows us to address demand quickly while we work on long-term solutions," said Abdul Nasser.

Similarly, the Serudong power plant in Tawau, which generates 33MW and rental diesel gensets with a capacity of 90MW, has its operational extended for another two more years.

Abdul Nasser said such measures are crucial to ensure enough electricity supply is provided to consumers especially during dry season which would see an increase in electricity consumption.

While the east coast relies on natural gas such as medium fuel oil and diesel, he said the west coast has the advantage of available gas resources, namely rental gas turbines as a cost-effective alternative.

"Unfortunately, the east coast does not have access to natural gas so we rely on medium fuel oil and diesel.

"Although diesel and medium fuel oil are more costly, we ensure

that the usage is at its minimal and only when necessary such as during peak hours, which is around eight hours a day," he said.

These interim measures,



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said Abdul Nasser, would help improve Sabah's electricity reserve margin which was below 10 per cent last year to currently at 15 per cent.

ECoS is also aiming to raise the reserve margin to 25 per cent by mid-year through a combination of short-term fixes and long-term infrastructure projects.

Another temporary approach to increase electricity generation while permanent projects are being completed is the Ulu Sibuga Main Distribution Substation (PPU) in Sandakan.

The Ulu Sibuga PPU, which is one of five main distribution substations in Sabah, and owned by Sabah Electricity as an injection point, is run by rental diesel gensets with a capacity of 25MW.

The other four PPU's are located in Mowtas, Seguntor and Labuk in Sandakan, and one in Labuan. All five PPU's collectively supply up to 90MW of electricity.

Abdul Nasser said these are among the fastest and most effective interim solutions ECoS is taking as it waits for longer-term projects, such as gas-fired power plants and renewable energy developments, to be completed.

"This is the quickest and most effective method to stabilise electricity power supply for now and once permanent solutions are completed, such as natural gas power plants in the west coast, then the two-year interim measures will be phased out," he said.

Abdul Nasser added that ECoS is taking several proactive steps to avoid power disruption while at the same time to resolve issues as quickly as possible to ensure sufficient power for future demand.

"What is important right now is to solve the problem we are currently facing as soon as possible before we implement a permanent solution that is more optimal.

"ECoS is committed to ensuring Sabah's power supply is stable for our consumers, businesses and investors," he said.



Abdul Nasser (second right) and ECoS team visiting the BESS in Lahad Datu.