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Sabah aims 80pc renewable energy

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah aims to shift from a gas-dependent energy mix, currently 80 per cent, to 80pc renewable energy (RE) by 2050.

Energy Commission of Sabah (ECoS) CEO Datuk Ir Abdul Nasser Abdul Wahid (pic) said flagship projects like the 100MW/400MWh Battery Energy Storage System (Bess) in Lahad Datu, set to be Southeast Asia's largest, would help stabilise the grid and support solar integration when it begins operations in July 2025.

Nasser was presenting Sabah's energy transition roadmap at the Energy Asia 2025 conference in Kuala Lumpur during a high-level panel titled "Energising Malaysia's Growth."

He joined a distinguished panel of industry leaders, namely Dato' Hamzah Hussin, CEO of Sustainable Energy Development Authority (Seda) Malaysia; Datuk Ir Megat Jalaluddin Megat Hassan, President and CEO of Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB); and Ir James Ung Sing Kwong, Group COO of Sarawak Energy Berhad.

Together, they discussed Malaysia's bold journey toward a greener, more sustainable energy future.

Nasser outlined Sabah's ambition for a cleaner, more resilient and inclusive energy system, guided by the Sabah Energy Roadmap and Master Plan 2040 (Se-Ramp 2040).

Established under the 2023 Gas Supply and 2024 Electricity Supply Enactments, ECoS, under the Chief Minister's portfolio,

regulates electricity and onshore gas in Sabah, overseeing power planning, licensing and rural electrification.

Nasser said this autonomy allows Sabah to tailor energy development to local needs, targeting full rural access by 2030, a SAIDI below 100 minutes by 2030 and maintain carbon neutrality by mid-century and beyond.

To improve energy security, Sabah's reserve margin is expected to exceed 25pc by Q3 2025 through three fast-tracked projects - the interim rental diesel (which was commissioned early this year) and subsequent completion of Lahad Datu Bess and a 100MW interim gas plant in Kimanis.

To maintain the healthy reserve margin for the next five years, new power plants projects have been approved which comprise mixtures of natural gas power plants in Kimanis and renewables mainly from solar and hydro plants.

Sabah is diversifying its energy mix with 826MW of solar targeted by 2030 and over 1,500MW of identified hydropower. The State is also actively exploring bio-mass, geothermal, wind and frontier technologies such as Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) and Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), backed by enabling legislation.

Sabah supports regional power integration via the Asean Power Grid, with the commissioning of Sabah/Sarawak inter-connection by end of this year and further strengthening the transmission backbone

through the Southern Link 275kV Transmission Line Project which will provide another link of its east and west coasts for better grid resilient, enable efficient cross-border trade and unlock hydropower potential.

However, tariff and subsidy challenges persist. The average tariff has remained at 34.5 sen/kWh since 2014, requiring over RM700 million in subsidies in 2025. ECoS is pursuing a sustainable tariff model, leveraging the ICPT framework to gradually phase out subsidies.

Despite global infrastructure supply constraints, Nasser reaffirmed Sabah's commitment to its energy goals, citing the formation of an intervention committee for accelerating rural electrification and a coordinating committee for hydro development.

"With strong policies, robust infrastructure, and investor-ready frameworks, Sabah is on track to meet Se-Ramp 2040," said Nasser.

"Our journey is not just about more power, it's about a just transition and inclusive energy for all."