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Sabah Electricity chairman to sue over bribery claim

Borneo Post (KK), Malaysia



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KOTA KINABALU: Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau has threatened to take action against a news portal for alleging that he had received bribes in relation to a multi-million Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project in Lahad Datu.

"Whoever the owner of this portal is, stop 'throwing rocks while hiding your hand' and say it to Sabah Electricity's face.

"If you don't amend what was written, especially the reckless allegations that I had received bribes, we will take action.

"I give you 14 days to amend the article," Madius told reporters after officiating Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd's (SESB) rebranding ceremony at the Employees' Provident Fund building near Sadong Jaya here on Friday.

SESB is now rebranded as Sabah Electricity.

Madius, who is the Sabah Electricity chairman, was referring to an article published by The Malaysia Corporate on Monday, which alleged that Madius, who was described as anti-Malaya, had backtracked and suddenly supported a Peninsular company which had won the tender for the RM645 million project.

The article, which had also named a prominent leader from Sabah's opposition side, implied that during the eight months taken in deciding the tender winner, there was a big possibility that the Tuaran Member of Parliament had received bribes in exchange for his lobby for the company.

Madius said he made his public threat as he feared that the article would negatively sway public perception and possibly derail the BESS project, which when completed can add

around 100 MegaWatts (mW) in generation capacity.

He stressed that the success of the BESS project is of utmost importance as it would allow Sabah Electricity's reserve margin to reach 20 per cent, reducing load shedding and electricity rationing throughout the state.

Coupled with their combined-cycle, gas turbine power plant project in Kimanis, which would add another 100mW, they hope to reach 30 per cent reserve margin, eliminating load shedding in Sabah, he added.

"The Sabah Electricity board in September last year had decided to open the tender process for the BESS project in November.

"Of course, the decision was guided by the government, the Energy Commission of Sabah (ECoS).

"We did not simply make a decision. This was with the approval of the government," he said.

Madius said 21 companies had taken part in the initial tender briefing.

He stressed that it was a stringent process as all the participating companies had to have at least RM5 million in paid-up capital, and "we did not just allow any Tom, Dick and Harry to participate".

This left six serious participating companies which went through another analysis by Sabah Electricity and eventually, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB), he said.

Ultimately, he said the power to decide on the winning company was in the hands of TNB as projects costing more than RM100 million was above his side.

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5 committees involved in consideration for tender

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"And as we know, TNB is a listed company, so they have to go through the governance of listed companies.

"I was told that at least five committees were involved in the consideration for the tender, so it took a very long time for them to decide, and it was only decided last August.

"Once it was decided by TNB and then went down to us, all the necessary processes of appointing were carried out.

"And now, we are looking forward for the winner of this bid to implement the project. If

everything goes smoothly, it is expected to be completed latest by June next year.

"That is why from now until June is a very critical time for Sabah Electricity, and we do not really want to focus on such allegations," he said.

The 100mW Lahad Datu BESS project includes a 400 megawatt-hour (MWh) energy storage facility, touted to be the largest such facility in Southeast Asia.

It is not only expected to increase the reserve margin capacity of the Sabah Grid during peak periods, but also support the addition of solar energy sources, specifically

large scale solar (LSS).

Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan) vice-president Datuk Junz Wong had previously raised questions on the transparency and decision-making process in the awarding of the project to a Peninsular-based firm, alleging that the award was over RM100 million the anticipated cost.

Junz, in response to Madius telling him to stop politicking the issue, had defended that questioning the integrity of a multi-million ringgit public tender is not politicisation but rather, it is part of his duty as a representative of the people.