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Bakun dam project in full swing

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BAKUN, Sat. - Despite coming under negative international scrutiny, the Bakun hydro-electric dam project seems to be progressing remarkably well.

With 80 per cent of the first phase of construction already completed, the dam project is in full swing. This against a backdrop of rumours on delays and financing problems.

Yesterday, a group of reporters got a closer look at the dam's progress during a media tour of the construction site, situated at the Balui river.

The project's first construction phase, which started 14 months ago, involves the construction of three 1.5-kilometre tunnels to divert the Balui river so that a 205-metre high concrete dam could be built.

The huge tunnels which ploughs through a hill has a diameter of 12 metres each. When completed, the waters of the Balui river will race through the tunnels at a velocity of 8,000 cubic metres per second.

After the media tour, Ekran Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing said negative reports and rumours on the Bakun project should now be put aside.

"I think you can write the actual fact of what is going on here," Ting told reporters. "You can see that whatever negative reports there are on the Bakun project can be solved after what you have seen at the site."

Echoing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement, Ting said the Bakun project was a national project.

"I have told many journalists that this is a national project, it is not a Ting Pek Khiing project. I cannot pay for the project," he said. "I do not need the project for myself but this is for Malaysia."

The project is being developed on a build-operate-transfer basis by Bakun Hydro-electric Corporation, a single-purpose company led by its major shareholder Ekran Bhd and five other parties.

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