

05 SEP 1997

EKRAN GIVEN GREENLIGHT TO PICK NEW PARTNER FOR BAKUN EPC CONTRACT

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 5 (Bernama) -- Ekran Bhd has been given the greenlight to pick a new partner for the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract of Bakun Hydroelectric Corporation (BHC) project, following the termination of its negotiation with the ABB-CBPO consortium.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said: "Ekran has decided to terminate negotiations with ABB, and it has to find another partner.

"We (the government) have given Ekran the right to make the decision," he told a press conference at the end of the first day of the UMNO General Assembly here.

On talks that Ekran had found a big local EPC partner in the now deferred RM13.6 billion dam project, Mahathir said: "We do not comment on rumours."

Yesterday, Ekran Bhd announced that it has not been able to reach an agreement with the Asea Brown Boveri-Companhia Brasileira de Projectos Obras (ABB-CBPO) consortium on the contract to develop the multi-billion ringgit power project in Sarawak.

With an agreement no longer possible, it has to "make other arrangements for completing the project, its executive chairman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing said. This means it has to find another company to undertake the project.

At another function, Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie told newsmen that the government would not get involved in choosing the new contractor as it was a private sector project.

"Obviously, BHC would decide who the contractor should be, we (the government) really don't know ... it's up to the developer," he told reporters here today after witnessing the signing of an agreement between P.E. Corrugated Duct Manufacturing Sdn Bhd and Rieckermann (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd.

The project is being undertaken by Bakun Hydroelectric Company (BHEC), with Ekran holding a 32 percent stake in it, the Sarawak government 19 percent, Sarawak Electricity Supply nine percent, Tenaga Nasional Bhd and the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), five percent each and the public 25 percent. -- BERNAMA

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