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Slight delay won't hurt Sarawak: Taib

A SLIGHT delay in the construction of the Bakun Hydroelectric Dam project will not be detrimental to the country, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said yesterday.

Ekran Bhd on Thursday had terminated its engineering, procurement and construction contract with Asea Brown Boveri-Companhia Brasileira de Projectos Obras (ABB-CBPO) consortium for the RM13.05 billion dam project after protracted negotiations failed to resolve their differences.

"It is all right if it is rescheduled. Its construction can be adjusted. To me, a slight delay is not a big problem," he said.

Abdul Taib spoke to reporters after the opening of the 51st Umno General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is Umno president, had earlier opened the three-day assembly.

He said even the Prime Minister on Thursday had said that certain mega projects may have to be delayed due to the unfavourable economic situation now.

"So it should be okay if there is a little delay in the construction of the dam," he said.

Abdul Taib said any delay in the construction of the dam would not affect the electricity supply in the state.

"We have made our own arrangements to ensure we have sufficient supply for the state in the next few years. After all, Sarawak will only take about 100MW of the electricity to be generated by the Bakun dam," he said.

Asked whether he would meet the other parties in the consortium on the next course of action, Abdul Taib said details are still being worked out.

"It is a national project and as such we should all give it due importance," he added.

In a statement to the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, Ekran executive chairman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing said: "After 10 months, it is now clear that the parties to the EPC contract are so far apart on these points that an agreement between Bakun Hydroelectric Corp Bhd and the ABB-CBPO consortium is no longer possible."

The dam is expected to provide 1,800MW electricity to Tenaga Nasional's grid by the year 2003.

Dr Mahathir on Thursday had said that there was a possibility that certain projects launched recently will be delayed due to the current depreciation of the ringgit against the US dollar.

However, he singled out the KL International Airport, saying that it would be completed on schedule.

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