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Blackout `more severe' than 1996 national power outage

MALACCA, Sat. - The power failure affecting several States on Wednesday was Pmore serious than the one which occurred nationwide on Aug 3, 1996, Tenaga Nasional Berhad executive chairman Datuk Dr Ahmad Tajuddin Ali said today.

However, despite its magnitude and severity, Tenaga managed to restore supply to all affected areas within a few hours.

"Following the national blackout in 1996, we had made several major and systematic changes ... in fact this process is still being carried out on our systems and overall operations.

"This is why we have been able to control the severity of disturbance from getting out of hand," he said.

While saying that Tenaga was still looking into the cause of the power tripping, Ahmad Tajuddin said he did not rule out sabotage.

"This possibility however is very remote but because it happened during the Apec forum, we still have to look into it. We are keeping it open."

Tenaga is also looking into other "natural factors" like weather variation in its investigation.

Ahmad Tajuddin said he had briefed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the Nov 18 blackout yesterday.

"Dr Mahathir understands it (the problem) well and I have also submitted the recommendations to contain the problem."

Among others, he said Tenaga's generation line of 500kv capacity at Air Tawar, Batu Gajah and Port Klang would be "re-energised".

For a start, the line would be energised at 275kv.

The blackout, which started at 1.10pm, hit 15 per cent of the areas in Kedah, Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu, five per cent in Perak, 90 per cent in Selangor and Malacca, and 30 per cent in Johor.

Supply to 80 per cent of the affected areas was brought back in less than two hours after the blackout.

By 4.15pm, supply was back to normal in all the States.

"We took a few hours to mount load shedding of 2,700 megawatts unlike during the national blackout where it took us about 16 hours to load 2,300 megawatts," he said after presenting excellence service and recognition awards to about 300 staff and retirees.

A preliminary report has been submitted by Tenaga's investigation team formed to check on the cause of the breakdown.

According to the report, power tripping occurred due to some "disturbances" on its 275kv power generation line between the Batu Gajah, Perak, main intake and northern Kuala Lumpur.

"The tripping caused insulation and unbalance in our relay system. Furthermore, more pressure had to be given to areas where the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) forum was being held. This had more or less resulted in 90 per cent of the areas in Malacca experiencing a blackout."

Ahmad Tajuddin said recovery took only a few hours as Tenaga's automatic load shedding protection regime would automatically reduce loadings at certain areas, thus increasing the pressure and relaying excessive supply to the affected areas.

"Recovery is by design and based on an islanded mode.

"This enables restoration of supply to be done quite fast," he added.

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