

24/10/2000

Bakun project will go on, says PM

BANTING, Mon. - The Government will continue with the Bakun hydroelectric dam project but has yet to decide whether to undertake a full-scale revival, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We are going to revive the project, but whether in the full-scale or not, we have not decided," Dr Mahathir told a Press conference after officiating Megasteel Sdn Bhd's steel mill here today.

The Prime Minister was asked about the status of the project which was put on hold following the 1997 economic downturn.

"We have spent quite a lot of money for the various requirements of the project, and if we don't continue, we will allow a lot of money to be wasted.

"And the demand for electricity is mounting very rapidly in this country."

The Bakun dam project was taken over by the Finance Ministry Inc from the Bakun Hydroelectric Corporation in August last year.

Since then, the project has been downsized in terms of its electricity generating capacity to 500 megawatt (MW), from an original plan of 2,400MW.

In its original full-scale proposal, the project was projected to have cost RM13.5 billion, including the laying of undersea supply cables from Sarawak to Peninsular Malaysia.

Recently, Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr George Chan was quoted as saying that the State had requested the Federal Government to continue with the project in its original scale.

Asked by a foreign journalist when a decision would be made on the matter, Dr Mahathir replied: "In deference to comments from the Press on the matter, we are a bit slow in deciding, but we want you to support us."

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