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Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	18/7/2013

PAGE 26 | NEW STRAITS TIMES

NATION

Ministry looking to end power problem in Sabah

NST - 18/7/2013

THREE ISSUES: Generation, transmission, distribution in urgent need of solving

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THE Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry is committed to enhancing power generation in Sabah within the next decade, said its minister, Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili.

This follows Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's directive to solve the power supply problem in the state.

"Any financial requirement, if justified, will be approved to en-

sure the goal is met," he said at the Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd (SESB) breaking of fast event here on Tuesday.

Ongkili said the utility company had been told come up with better mechanisms to improve power supply.

"To reduce the System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI), there is an urgent need to solve three issues — power generation, transmission and distribution."

For the past three years, SESB had spent some half a billion ringgit to reduce SAIDI in the state.

The minister said the revenue collection from its present tariff in Sabah covered 80 per cent of the company's expenses, while the rest was subsidised by its parent company, Tenaga Nasional Berhad.

"Another problem is the open and uncoated power cables which makes it more vulnerable to power disruptions.

"It takes only one bird landing on the cable to cause major power failure," he said, adding about 80 per cent of cables here were uncoated.

He said power seepage in the

state covered about two per cent, which translated to about RM50 million in expenses for repair works.

Ongkili had proposed to the Federal Government that it re-strategise power development plans in state after projects, such as the coal power plant in Lahad Datu, was scrapped following protests.

The minister is expected to head to Tawau at the end of the month to visit the Kubota power plant and geo-thermal plants, and meet with the business community there.