KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

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Hydroelectric dams huge revenue earners

KUCHING: The construction of mega hydroelectric dams in the state such as Bakun, Murum, and Baleh, which is being built, have not been in vain as they have proven to be huge revenue generators for the state government through electricity for export and domestic use.

Sarawak Utilities Minister Datuk Seri Dr Stephen Rundi Utom said about 98% of the population is able to receive 24-hour electricity supply via the two dams and other channels, including solar energy under the Sarawak Rural Alternative Electricity Supply Scheme.

He said Sarawak currently supplies electricity to Sabah and Kalimantan in Indonesia, while talks with Brunei are ongoing to supply energy to the country.

"I heard news that Singapore is also applying, and if this is so, we need more energy production. So it has not been a fruitless pursuit because there is cash flowing into the government's coffers," he told Bernama.

The Sarawak state government had taken full ownership of the Bakun hydroelectric plant, which began operating in 2011, from the federal government to generate hydropower income.

Bakun is capable of producing between 1,700 megawatts (MW) to 2,110MW of electricity while the Murum hydroelectric dam, which started operating in 2015, is capable of producing between 635MW and 944MW.

The construction of the third hydroelectric power station in Sarawak, namely the Baleh hydroelectric dam in Kapit, which started in 2018, is expected to generate up to 1,285MW when operational in 2026.

The plant is expected to further strengthen Sarawak's efforts to develop renewable energy resources to meet the demand for energy from domestic industries and neighbouring countries.

Earlier, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abang Johari Abang Openg said Sarawak Energy Bhd is exploring the potential of the hydroelectric power dams in the state to generate energy from hydropower and solar power through floating solar panels in the dams.