

## **Bakun Dam to become a restricted area**

BAKUN: The Bakun Hydroelectric Dam will soon become a restricted area once the government gazettes it as a high security zone, reveals Sarawak Hidro managing director cum chief executive officer Zulkifle Osman.

He said the decision by the government would be known "in a month or two".

The two main sites which will be gazetted soon will be the main dam area especially the powerhouse and the switchyard that is considered as the nerve centre.

"As such we need to improve an alternative access road which is currently a logging road so that the people will not use the present access road that passes through the switchyard area," said Zulkifle during his briefing on Bakun Dam's overall performance to Tourism Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg here Tuesday night.

The alternative access road is about 10km long. While he said Sarawak Hidro could assist in providing culverts and bridges, it would not be able to improve the condition of the logging road, as it is not within its scope and jurisdiction of works.

Meanwhile, Abang Johari said the state cabinet would convene a meeting soon to mitigate the issue so that it would not deprive the local people access to the landing point in the lake. The landing point in the lake is the only way for the locals both from Sg Asap Resettlement Scheme, located some 60km from the dam site, and those living upriver to reach their respective destinations.

In response, Abang Johari said he would not be able to provide the detail of the plan as it is under the purview of the chief minister who is also the minister in-charge of planning. On another issue, Zulkifle said he was worried about the lack of monitoring in the sale of fuel and waste management in the lake area.

He also stressed that there should be a body to monitor the environment in the lake to prevent oil spill as it could endanger the sensitive parts of the dam's hydroelectric components especially its powerhouse.

"There is also a need for a proper waste management and waste disposal from the 'jelatongs' in the lake area so that we can always maintain the ecstatic beauty of the lake," said Zulkifle.

A 'jelatong' is a floating house where its owner could use it as storage place for fishing and hunting equipmen