

16 JULY 2001

Parliament-Debate

ALLOW COUNCIL HEADS TO CUT OFF POWER SUPPLY TO GAMBLING DENS, GOVT TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, July 16 (Bernama) -- A backbencher today urged the government to extend the powers to local authority heads and district officers to cut off power supply to premises using illegal slot machines for gambling activities.

Chang See Ten (BN-Gelang Patah) said the move was necessary for effective law enforcement against the rampant use of illegal slot machines in the country.

In this regard, Section 38 (1)(a) of the Bill needs to be reviewed as it only empowered a police officer with the rank of not below an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) to disconnect electricity supply to such premises, he said when debating the Electricity Supply (Amendment) Bill 2000 in the Dewan Rakyat.

The Bill, among other things, aimed to enhance effective supervision of the power sector, particularly electricity and gas supply.

Deputy Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia Datuk Tan Chai Ho, in tabling the Bill at the Dewan Rakyat today, said with the setting up of the Power Commission as provided for under the Bill, the supervisory powers of the Electricity Supply and Gas Department would be transferred to the commission.

Teresa Kok Suh Sim (DAP-Seputeh) urged the government to re-evaluate the National Technical and Standard Regulations to ensure the electrical appliances in the market were safe.

She also sought explanation on the power production efficiency of Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) power plants after the agency was privatised as the government gave strong emphasis on power efficiency under the current Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005).

She also proposed that the government enact a National Energy Policy to tackle power generation problems.

"We also need to carry out a study on power production, the amount of power consumed by the domestic and industrial sectors as well as energy-saving measures," she said.

Liow Tiong Lai (BN-Bentong) urged the government to implement fairly and justly this legislation after it had been gazetted as law.

He cited instances of tenants who move out without paying the electricity bills, causing premise owners a heavy burden as they had to pay the arrears and surcharge imposed by TNB.

Husam Musa (PAS-Kubang Kerian) urged the government to ensure that the electricity tariffs charged to consumers were reasonable.

He said the current tariff structure could be reduced if the proposed Power Commission and TNB took several measures, including calling for open tenders in all its transactions and award of contracts.

By 2005, Malaysia is expected to have excess electricity both by TNB and the five Independent Power Producers (IPPs), he said.

In that year, the demand for power is expected to drop by three per cent from 11 per cent to eight per cent, he said.

Fong Kui Lun (DAP-Bukit Bintang) questioned the legality of the surcharge currently levied on consumers for late settlement of electricity dues as this Bill had not been enforced yet but consumers had been paying surcharge for delayed payments.

He said the surcharge of one per cent of the electricity bill was unreasonable although the delay was only a week.

Mohd Apandi Mohamad (PAS-Jeli) said the government should not have given additional allocation for the Bakun hydro-electric power project in Sarawak as the project had been abandoned.

At this juncture, Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis (BN-Rompin) stood up and told the House that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had announced today that tenders would be called for new IPP projects.

He said the government announced the decision at the Malaysian Electric Power Forum 2001 here today.

He said the TNB had made it a policy that electricity tariffs would only be raised for two reasons.

"The first is, when the cost goes up and the second, where there is a new added value to consumers," said Dr Jamaluddin who is also TNB chairman.

He said if TNB could not convince the government on the two reasons, the government would not consider giving the approval for power tariff hike.

The Bill was later approved.

-- BERNAMA

FA MUN NZ TS