

Keng Yaik: Conserve water or pay for it
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The government will put the blame on consumers, should the price of water goes up.

According to Energy, Water and Communications Minister Dr Lim Keng Yaik consumers should not waste water by "washing cars and watering plants with running water."

He said consumers would have to conserve water or pay more for it.

"Although I am not announcing any increase in water tariffs, increase in tariffs in the future will bring the punitive aspect, punishing those who waste water, use too much water," he was quoted as saying by Bernama today.

Lim was commenting in a news report that Malaysians are using up to 500 litres of water per person daily.

Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya recorded the highest level of water consumption in the country.

"If we don't play our part to keep rivers clean, then the cost of water treatment will go up very high," he told reporters today.

Last October, the minister announced the increase of water tariff by 15 percent for Klang Valley residents.

Water supply was privatised on Jan 1, 2005, with Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor (Syabas) responsible for distribution in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.

Syabas is 70 percent owned by Puncak Niaga, with the balance owned by the Selangor government.

Syabas entitled to increase

Lim said Syabas was entitled to the increase because it had successfully reduced non-revenue water (NRW - water stolen or lost through leakage) by more than five per cent within a year, according to the concession agreement.

Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) earlier this year urged the government to explain why the water concession agreement and audited accounts of Syabas are classified.

At the same time, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress and 15 individuals filed an application for a judicial review against the government's decision not to reveal the contents of the water concession agreement and audit report.

The application, filed in the Kuala Lumpur High Court in January, named the Selangor and federal governments respectively and Lim as respondents.

Meanwhile, when asked to comment on the plan by Astro All Asia Networks Plc to increase subscription fees, Lim said: "If you are not happy, don't subscribe to Astro, you won't die."

Nobody is forcing you. Watch RTM or TV3 ... FOC (free of charge)."

Astro has announced an increase in subscription fees by between RM5 and RM15, effective immediately for new customers and from next month for existing customers.

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