

New Electricity Tariff Takes Effect, Can You Cope?

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KUALA LUMPUR, June 30 -- Consumers in Peninsular Malaysia will have to be more prudent than ever when the new electricity tariff takes effect Tuesday.

Under the new tariff, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) decided that domestic users would still be eligible for the existing tariff of 21.8 sen/kWh if their monthly usage did not exceed 200 kilowatt hour (kWh).

However, for electricity usage between 201 kWh and 400 kWh, they will have to pay 34.5 sen per kWh unit.

The rate will increase on subsequent 100 kWh of usage -- 30 sen for 401-500 kWh, 39 sen (501-600 kWh), 40 sen (601-700 kWh), 41 sen (701-800 kWh) and 43 sen (801-900 kWh).

A maximum rate of 46 sen will be charged for each kWh when the usage reaches 901 kWh and above.

Prof Madya Dr Mohd Wazir Mustafa of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)'s Faculty of Electrical Engineering said a majority of households would be affected by the new tariff.

"I think more than 50 per cent households in the country use over 200 kWh electricity monthly, and the effect would be felt by most of them.

"Most of us live in a terrace house with limited windows, and we need the lamps and fans switched on for 24 hours a day. If there is no one in the house during the day, maybe the electricity usage will not reach 200 kWh per month," he told Bernama.

On the use of solar energy as an alternative, he said, it could help in long-term energy-saving, but it would cost to install them.

"If we want to depend 100 per cent on solar energy, our house will need more panels, spaces and of course, money," he said.

That was why, he said, currently solar energy were only used by the well-to-dos and in island resorts where there were no sources of electricity.

On several gadgets in the market, claimed to be able to save power consumption, Mohd Wazir said he was not sure of their effectiveness.

In fact, he said, apart from solar energy, the consumer was left with no choice other than to be more prudent and not to depend too much on electrical appliances in their daily chores.

He said ironing, for example, should be done in a large scale, because the iron needs more electricity and time before it could really heat up.

The amount of items placed in the refrigerator could also help in saving the electricity, he said.

"Reduce the items in your fridge. The more items you placed in it, the more power it needs to keep them cool.

"And if you are on vacation, empty the fridge, and switch it off, but let the door ajar, so it won't smell," he said.

Mohd Wazir said the position of the refrigerator in the house also played a role in power-saving.

He said if the refrigerator was placed in a small area, the hot air it releases could not circulate, and thus more power would be needed to control its internal temperature.

An air-conditioner's temperature should also be kept between 23 and 24 degrees Celsius, he said.

He also advised the public to use power-saving lamps even though they might be slightly expensive than ordinary ones.

"For instance, we can use an 8 Watt bulb which brightness is equal to those of 80 or 100 Watt bulbs. We don't need to put it in all places... just in places where we normally spend more time such as in the kitchen and the living room," he said, adding that the public should train their children to switch off unused lamps and fans.

A television and rice cooker, he said, although did not consume high energy, should be switched off and not be left in a standby or warm modes.

Better still, Mohd Wazir said electrical rice cookers could be replaced with conventional pots and stoves.

His view was shared by his colleague, Professor Dr Shah Rizam Mohd Shah Baki who said that the key in energy-saving was actually public awareness, and not on certain technology only.

She said, however, that there were several energy-saving approaches that could be used, especially in lighting aspects.

As such, she said, **T5 fluorescent tube**, compact fluorescent and light emitting diode (LED) bulbs, would definitely help because they only use minimum power.

Although the bulbs might be a little expensive, they usually last longer and more environmentally-friendly, she added. Meanwhile, Federation of Malaysian Consumer's Associations (Fomca) Communication Director Yusof Abdul Rahman said the public should change their lifestyle to cope with the new tariff.

He said the tariff was unavoidable as the government had to bear with the rising cost of gas and coal which were the main fuel for power generation in the country.

"The public must be willing to buy and use efficient electrical appliances even though they might cost a little higher, but they can save energy in the long run," he told Bernama.

Malaysian Muslim Consumer Association (PPIM) however asked the TNB to explain thoroughly how the new tariff would be determined, so the public could be prudent in their power usage.

"A clear guide to count the new tariff should be attached in the monthly bill to enable the consumer to count and monitor their household usage," PPIM project coordinator, Noor Nirwandy Mat Noordin said.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Bumiputera Manufacturers and Services Industry Association president Datuk Raja Nong Chik said the new tariff would definitely affect the industrial business, especially the small and medium enterprises.

He also estimated that about 50 per cent of the small and medium entrepreneurs would have to adjust to the new tariff, a process which he said would take up to two years to complete.

The new tariff would also increase their operational costs and they would be left with no choice but to pass them to the consumers in the form of higher prices of goods, he said.

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