

PBAPP non-committal if water tariff will be increased next year



By **AUDREY DERMAWAN** - September 14, 2017 @ 7:52p



Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the Penang domestic consumers would continue to enjoy the lowest domestic water tariffs in the country at 32 sen per 1,000 litres for the first 35,000 litres per month. Pix by Mikail Ong

GEORGE TOWN: There will be no water tariff increase in Penang this year.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa, however, remained non-committal when asked if there there would be an increase next year.

"It depends...we see how the situation goes. We are a public-listed company, and we do not want the people to speculate," he told newsmen here today.

He said the Penang domestic consumers would continue to enjoy the lowest domestic water tariffs in the country at 32 sen per 1,000 litres for the first 35,000 litres per month.

Jaseni said what they had merely applied for was a water conservation surcharge (WCS) review that will only affect 23 per cent of domestic consumers who use more than 35,000 litres per month.

"The WCS is not a tariff review but a penalty that is only applicable to domestic consumers who use too much water at home.

"The review application was sent on April 28, and we are still awaiting approval from the National Water Services Commission (SPAN),' he said, denying claims of a possible water tariff hike.

Jaseni also denied that PBAPP was facing "cash flow deficit" as alleged.

He said Penang's non-revenue water (NRW) still remained one of the lowest in the country, denying claims of worsening NRW by a state Gerakan leader recently.

"Our no water rationing policy caused our NRW percentage to increase. However, Penang's 21.5 per cent NRW is significantly below the national average of 35.2 per cent and the second lowest in the country after Malacca.

"While NRW management is important, the No 1 priority for PBAPP today is no water rationing in the face of climate change.

"That said, we are already implementing on-going NRW management solutions such as installing pressure reducing valves (PRVs) to implement pressure management. We are also implementing pipe replacement and meter replacement projects," he added.

NRW represents water that is lost due to pipe bursts, leakages, water theft, fire-fighting and inaccurate metering.

Penang's NRW percentage increased by 3.2 per cent from 18.3 per cent in 2014 to 21.5 per cent in 2016.

Jaseni said in the past three years, PBAPP had been pumping water at higher pressures from the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant to ensure that there was no water rationing during the dry seasons and to meet increasing water demands.

"Pumping water at higher pressures caused smaller distribution pipelines to burst or leak and this led to higher NRW losses," he said.

Padang Kota Gerakan coordinator H'ng Khoon Leng had recently said that the 21.5 per cent NRW last year amounted to "nearly RM98.8 million" if it were to be calculated based on trade rates of RM1.36 per cubic metre.

He had also said that if it had indeed wanted to be a world class water supply company, PBAPP should not be comparing itself with other states, but with other countries with low NRWs such as Singapore (five per cent) and Japan (seven per cent).