

Water tariffs to be increased

➤ Most states in agreement and final discussions ongoing, says minister

KUALA LUMPUR: Water tariffs are expected to be increased this year, with most state governments having agreed to it, said Water, Land Natural Resources Minister Dr A. Xavier Jayakumar (*pic*).

He said the matter was still being discussed and the amount has yet to be finalised as the states had different tariff rates and some had not reviewed the tariff for many years.

"Most states have agreed. There are one or two states which do not agree, but we will discuss it with them.

"However, I can give an assurance that it will not burden the people," he said after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and Indah Water Konsortium (IWK) yesterday.

On whether the increase would be 20% as being considered by Penang, he said: "We'll see. There is still time for us to discuss the tariff rate... Twenty per cent is too high, we can reduce it a little bit".

He expressed hope negotiations between the Water Service Commission (SPAN) and



the state governments could be finalised soon for the new tariffs to be implemented, Bernama reported.

On another matter, Xavier said the integrated or single billing system for water supply and sewage services in Labuan has proved successful, with collection increased to 93% from 40% since it was introduced in 2016.

He said if the system could be introduced nationwide, IWK

would be able to cover its operations costs, hence enabling the government to reduce its subsidy of RM150 million a year.

"We can't continue supporting them at this level and must find ways to resolve the IWK issue."

Earlier, IWK chief executive officer Faizal Othman and FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mahmod signed the agreement on the use of treated sewage waste as fertilisers for non-edible plants.

"It can be used for reforestation, in rubber plantations and decorative plants grown by local government authorities. We hope it can be commercialised one day," said Xavier.