

## Water losses under control, says Penang utility company

Predeep Nambiar | September 14, 2017

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**PBA says it is aiming for lower NRW losses, despite being the second lowest in the country after Melaka.**

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GEORGE TOWN: Penang's non-revenue water (NRW) still remains one of the lowest in the country, the state utility company said today over claims of worsening NRW by a Gerakan leader recently.

NRW is water that is "lost" before it reached users, due to pipe bursts, leakages, water theft, firefighting and inaccurate metering.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) CEO Jaseni Maidinsa admitted there was an increase in NRW by 3.2% from 18.3% in 2014 to 21.5% in 2016.

He attributed the increase to the challenges posed by climate change and prolonged dry seasons.

Jaseni explained the NRW had increased because the PBA had increased water pressure from its treatment plants during the dry season.

As a result, he said, the higher pressure had caused outdated pipes to burst, leading to more NRW losses.

"While NRW management is important, the top priority for PBA is to have no water rationing in the face of climate change.

"That said, we are installing pressure reducing valves worth a few hundred thousand ringgit, and replacing meters to reduce our NRW losses further.

"Nevertheless, our NRW has been one of the lowest in the country, recording 21.5% last year, very much below the national average of 35.2%.

"We are working hard to reduce that number," he said at a press conference in Komtar today.

Jaseni provided statistics from the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) of the country's current NRW, which put Perlis at the highest on the table at 60.7% and Melaka, at 19%, at the lowest last year.

Perlis was followed by Sabah at 52%, Kelantan (49.4%), Pahang (47.9%), Kedah (46.7%), and Sarawak (36%), all of which were above the national average of 35.2%.

Below the national average were Negri Sembilan (32.7%), Selangor (32.2%), Labuan (30.5%), Perak (30.5%), and Terengganu (30%).

In the low category were Johor at 25.9%, Penang (21.5%) and Melaka at 19%.

NRW is calculated by deducting the amount of billed water from the amount of water pumped out by a treatment plant.

Meanwhile, Jaseni said since PBA's incorporation in 1999, the state's NRW had fluctuated between 16.9% and 23.9%.

"The 23.9% NRW was recorded in 1999, during the tenure of the previous government administration," he said.

Gerakan: Nearly RM100 million likely lost in "lost water"

Padang Komtar Gerakan coordinator Hng Khoon Leng had said the 21.5% 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.

"The worsening of 3.25% NRW from 2014 to 2016 amounts to RM15.6 million. The reduction of NRW is a key goal of any water supply company. It's an indicator of its management excellence.

"In 1985, Penang's NRW was at 21.5%. Penang had gradually lowered the NRW, by 2008 its NRW was at around 18%.

"However, these past few years, NRW had worsened. In 2014, NRW was 18.25%, in 2015 NRW increased to 19.9% and in 2016 it worsened to 21.5%," he said in a statement last week.

Hng said if it had indeed wanted to be a world class water supply company, the PBA should not be comparing itself with other states, but with other countries with low NRWs, such as Singapore (5%) and Japan (7%).

"Even eastern Manila in the Philippines had achieved NRW of 11%," Hng said.