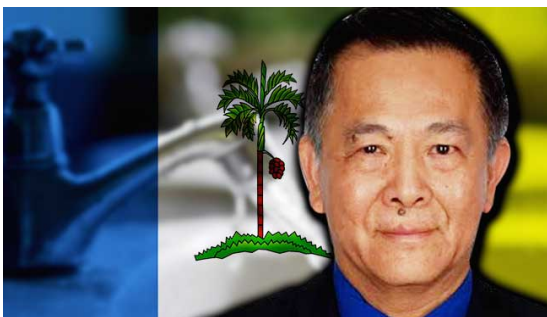




NGO tells Penang to double water prices

Predeep Nambiar | April 27, 2017

Penangites not heeding government's save water mantra as it is too cheap, says NGO.



GEORGE TOWN: Penang's proposed surcharge for water wasters is too low, a water interest group said today.

Water prices should instead go up to curb wastage, it said.

Water Watch Penang president Prof Chan Ngai Weng said higher water prices would encourage people to save water, but at the same time should not burden the poor.

Recently, Penang Water Supply Corporation said it would increase the surcharge of 48 sen introduced in 2014 to RM1 next year. It will be charged for every extra 1,000 litres used after water consumption hits 35,000 litres.

The surcharge is applicable to 25% of 504,400 domestic users, which comes up to about 126,000 users. Households with more than eight people can apply for a 60% rebate.

"I always warn people of an impending water tariff hike, because Penangites are paying the lowest water bills in the country.

"Why is this so, when we are a water-stressed state where 84% of our water supply is from the Sungai Muda in Kedah?

"This is thanks to the Penang government's subsidies on the tariffs. It is good for the people, but bad for water resources.

"People do not pay attention about saving water because water is so cheap," he told FMT.

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Chan, who is a professor at Universiti Sains Malaysia's Humanities School, specialising in water resources, gave Water Watch's recommended water tariff structure for Penang.

He said for starters, the first 20,000 litres a month should remain at the current 22 sen per 1,000 litres. He said this should be enough for a family of five.

The next tariff block, 21,000-35,000 litres a month, should be 44 sen per 1,000 litres.

Those exceeding 35,000 litres a month should be charged RM1.30 per 1,000 litres.

Chan said the RM1.30 rate would be the actual production cost and represents only cost recovery for the water service provider.

"Such prices will be fair and acceptable among the people, as the poor will not be over-burdened. And the conscientious water users will not be penalised.

"Only water wasters will be penalised, which is what the state government wants," Chan said.

The following table explains Penang's domestic water tariffs:

PENANG DOMESTIC WATER TARIFF - (Tariff 1)	
Minimum Charge	RM2.50 per month
First 20,000 litres	RM0.22 per 1,000 litres
More than 20,000 litres to 40,000 litres	RM0.46 per 1,000 litres
More than 40,000 litres to 60,000 litres	RM0.68 per 1,000 litres
More than 60,000 litres to 200,000 litres	RM1.17 per 1,000 litres
More than 200,000 litres	RM1.30 per 1,000 litres
WATER CONSERVATION SURCHARGE (WCS)	
Consumption above 35,000 litres per month	RM0.48 per 1,000 litres

Chan said if the Penang government decides to hike the prices of water, it should engage interest groups and members of the public in an open forum before any decision is made.