

TNB seeks solution to high electricity bill problem

Ainaa Aiman -June 16, 2020 7:49 PM



TNB says one electricity bill was produced for three months — March, April and May.

PUTRAJAYA: Tenaga Nasional Bhd has given an assurance that it is working with the energy and natural resources ministry and Energy Commission to solve the problem of high electricity bills.

Consumers have been complaining on social media about the high charges.

TNB chief retail officer Megat Jalaludin Megat Hassan said there was a higher average domestic consumption of electricity during the movement control order (MCO) period because people were forced to stay at home.

He also said they had announced a moratorium on electricity supply cuts until July 31.

“We want to tell the rakyat that if you cannot pay your full electricity bill, you can pay in instalments.

“Even if you cannot pay in instalments, do not worry ... we will not cut off your supply,” he told a meeting with citizen media practitioners, including bloggers, at the ministry today.

He noted that TNB had made it possible for people to pay their arrears in instalments until December 2020. Commenting on viral posts on social media about high charges, he explained that the most recent electricity bills were calculated based on manual meter readings, which had resumed during the conditional movement control order (CMCO).

The most recent bill, he said, showed actual electricity consumption rates compared with estimated readings during the MCO period when meter readings were suspended for the safety of consumers and TNB workers.

“It was calculated for three months – March, April and May – and one bill was produced.”

He explained that the total electricity consumed was calculated through the pro rata mechanism — approved by the ministry and the commission.

He said the pro rata method ensured that the total electricity bill was not calculated based on a lump sum of three months' worth of electricity consumption.

“If we use that lump-sum method, then it will show high electricity consumption as it will be categorised under the highest tariffs. But TNB does not use this lump-sum method, as widely assumed.”

Megat Jalaludin also said TNB was merely the implementing agency and was not authorised to give discounts. He said tariffs were set by the Energy Commission, which regulates the electricity industry.

“The commission will discuss with the minister on any changes to the tariffs or discounts that can be given. If it is decided that we can give discounts, we will implement them.”

He also said complaints would be looked into on a case-to-case basis, giving the example of people who were given bills despite not staying at home during the MCO.

Meanwhile, Energy and Natural Resources Minister Shamsul Anuar Nasarah said they were working to resolve the issue.

He clarified that the 50% discount announced for electricity bills under the Prihatin economic stimulus package was only for B40 low-cost households.

‘Complain to tribunal’

Meanwhile, consumers unhappy with the increase in their electricity bills during the MCO period can file their complaints at the Tribunal for Consumer Claims Malaysia (TTPM).

Deputy Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Rosol Wahid told Bernama that besides lodging complaints to TNB and the Energy Commission, consumers have another alternative to file their case with TTPM for a fee of only RM5.

“The issue of high electricity bills during the MCO has come to our attention. We noticed that many consumers have expressed dissatisfaction.”

He added that the TTPM has received two claims so far, including one on the extraordinary spike in the electricity bill, filed on June 5.

TTPM was established on Nov 15, 1999 to serve as an alternative channel for consumers to claim compensation regarding purchase of products or services, and the cases can be resolved within 60 days.

The tribunal also enables consumers to seek redress not exceeding RM50,000 for the purchase of products and services which are not as advertised.

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