

# Hitting Penang water wasters in the wallet

By **Predeep Nambiar** - May 25, 2021 7:45 AM

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*Penang's nine water treatment plants have a healthy reserve of 31% according to the water supply company. (Bernama pic)*

GEORGE TOWN: A newly proposed water rate increase in Penang has received support from key interest groups, saying it would force Penangites to use less water.

The state's water use per capita per day is nearly 300 litres per day while the national average is 240.

An expert said Penangites who use a reasonable amount of water can expect to pay a bit more, but water wasters will be severely punished with an increase of close to RM110 on their current bills.

The increase is part of a proposed water tariff review by the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) to ensure water security by 2050 and to reduce water wastage. Penangites enjoy the lowest water bills in the country, averaging RM5.55 for domestic users.

The proposal was published on the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) website calling for public feedback before the federal regulators could okay the hike in water tariffs.

Water Watch Penang president Chan Ngai Weng said the proposal was timely as Penangites continue to be the highest water users, especially residential ones. He said the reasonable increase in tariff would encourage more to save water, while the hike for business users would push more to install water recycling plants.

STRUKTUR TARIF SEDIA ADA			CADANGAN STRUKTUR DAN KADAR TARIF BAHARU			
Kategori	Jalur Sedia Ada	Kadar Sedia Ada	Kategori Utama	Jalur Baharu	Cadangan Kadar TSM Separa (RM)	
Domestik	0-20m <sup>3</sup>	0.22	Domestik	0 - 20m <sup>3</sup>	0.55	
	>20-40m <sup>3</sup>	0.46		>20 - 35m <sup>3</sup>	1.10	
	>40-60m <sup>3</sup>	0.68		>35m <sup>3</sup>	2.00	
	>60-200m <sup>3</sup>	1.17	Caj Minimum	5.50		
	>200m <sup>3</sup>	1.30	Bukan Domestik	0 - 35m <sup>3</sup>	1.50	
	Surcaj konservasi air bagi penggunaan air melebihi 35 meter padu sebulan	0.48		>35m <sup>3</sup>	2.10	
	Caj Minimum	2.50		Caj Minimum	15.00	
Perniagaan (Biasa)	0-20m <sup>3</sup>	0.85	Kategori Khas	Institusi Keagamaan/ Kebajikan	Kadar Rata	0.55
	>20-40m <sup>3</sup>	1.05			Caj Minimum	5.50
	>40-200m <sup>3</sup>	1.30			Domestik Pukal	Kadar Rata
	>200m <sup>3</sup>	1.45			Caj Minimum	11.00
	Caj Minimum	12.00		Perkapalan	Kadar Rata	7.00
Perniagaan (Khas)	Kadar Rata	3.00			Caj Minimum	70.00
	Caj Minimum	12.00	Di bawah TSM, struktur tarif (kadar dan jalur) akan diseragamkan untuk seluruh Semenanjung Malaysia dan Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan			
Institusi Keagamaan/Kebajikan	0-20m <sup>3</sup>	0.22	Domestik (kadar meter pukal)	0-90m <sup>3</sup>	0.00	
	>20-40m <sup>3</sup>	0.46		>90m <sup>3</sup>	0.35	
	>40-60m <sup>3</sup>	0.68		Caj Minimum	26.00	
	>60-200m <sup>3</sup>	1.17		Kadar Rata	7.00	
	>200m <sup>3</sup>	1.30		Caj Minimum	50.00	
	Surcaj konservasi air bagi penggunaan air melebihi 35 meter padu sebulan	0.48	Perkapalan	Kadar Rata	7.00	
	Caj Minimum	2.50	Kios Air	Caj Minimum	50.00	

The current water tariffs for Penang users and the proposed new ones.

He said these recycling plants could then be used by factories to recycle water collected by air conditioners or to reuse wastewater for non-consumptive purposes.

Chan, a water resources professor at Universiti Sains Malaysia, said the increase for domestic users was small, between RM3 and RM14.86 for those who use less than 35 cubic metres of water a month. It is expected to affect 75% of domestic users.

Chan said those who used more water, between 35m<sup>3</sup> and 50m<sup>3</sup> monthly, would see an increase of RM19.28 to RM28.11.

He said it was also "strange" to see that business users would face a lower water rate increase.

Business users can expect to pay an additional RM3 to RM69.19 monthly, while domestic users who use more than 100m<sup>3</sup> of water, regarded as water wasters, can expect to pay an additional RM109.16.

Chan was surprised to see the charges for those in the domestic category using less than 20m<sup>3</sup> being more than doubled. The rate has been increased from 22sen per cubic metre to 55sen.

"The minimum 20 cubic metres is considered the standard for an average household, and should not be touched as these are the water saving households.

"Any water tariff restructuring should not marginalise the poor as long as they use below the 20m<sup>3</sup> level," he told FMT.

Consumers Association of Penang president Mohideen Abdul Kader said there has been an urgent need to increase water prices in the state, as it has been too cheap and wasted as a result.

He said this would also fix leaks or non-revenue water in the distribution system, and the building of more water treatment plants to ensure water security.

"We have not been paying enough for water, compared to other countries. Daily, we see people washing their cars with so much water wasted.

"The increase is justified for long term sustainability. You have to address the problem now and bite the bullet.

"At the same time, I would like to urge that the poor get the necessary rebates so they are not affected by the hike," he told FMT.

SPAN, in producing the Penang authority's working papers to justify the hike in a public feedback website, stated the water company required funds to meet future demand, aside from wanting to prevent wastage that could arise from low water bills.

It also noted that Penang's nine water treatment plants, with a design capacity of 1,599 million litres a day, only drew 1,105 MLD last year, and had a reserve of 31% margin, which was healthy.

The regulator said that despite healthy margins, the adjustment of tariffs was necessary as old piping had to be replaced to reduce leaks or non-revenue water, while more water was needed for Balik Pulau and the upcoming Penang South Reclamation project by 2030.

SPAN also revealed that PBAPP's capital expenditure proposal to carry out water-related projects cost an estimated RM500.8 million.

Those who would like to take part in SPAN's survey may head to its [website](#). The survey is open from today until June 6.

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