Many home owners keen on smart meter

MALACCA: Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) is set to expand its Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) or "smart meter" to 8.5 million customers across the country.

The first phase of the project will focus on consumers in Malacca and subsequently Putrajaya starting 2017. About 300,000 houses here will replace their traditional meter to a smart meter, an electronic device that records consumption of electric energy in intervals of an hour or less and communicates the information daily back to the utility for monitoring and billing.

Senior manager for the (Communication Plan and Stakeholder Engagement) TNB Smart Billing project, Datuk Siti Laila Sri Asih S Garieh, said customers would soon be able to access realtime information on their power usage as well as monitor the pattern and disruptions.

"This device will allow us to monitor our customers' usage, helping them save their electricity bills through energy efficient practice and educating them on our carbon footprint initiative, so it's a 'win-win' concept," she said during a recent TNB's media familiarisation trip.

She said the smart meters would also enable two-way communications between the meter and the central system.

Siti Laila said TNB had successfully conducted a pilot project last year involving 1,000 houses, using a RM6mil fund provided by the government, to understand the technological, regulatory and customer challenges.

"Many may harbour the perception that this technology will only attract those high-end users living in bungalows or semi-D houses, but our survey shows that those in terraces and low-cost houses are also keen to have this new device, especially landlords renting their houses to tenants," she said.

Siti Laila said the RM6mil fund included the infrastructure and implementation system as well as the connectivity and communication router.

She also said houses in other states would get their digital meters changed to the smart meters in phases with no payment required.

The whole project is expected to be completed by 2021.

Many countries in the Asia Pacific, such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea, are already deploying smart meters on a large scale to take advantage of their capabilities in grid control and monitoring.

The AMI system, which has been installed in about 180 million homes around the world, promises to offer flexible tariffs and prevent power theft.

It will allow the utility company to provide additional services to their customers such as automatic reconnection of supply and also do away with the need for meter readers to make house visits as bills are automatically read each day.

**Smart device:** A TNB worker reading and cross checking the smart meter with his device at a residential home that was fitted with the smart meter system recently.