

Headline	Power rates hike will burden people, says Gerakan		
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## Power rates hike will burden people, says Gerakan

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PENANG Gerakan has called for a review of the electricity tariff increase announced by the government on Monday to avoid a chain reaction on prices of other goods.

Its secretary, Oh Tong Keong, said yesterday a tariff increase would cause the people financial burden.

He said the people were already burdened by a series of price increases following the recent withdrawal of government subsidies on diesel, petrol and sugar.

"The proposed increase in electricity rates will create a hole in the pockets of the average income-earner," he said.

"Penang Gerakan sympathises with the people's plight of having to pay more for their food. We strongly urge the government to review the decision. The proposed increase will cause dissatisfaction among the people."

Oh was commenting on Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili's announcement on Monday that electricity tariffs in Peninsular Malaysia would go up by 4.99 sen per kWh, or 14.89 per cent, from the existing 33.54 sen/kWh from Jan 1.

Sabah and Labuan will see a

hike of five sen per kWh, or 16.90 per cent, from the current 29.52 sen per kWh.

Oh said since factories, hotels, shopping complexes, eating outlets and food courts utilised electricity, a rates increase would lead to prices of daily necessities going up.

To commensurate with the increase, he said, the federal and state governments and the private sector should review the salaries of their employees.

Alternatively, the government should introduce more rebates and other forms of aid to lessen the financial burden.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng described the proposed increase as untimely and unjustifiable.

He said he was deeply concerned about its impact on small businesses.

"Sundry shops, coffeeshops, barbers and small business owners will have to fork out more to keep their shops open," he said in a statement.

"SME industries will have to maintain cost-competitiveness amidst the increasingly challenging environment.

"More worrying is that small businesses in the commercial or industrial category which consume no more than 200 kWh monthly will have to suffer a 10% hike. This is unfair and unjustifiable."