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Shaken up by hike in electricity tariffs

TOO HIGH: The business community is anxious about the new power pricing for next year

**NOEL ACHARIAM AND
ROBIN AUGUSTIN**

MANY business operators in the city want a revision of the new electricity tariffs for next year, announced by the government recently.

They are agreeable to an increase, but they feel that the 15 per cent hike is too steep.

Atarikoi Marketing Sdn Bhd, owner Robert Gan said that his koi fish business will be affected.

"I might have to raise the prices of my fish. We run the oxygen pumps 24 hours a day and this consumes a lot of electricity.

"The increase will burn a hole in my pocket," he said, adding that his monthly electricity bill is at least RM5,000.

Gan also said that due to the increase in tariffs, he may have to reduce his workforce to keep down the operating cost. "An increase is understandable but it should be done gradually. Five per cent every three years is acceptable."

Cranberry Cake House owner, Ang Ting Kwai concurred that any increase in tariffs should be done in stages. "I think a small increase of five to seven per cent is fair, but 15 per cent is too high," he said, adding that he may consider increasing his

prices.

"Currently, my shop's electricity bill is between RM3,000 to RM4,000 a month."

An ice manufacturer spokesman said that the hike will eventually affect the ice industry.

"We will then have no choice but to pass the increase in costs to our customers," he said.

Brickfields Business Council, president Datuk Bharat Maniam said a proper study needs to be conducted before the tariffs are implemented on Jan 1.

"If there is a need to raise the tariffs then the government should inform the public on how and why it should be done. This shows that the government is transparent because it involves taxpayers," he said.

Bharat said the government should set up a committee, which should also include representatives from the business community, to assess the implementation of the new tariffs. "If the committee finds that the subsidies are too high, then they should be revised," he said.

SS15 Business Community member Datuk Samson Maman said that an increase in electricity tariffs would have a huge impact on busi-

nesses everywhere.

He said that the cost of doing business would escalate because of the hike. "An average business operator is paying more than RM1,000 a month in electricity bills. If there is an increase, some businesses will go broke," he said.

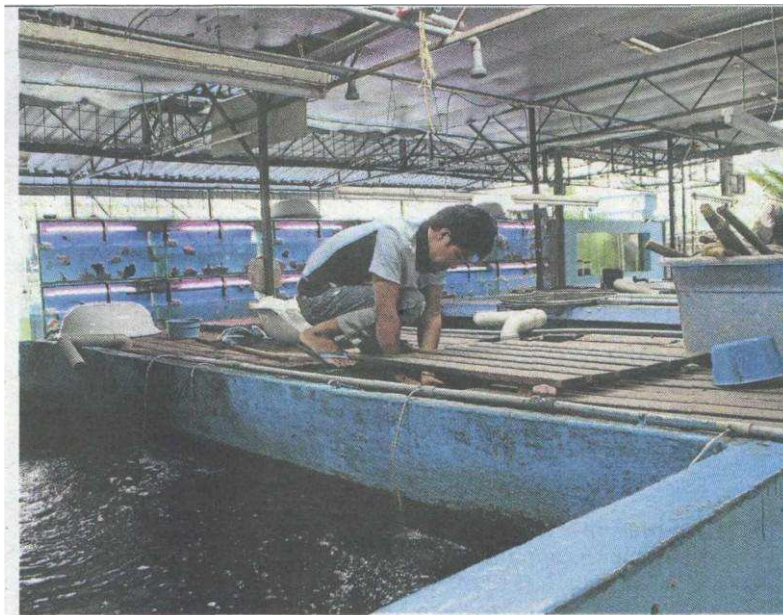
Samson — who works in the reprographics solutions industry, which involves printing and copying — said that the number of businesses in the industry was dwindling. "We are finding it difficult to survive because of the high cost of materials. If there is a hike in tariffs, many of the businesses will be affected," he said. Samson, who runs four printing outlets, said he will have to close two outlets if the rates are not revised.

"We are already reeling from the fuel hike and the rise in the price of sugar," he said.

Brickfields Little India Petty Traders Association president G. Gunasegaran said that even a minimal hike in the tariffs will affect the business community.

"It will affect the cost of production. Traders will have no choice but to increase the price of their products and services," he said.

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A koi fish breeder is worried that the new tariffs will 'burn a hole in his pocket' as his pumps have to run non-stop. Pic by Robin Augustin