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Fomca: Protect low-income earners from higher tariffs

PETALING JAYA: Low-income consumers should have some protection from higher electricity tariffs next year, said Fomca secretary-general Datuk Paul Selvaraj.

"It's important to maintain a certain lifeline for the poor. A certain amount of electricity usage should be exempted due to the existing burden these wage earners already have on their shoulders," said Paul in a phone interview.

Households using less than RM20 of electricity a month have been exempted from paying Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) since October 2008, and at least 1.1 million households come under this umbrella.

According to Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili, electricity tariff in Malaysia will likely increase by 10% to 20% next year in a move to promote efficiency and competitiveness in the Malaysian power industry, as well as to ensure sufficient returns to capital for TNB.

"The Government should be transparent with the index of indus-

trial production so that people know what the deal is," said Paul, who agreed that subsidies for electricity should be gradually decreased.

Penang Consumer's Protection Association president Korisatan Karuppiah said this was not the right time to implement this plan.

"The people, especially the lower-income group, are already going through a lot and it is a burden for them.

"Their salary isn't at the mark for this implementation. The Government should postpone it for another two years," Korisatan said, adding that consumers should only be charged extra if there was "abuse".

Korisatan added that the Government needed to put more effort in getting the "go-green" messages across when it came to energy use.

In regard to this, Paul agreed with Korisatan that consumers here were not properly educated on how to use energy efficiently.

"Consumers should be educated when purchasing home appliances on the ways to limit their energy consumption," he said.

VALUATOR

Company(Brand)	Mention	Tone	ROI
Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (FOMCA)	1	0	0
Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (Ministry of	1	0	0
Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) (Tenaga Nasional)	4	0	0