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Water tariff expected to be increased this year: Xavier

KUALA LUMPUR: The water tariff is expected to be increased this year with most state governments having agreed to it, said Water, Land Natural Resources Minister Dr A. Xavier Jayakumar.

He said the matter was still being discussed and the amount yet to be finalised as the states had different tariff rates and some, had not reviewed the tariff for tens of years.

"Most states have agreed. There are one or two states that do not agree, but we will discuss with them.

"However, I can give the assurance that it will not burden the people, and it will be of benefit for the people as there will be clean water to drink," he added.

He told reporters this after witnessing the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and Indah Water Konsortium (IWK) here today.

Asked if the increase would be 20 per cent as being considered by Penang, he said: "We'll see how...there is still time for us to discuss the tariff rate...20 per cent is too high, we can reduce it a little bit".

He hoped negotiations between the Water Service Commission (SPAN) and the

state government could be finalised soon for the new tariff to be implemented.

Meanwhile, Xavier said the integrated or single billing system for water supply and sewage services in Labuan proved successful with collection increased to 93 per cent, from 40 per cent, since it was introduced in 2016.

He believed that if the system could be introduced nationwide, IWK would be able to cover its operation cost, hence enabling the government to reduce its subsidy of RM150 million a year.

"We can't continue supporting them at this level and must find ways to resolve the IWK issue... we see that we the joint billing, there is no problem for residents to pay," he said.

Earlier, IWK, represented by its chief executive officer, Faizal Othman, and FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mahmud signed the MoU on the use of treated sewage waste as fertilisers for non-edible plants.

"It can be used for reforestation, in rubber plantations and decorative plants grown by local government authorities. We hope it can be commercialised one day," said Xavier. - Bernama