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Most states agree to increase water tariff, says minister

The govt has not finalised the new rate for water tariff as discussions are still ongoing

by LYDIA NATHAN

MOST state governments have agreed on a water tariff hike this year, said Minister of Water, Land and Natural Resources Dr Xavier Jayakumar.

He said the government has not finalised the new rate for the water tariff as discussions are still ongoing between the National Water Services Commission and the respective state governments.

When asked about the likelihood that other states may impose a 20% water tariff hike like in Penang, he said every state will have a different rate.

"We'll see how. There is still time for us to discuss the tariff rate...20% is too high, we can reduce it a little bit," he said.

"We hope to have the discussion and implementation rolled out this year, but we are assuring the people that it will not be a burden to them," Dr Xavier said to reporters at the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and Indah Water Kon-



Dr Xavier (left) together with Abdul Latif (second from right) conducting a tree-planting ceremony in FRIM yesterday

sortium Sdn Bhd (IWK) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Xavier also said the pilot project of joint billing for both waste water and treated water has been a success in Labuan.

"The collection under IWK had increased to 93% from 40% since the project was initiated and the residents had no issue paying both bills together.

"The reason for the joint billing is that IWK had issues in the collection and was not making enough to cover the

maintenance side. The ministry has been subsidising them for about RM150 million, but cannot continue to do so at this level," Dr Xavier said, adding that he hopes to expand the joint billing system to other states as well.

Meanwhile, the MoU signing between FRIM and IWK aims to research the use of treated water waste (biosolid) for the production of high-quality planting materials and forest plantation.

The MoU was signed by FRIM DG Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod and IWK CEO Faizal Othman.

FRIM has been tasked to conduct research in the application of biosolids for the production while IWK will supply the biosolids and contribute its expertise in the domestic sewage management area.

Faizal said the sewage management is crucial to ensure the sustainability of the environment and continuing research into it is important.

"For example, IWK's research on the wood quality of rubber trees indicated that the use of biosolid has increased tree perimeter and diameter, therefore making it one of the best materials to restore degraded lands," he said.

However, the product can only currently be used on non-edible plants for now.

IWK also plans to commercialise the end product from the waste water instead of sending it to landfills.

"There are roughly about 100,000 tonnes being produced yearly, so we are looking at how much can be used for the application. This is all in line with green technology," he said.

Dr Xavier said there are ongoing studies being conducted to see how the waste water can be turned back into energy.