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Hike after SESB meter change?

Sohan Das

LABUAN: Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Dr James Maximus Ongkili said he will look into complaints by consumers that the recent replacement of SESB meters had in some cases caused an increase in the electricity charges of households.

Maximus, who was here recently to visit Departments under his Ministry and inspected the Patau-Patau sub-station accompanied by local Member of Parliament Rozman Datuk Isli, said:

“I have been told of such complaints and an independent body will be set up to verify whether there was a connection in the alleged hike in electricity charges with the replacement of the old meters.”

He believed that digital meters are more accurate.

Maximus assured that as far as he knew there was no hike in SESB tariff rates and “neither we have an intention to review it as this is part of the 13th General Election promise.” Since the beginning of this year, SESB (Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd) here had, without any request, been replacing analog SESB meters with digital ones.

While in some cases there had been no complaints that the

charges had gone up, there were complaints from others that the “unnecessary” exercise had strangely caused their bills to soar.

One consumer told *Daily Express* that following the change of the meter, his bills which used to be about RM180 per month increased to RM200, while there was no use of extra electricity nor he had installed additional appliances in the house.

In another case, it was said that the bill which used to be about RM500 per month had increased to RM800.

It is not known what had caused the sudden and strange hike in some cases. Some said it could be due to “mis-calibration” of the new meters. The question that has risen is whether it is necessary for the loss-making SESB, which depends on Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) to subsidise its operational cost, to spend money to purchase and replace faultless meters.

The change of the electricity meter is reminiscent of the incident in 2001 in Sabah when under then Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam some 100,000 water meters were replaced at a scandalous cost of RM250 million triggering a public outcry against the move and unnecessary expenditure.

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Maximus and Rozman at the Patau-Patau sub-station.