New Straits Times : 16 October 2006 It will be a burden to everyone. This was the response of consumers following the government&#65533;s decision to increase water tariffs by 15 per cent in the Klang Valley. Taman Mayang Jaya and Taman Megah Residents&#65533; Association chairman Liew Wei Beng said with the fuel price and electricity tariff hikes this year, a rise in water tariffs would further burden the people.<br /><br />"Although some consumers may not have to pay more, they will still be affected. <br /><br />"Businesses like food traders will incur additional cost and pass it on to consumers," he said.<br /><br />On Saturday, Energy, Water and Communications Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said the tariff hike was necessary as Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syabas) was saddled with a RM2.3 billion debt when it took over from Selangor Water Management Corporation on Jan 1, last year. <br /><br />Taman Mastiara Residents&#65533; Association chairman Nadzry Abd Hamid said the public should not be burdened by the RM2.3 billion debt.<br /><br />"It seems like the consumers are being forced to share the debt and this is not the right way to get out of the problem. <br /><br />"Although it is just 15 per cent, we will still have to dig deep into our pockets, more so the lower-income group," said Nadzry.<br /><br />Subang Jaya Zone 1 Residents&#65533; Committee treasurer A.S. Gill felt the hike was unjustified.<br /><br />"Syabas must improve the water quality before implementing new rates. It is unfair if we have to pay a higher rate for water of poor quality," he said.<br /><br />Federation of Malaysian Consumers&#65533; Association president N. Marimuthu said as only the high-end users would be directly affected by the tariff hike, consumers should conserve water.<br /><br />"As consumers, of course we won&#65533;t be happy with any tariff increase but we also have to be realistic. We can&#65533;t expect to get anything for free and cheap forever," he said.<br /><br />The 15 per cent increase in water tariff rates will affect those who consume more than 30 cubic metres per month.<br /><br />For consumers who use between 20 and 25 cubic metres monthly, the increase will be six per cent. <br /><br />The effective date for the new rates will be announced by the Selangor government soon.<br /><br />The decision to increase the tariffs was reached after Syabas met the conditions of its concession agreement to reduce the level of non-revenue water (NRW).<br /><br />Under the agreement, the tariff hike was supposed to have taken effect from Jan 1, but it was delayed because the audit to confirm the reduction of NRW was not completed. 