

ENERGY

ERC to hold steady on electricity bill

YUTHANA PRAIWAN 6)

The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) is maintaining its monthly electric bill during September to December at an average of 3.5966 baht per kilowatt-hour (unit) on the back of a stable fuel tariff (Ft) rate.

Power bills have been stable over the previous two periods — January-April and May-August.

According to the ERC, power bills are largely in line with a decreased Ft rate of 15.9 satang per unit, caused by higher natural gas supply.

Viraphol Jirapraditkul, commissioner and spokesman, said the ERC has accumulated cash of 3.9 billion baht to be provided as a direct subsidy.

The cash left over from several periods for which the ERC partially applied the Ft rate totals 15.297 billion baht, so the 3.9 billion baht is enough to support the subsidy from September to December.

The remaining 11.397 billion baht is expected for preparations in increasing the power rate in 2019.

Fuel prices from May to August are in an upcycle trend.

Natural gas in particular is expected to increase by another 17.54 baht per million British thermal units (BTU) to 279.94 baht.

A one-baht change in the gas price per BTU will cause a 4-6 satang per unit shift in the Ft rate.

Moreover, the baht has weakened from 32.05 baht against the US dollar for the May to August period to 32.14 baht, according to the exchange rate at the Bank of Thailand.

Moreover, local lignite coal has increased by 0.63% to 5,939 baht per tonne from 5,887.

But Mr Viraphol said the ERC has accumulated funds from earlier this year and aims to peg the Ft rate from September to December.

"All of these factors are set to increase power bills, but the ERC predicts the fixed rate will not place a financial burden on power consumers," he said.

The ERC said power demand during the September-to-December period is set to rise by 5.74% to 62.04 billion units.

Natural gas still makes up a large proportion of the country's power generation at 60.5%, while electricity purchased from Laos represents 14%.

Lignite and imported coal come next at 9.57% and 6.94%, respectively.

Some fuel prices are slightly increasing, such as diesel, up 1.21 baht per litre or 5.6% to 22.76 baht per litre.

Imported coal has risen by 32.13 baht per tonne to 2,526.73 and lignite is stable at 693 baht per tonne.

The ERC estimates that the feed-in tariff for state utilities purchasing power from renewable operators during the same period will total 15.751 billion baht, up from 15.072 billion in the prior period.