

ENERGY

Activists demand cheaper, public-focused power plan

APINYA WIPATAYOTIN 3

An advocacy group is planning to ask the Energy Ministry to revise its Power Development Plan draft, which it says has failed to raise people's awareness on energy saving and may ultimately burden consumers with high electricity charges.

The call for a revision comes as Thailand gears up to launch its national Power Development Plan (PDP) for 2019-2037, which was put up for public hearings in Bangkok and four other regions last month.

The final hearing on the PDP draft took place in Bangkok on Dec 24, after similar hearings were held in Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, Surat Thani and Chon Buri.

Suphakit Nuntavorkarn, a researcher at the Healthy Public Policy Foundation and a sustainable energy advocate, voiced his concerns over the erroneous load forecast assumptions contained in the draft.

He said the new PDP does not take into account the fact that the country's actual average peak load has been declining since 1998, thus paving the way for the

construction of more power plants to meet the forecast demand, which is far higher than real demand.

As a result, Mr Suphakit said, customers will lose out because the cost of constructing new power plants will ultimately be passed on to them.

Thailand's average peak load decreased from 6.4% in 1998-2006 to 1.45% between 2013-2018 because of the global economic downturn and numerous energy savings campaigns.

The new PDP draft assumes the peak load for 2019-2037 to be 73,211 megawatts — higher than the peak load of 40,879 mW in 2018.

"The real victims of the government's new PDP are the consumers," he said.

"We will send a letter to ask the ministry to revise the draft for the benefit of the people."

"The plan was created to justify the construction of megapower plants — such as the two 700-mW plants planned for the Western region, the bidding processes for which are expected next year," he said.