

B400m for LED campaign

Energy policymakers have kicked off a subsidy campaign to encourage businesses and households to switch from fluorescent light bulbs to those using light-emitting diodes (LED) to help save energy, says Energy Minister Narongchai Akrasanee.

He said the government would set aside about 400 million baht for a budget from the energy conservation fund next fiscal year to support the LED project. The pilot project will ask for cooperation in switching from state agencies with offices exceeding 2,000 square metres.

The LED campaign was introduced to the public in 2013, but it did not go over well as the country was embroiled in political turmoil.

In 2013, the government replaced the Defence Ministry's lighting system with 310,000 LED lights at a cost of 395 million baht. In 2014, it installed 460,000 sets of LED lights at the Justice Ministry and Royal Thai Navy for 950 million baht. The government plans to install 100,000 LED lights at the Royal Thai Air Force.

Funding will come from a levy on petrol and diesel consumption of 25 satang per litre, making up 20 billion baht per year, said Thammayos Srichuay, director-general of the Alternative Energy Development and Efficiency Department.

The budget will make up 20-30% of the total cost each household or state office pays to switch to LED, he said.

Mr Thammayos said the campaign was one of several tools to help reduce power consumption for lights by 12.5 billion kilowatt hours a year by 2035. Last year, Thailand consumed 25 billion units for lighting, or 15% of total power consumption.

The high LED retail price is the major deterrent for consumers. LED lights consume 60% less electricity than fluorescent bulbs and 80% less than regular bulbs, but LED lights cost six times more than the latter.

"The first stage is to increase LED demand to reduce costs of commercial production," he said.

Lighting and Equipment Plc (L&E), Thailand's largest LED producer, said LED demand rose rapidly in the last few years and economies of scale would help cut production costs. LED production cost has dipped 20% per year because of demand growth, making LED more competitive with fluorescent bulbs, as L&E tripled production capacity.

