



The Herald

Zesa to unveil new prepaid metering system

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ZESA Holdings will in March introduce a new prepaid smart metering system as part of measures to partially cure load-shedding and other consumer grievances.



If fully implemented, the system would enable landlords and tenants to easily monitor their electricity use and spend as much as they can afford.

This creates a greater awareness and control of costs.

Energy and Power Development Minister Elton Mangoma yesterday said the smart meter system would also help in reducing electricity debts, enabling the power utility to secure constant electricity supplies.

Minister Mangoma said the system was more advanced than the Cash Power 2000 system that was phased out three years ago. "The new system will start in March and we will begin with business clients. Mid year, households would start buying the meters. The meters would be very affordable with the cheapest pegged at US\$30.

"It is set to solve all the problems faced by consumers in the country including load-shedding. When every user is paying, then Zesa would have enough money to ensure excellent power distribution."

The Minister said the new system would put an end to estimates and physical checking system that had earned the power utility a bad reputation.

"Estimates would be a thing of the past and there would be no need for Zesa employees to physically get readings for billing. The billing system had been very bad and we had received endless queries from consumers," he said.

With the new system, the minister said, fraudulent connections would be easily detected and the consumer would make his own budget on using electricity.

The new system was announced at a time when electricity consumers were complaining about uneven distribution of power.

Most e-mail messages sent to The Herald are from consumers registering displeasure at what they believe is unfair load-shedding.

Mrs Evelyn Maringa of Kuwadzana Extension felt Zesa was being unfair to her community.

"At times we go for a week without electricity without any explanation. It appears like the so-called load-shedding is targeting our area.

"Despite all that blackout, bills will be unbelievably high. Even if we spend the whole month away from home, we still get shocking bills," Mrs Maringa said.

On January 18, Tasununguka Ziki of Nyanga sent an e-mail message complaining about blackouts.

"What explanation does Zesa give to these blackouts? Then it was forex and now what is it? No electricity, no development".

Said Msichili Memory of Zvishavane: "Is Highlands not part of Zvishavane? Zesa tinyarewo please. Two weeks without electricity while Makwasha and Mandaba have continuous power supplies."

Nyari of Gweru, on January 25, said: "Can our power utility please explain how we save power by shedding Riverside from 6am till 9pm daily while Lundi Park and Athlone have continuous power?"