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Tenaga's monopoly has to end

TENAGA Nasional Bhd (TNB) has incurred the ire of customers again, this time over changes in its billing system.

It changed customers' account numbers without informing them. This resulted in confusion and inconvenience among thousands. Ironically, the change in account numbers was designed to improve its billing system.

Unaware of the changes, most continued to pay into their old accounts. Its customer service agents seemed to be giving conflicting advice. One customer was told to go to a TNB outlet to reverse his payment while another was told not to worry because his information was accurate in TNB's system.

TNB's online FAQ says customers don't have to update their auto debit facilities but encourages them to change their favourite biller information to the new account details. It does not give any deadline.

Banks, however, are telling clients that favourite biller information should be updated before Oct 19, after which TNB's old account closes. Should not have TNB emphasised this? Will there be more confusion?

And why wasn't the change in account number better publicised?

TNB says it announced it on its website, on the back of electricity bills and at its kiosks. It wouldn't hurt to take out newspaper or television ads before the change.

TNB aspires to be a global player, but how can it attain such lofty ideals when a straightforward customer engagement on new account numbers is messed up?

Perhaps the time has come to end TNB's monopoly of being the sole transmitter and distributor of electricity. Besides voicing out their grievances, customers don't have any other option, and TNB knows this.

Luckily, it doesn't enjoy a monopoly in power generation. There are many independent power producers and this has helped avert outages.

Competition will help boost the national utility company's efficiency. Just look at Telekom Malaysia Bhd which for the longest time was the sole telco. Subsequently, the sector was liberalised and more players came in.

To hold its own, Telekom had to become more efficient and productive and today it can compete toe-to-toe with the others in its field. It is time to do the same in the power sector and give Malaysians a choice. **FocusM**

VALUATOR

Company(Brand)	Mention	Tone	ROI
Independent Power Producer (IPP) (Independent Power	1	0	0
Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM Berhad) (Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM	3	0	0
Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) (Tenaga Nasional)	11	0	0