

Water talks: One thing at a time, urge senators
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The federal government has been urged to put off talks on the Pahang-Selangor inter-state raw water transfer project until the water restructuring project in Selangor is resolved.

NONESelangor government-appointed Senator S Ramakrishnan (right) said that the state needs to finalise issues with the National Water Service Commission (Span) in areas such as water tariffs, before talks on the water transfer project.

"We call upon the minister and government to not think just one way, by saying that the (water transfer) project is non-negotiable and insisting that there is now a bottleneck," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby today.

He was responding to news reports that the federal government wants to expedite talks on the water transfer project, which involves transferring 1,890 million litres of raw water daily from Sg Semantan in Pahang to a treatment plant in Hulu Langat, Selangor through a 44.5km tunnel.

It is understood that the Selangor government is worried that until new water tariffs can be finalised, the cost of the multi-billion ringgit water transfer project will be added to the tariff rates.

Currently, the state government is preparing to buy up the state's water assets which include four companies - water distributor Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syabas), water treatment company Puncak Niaga Holdings Bhd, and water suppliers Syarikat Pengeluar Air Sungai Selangor Sdn Bhd (Splash) and Konsortium Abbas Sdn Bhd.

Project viability questioned

The Selangor government is arguing that it can better manage the state's water assets and reduce non-revenue water, currently at 34 percent, in order to provide affordable water tariff rates.

The Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry has reportedly given the state government the green light to negotiate a deal with the companies and has urged it to complete discussions by the end of this month.

water paipsRamakrishnan also stressed that there is no guarantee that the water transfer project, originally scheduled for completion for 2014, will be viable in the long term.

"We are not sure if there will be water in Pahang in six years when the tunnels are completed as things are changing - there's global warming, change in weather patterns - so we don't want to be caught in a situation where after spending RM9 billion to bring the water but there is no water," he said.

Another Selangor-appointed Senator, Syed Husin Ali, said that the federal government must not continue to be at loggerheads with the state government because the public is hoping for a speedy resolution to the problem.

"The political tension is getting intense and other side of the fence is using water as a political tool in its bid to regain states held by Pakatan Rakyat," he said.

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