

**London's legal eagles to assist S'gor in water tussle**  
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The Selangor state government has engaged a London-based legal firm, in an attempt to resolve its ongoing tussle with the federal government in reclaiming control of the state's waterworks.

NONE Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim (left) has met with a team of senior lawyers to look at legal avenues to end the deadlock, according to a statement from the state's secretariat today.

"We explained the reluctance of the federal government to cooperate in the implementation of the act that they enacted. The attitude of the federal government reeks of cronyism and an emphasis on political interests before the interests of the people," said the statement.

Puncak Niaga Holdings Bhd and its subsidiary Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syabas) have been part of a tug-of-war between the state and federal government.

The opposition led-Selangor is insisting on buying over the company in order for it to be restructured before allowing it to be federalised under the Water Services Industry Act 2006 (WSIA).

The state administration had repeatedly argued that this move was necessary because Syabas' performance had failed to meet the stipulations in the water concession agreement and also refused to have its accounts audited.

However, Puncak Niaga, whose boss Rozali Ismail has strong links with Umno, has refused to budge, saying that the price offered for the takeover is too low.

"As it is a reputable law firm, we hope that it will be able to draw upon their legal experience in dealing with similar situations elsewhere.

"A lack of transparency and accountability lies at the root of the problem. Concession contracts were supposed to have been conducted via open tender - a simple term but one that is difficult to execute if one is not serious about weeding out corruption," it added.

The secretariat reiterated that federal government's actions to further delay the problem and to sabotage the implementation of WSIA is putting at stake the welfare of millions residing in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya for "petty political considerations".

"The people of Selangor continue to bear the financial burdens of a privatisation exercise gone terribly wrong. Instead of maximising the resources of the state which belong to all citizens, the concessionaires compromised on water quality and delivery, continually pushing tariffs up while actually delivering worse levels of service."

