

Selangor MB brushes off pro-Syabas protest

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By Koh Jun Lin

Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim has brushed off a pro-Syabas protest outside the state secretariat building today, saying that the state water concessionaire or its parent company had probably paid them.

The unionists from Pekerja-pekerja Perbadanan Urus Air Selangor (PPPUAS) demanded that the state government call off its bid to take over Syabas, on the grounds that it could affect their welfare benefits.

"I don't know what has happened (to their benefits). They were probably paid by Syabas or Puncak Niaga to do this kind of work.

"However, they won't get the same kind of entitlements as the Syabas chairperson. That's all," quipped Khalid when asked about the protest at a press conference today.

The peaceful protest started at about noon today, with some 100 unionists led by PPPUAS president Abdul Aziz Ali handing over a memorandum to urge the state government to cancel its takeover plans and support the federal government-backed Sungai Langat II Water Treatment Plant project.

"We submit this memorandum to oppose the menteri besar's takeover of Syabas. We work hard and want to show that we are the best staff and the best company," he said.

Abdul Aziz also said that the union was 'worried and afraid' about the welfare of some 3,800 workers if the takeover takes place, adding that, "Syabas is the best".

The workers hail from Puas, which in turn is a subsidiary of Syabas.

He also said that Selangor's water woes are not because of poor management, but because water treatment plants could not cope with demand.

Besides chanting "Long live Syabas," the group also held up banners that amongst others read "We want treated water, not dam water", and "We support Syabas,"

The memorandum was received by Khalid's aide Ahmad Nazuli Ismail and the group dispersed shortly after 1pm.