

NGOs give Syabas two weeks to prove water crisis

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A coalition of NGOs today has given Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor (Syabas) two weeks to produce hard evidence of the alleged water crisis, or have the allegation declared null and void.

Coalition Against Water Privatisation (CAWP), in handing over a memorandum to Syabas today, has given Syabas till Aug 7 to make a full public disclosure of technical details of its operations.

A group of five CAWP representatives led by Klang MP Charles Santiago (right) gathered at Syabas headquarters at Jalan Pantai Baru at 11am today.

"If Syabas intends to ration water, if it intends to continue claiming that the state faces a water crisis, it will need to provide evidence.

"If it fails to do so, we will declare its claims of a water crisis null and void," said Santiago.

Syabas has been warning of a water shortage in the state, a move the critics see as aimed at forcing an agreement on the Langat 2 water treatment plant project.

CAWP's memorandum calls for disclosure on seven points, including the total flow of untreated water from dams and the pump system to the treatment plants, and the water meter readings of treated water to the treatment plant and to consumers.

It also calls for the release of the logbooks and calibrated water readings as well as holdings company Puncak Niaga's payments to its subsidiary Syabas for its sales of water in the same period.

Five representatives allowed to enter premises

This morning, CAWP had requested that 10 NGO representatives from CAWP be allowed to meet with Syabas vice-president V Subramaniam to hand over the memorandum.

However, at the Syabas headquarters entrance, only five representatives, including Santiago, Aliran exco member Sarajun Hoda, Tenaga Nasional Berhad representative Mohammad Rozeli, MTUC secretary-general Abdul Halim Mansor, and Penang Senator Syed Shahir Syed Mohamud, were allowed to enter the premises.

This, too, was after lengthy negotiations with Syabas staff, who had initially insisted that only two representatives from the coalition be allowed to enter the Syabas premises.

Sixty people were present at today's memorandum handover, including representatives from 30 CAWP-affiliated NGOs as well as 30 members of the public.

There was a heavy police presence at the Syabas headquarters, and although Santiago had asked Syabas staff to allow the media to accompany them into the premises, the press were denied entry.

Meanwhile, when asked about Syabas' response to the coalition's attempts to engage with the alleged water crisis thus far, MTUC member A Karuna, who was unable to join the party into Syabas's office, said that the company had so far dismissed questions and proposals that the coalition had made in connection to the crisis as "irrelevant".

The memorandum hand-over comes amid criticism that Syabas' claims of a water crisis are false, with the Selangor state government alleging that Syabas had 'manufactured' the situation as a tactical move.

Santiago had previously demanded that the water concessionaire furnish facts about the water crisis, but Syabas has yet to respond to these demands.

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