

## **Khalid seeks meeting with DPM over water dispute**

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**By Nigel Aw**

Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim today said he was prepared to meet with Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin to resolve the stalemate on the water issue in the state.

This, he said, includes accepting the proposed RM8.65 billion Langat 2 water treatment facility on condition that the federal government give its nod for the state's long-stalled water restructuring exercise.

"If you agree to the restructuring, we will incorporate Langat 2 into the restructuring. Then let's also get a team to work out the reduction of non-revenue water and look for other sources of water," he told Malaysiakini in an interview today.

Khalid explained that the restructuring was essential to stave off a 75 percent hike in water tariff which is compulsory under the existing agreement with Syabas but is currently being blocked by the state government.

Syabas had since taken the case to court, demanding compensation from the state government for preventing the hike which amounts to a staggering RM1.2 billion up to 2010.

"I met Muhyiddin on Friday and he told me he is willing to sit down and talk to me with reference that the people's interests will be taken care of. I said okay, let's go ahead. I am waiting for that," said Khalid.

Khalid said his office will send a letter to Muhyiddin, who chairs the special cabinet committee overseeing the Selangor issue, by Tuesday for a meeting.

'No land for Langat 2 until restructuring done'

On Monday, Muhyiddin had announced that an open tender for the Langat 2 water treatment plant will be called with or without the state government's consent.

Asked if the Selangor will approve the land for the project, Khalid replied: "Not yet, not until they resolve (the water restructuring first).

"They can do a tender, they can do publicity. We shouldn't stop them from doing that. But those they can do, they do, those I can do, I do," he said.

Khalid added that a resolution through the special cabinet committee would be preferable but if all options are exhausted Selangor will take the federal government to court for a judicial review over its decision to block the restructuring exercise.

The water restructuring exercise which is required under the Water Services Act 2006 has already been carried out in Perak, Malacca, Negri Sembilan, Johor and Perlis, but for some reason, Khalid said, was being blocked by the federal government in Selangor.

The exercise will essentially see all water services in the state taken over from the private sector and consolidated under a special purpose vehicle.

The infrastructure will subsequently be handed over to the federal government but will be managed by the state government.

When consolidated under a single entity under the state government, Khalid said this would improve efficiency and also solve other water concerns in the state.

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