

'Najib placing interest of cronies ahead of rakyat'

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COMMENT Even in the light of sheer incompetence, Najib Abdul Razak and Peter Chin continues to defend Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor (Syabas) and blame the Selangor government, placing the interest of cronies ahead that of the rakyat.

It was the Barisan Nasional government which started the privatisation of the water industry in Selangor in 1996. It was the BN government which signed the concession agreement to allow Syabas to increase tariffs by 37 percent in 2009, a further 25 percent in 2012, 15 percent in 2015 and further increases every three subsequent years.

However, when Syabas failed to deliver its services to the residents of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor over the past month, the BN government has chosen to lay blame on the Pakatan Rakyat Selangor government for failing to "approve" the construction of the multi-billion ringgit Langat 2 water treatment plant.

How Langat 2, which is only scheduled to be completed in 2014 at the very earliest, could have prevented the current water crisis in KL and Selangor is beyond our comprehension.

Despite the above, both the prime minister and the Energy, Green Technology and Water minister have chosen to defend and deflect criticisms laid on Syabas, clearly indicating that profit for BN cronies is more important than the sufferings of the man-on-the-street.

Najib has the cheek to say that he is "saddened to see people living in flats having to lift buckets of water to the upper floors." However in the same breath, Najib claims BN is unable to resolve the crisis because the Selangor government "won't give the development order" for Langat 2.

As highlighted above, the current water crisis in Gombak, Ampang and Kuala Lumpur has nothing to do with Langat 2 and everything to do with Syabas' inability to maintain its existing water supply services.

'Water concession cannot be terminated'

Similarly, when Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim once again suggested to the federal government that the Syabas concession be terminated for poor performance so that the state government can step into the management to rectify the shortcomings, the proposal was rejected outright by Chin.

Chin (left) gave the ridiculous excuse that "the Selangor government cannot take over Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syabas) for it violates the conditions stipulated in the water concession agreement".

He said the water concession company was appointed to manage and administer water supply in Selangor in 2004 and the state government would liable if it were to terminate the contract.

The excuse by the minister demonstrates the extent to which the BN government is willing to tolerate transgressions by its cronies, even if the rakyat is suffering from extended water services disruption.

It appears that even if Syabas was to default on all the terms of its concession agreement, the concession agreement cannot be terminated.

The Selangor government wants to terminate the Syabas concession agreement to ensure that the quality of water services can be improved and the state will not suffer from such disruptions as a result of poor maintenance of its water treatment facilities.

However, based on the concession agreement, the termination can only be carried out with the consent of the federal government.

Hence, the Syabas concession agreement can be terminated if Syabas failed to fulfil it's part of the bargain. The only reason why the termination cannot proceed is because the BN government is dead against it and will protect Syabas at all cost.

It is clear that the BN government is beyond redemption and is unable to change itself to prioritise the interest of the rakyat.

While Najib espoused "transformation" in his speeches over the past four years, no "transformation" could be seen as BN's privatisation cronies are not only fully protected by his administration, they have continued to prosper at the expense of the people.

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