

**Sultan's help sought to stop privatisation of water**  
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The Perak Consumers Association (PCA) has written an appeal to Sultan Azlan Shah to stop the Minister of Finance Inc's (MOFI) proposed takeover of the state water assets from the Perak Water Board (PWB), as it will push water tariffs up.

NONEPCA president Abdul Rahman Said Alli (right) said the appeal was made to the Sultan two weeks ago when they heard that a unit of MOFI, Pengurusan Aset Air Bhd (PAAB) is going ahead with the takeover from PWB.

"In any privatisation scheme, it is the company that makes money at the expense of consumers, who end up eventually as the losers," said Rahman.

During Pakatan's rule of the state, the then state Finance, Infrastructure, Public Utilities, Energy and Water Committee chairman Ngeh Koo Ham, had warned that the federal government's unilateral move to privatise the PWB could result in consumers paying double the present rate of 70 sen per cubic metre.

Nga had said that at present, Perak ranks second to Penang in providing such low water rates.

"What is the necessity for selling PWB when it is minting money for the state government?" Rahman asked.

Menteri Besar Zambry Abdul Kadir was reported as saying that PWB had earned RM88.9 million of which RM15.7 million had been net earnings for the period ending April 30, an increase of 8.2 percent when compared to RM82.2 million in the corresponding period last year.

Rahman claimed that PWB has cash reserves of RM400 million and the board is paying royalty to the tune of RM60 million per year to the state government.

Consumers' views not sought

It was reported that PAAB would complete the takeover of water assets in Perak and Perlis by end of May in a move to regulate the water services industry.

NONEThe national water restructuring plan, involving Peninsular Malaysia states and Labuan, is meant to relieve states and concessionaires of the heavy burden of funding future water infrastructure development.

Rahman claims that the main objective of PAAB is to control all the states' water assets and use these assets as collateral for soft bank loans to fund repair of leaking and rusty pipes nationwide.

"What happens to the Perak water assets which run into millions of ringgit, if PAAB happens to fold up?" asked the PCA president.

According to Rahman, the Perak water assets were bought by PWB from the water deposits paid over the years by consumers in Perak.

"As such, the state government must first get the consent of consumers who are the main stakeholders in the Perak water assets before trying to privatise the board, " said the consumerist.

He said Pakatan during its 10-month rule, had tried to protect the consumers' interests by opposing the three federal initiatives - the privatisation of PWB, the implementation of the Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Act 2007 and the inclusion of sewerage charges to water bills.

"However, with the takeover of the state by BN, privatisation has become the norm at the expense of consumers," he lamented.

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