

THE STAR

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# Najib: Resolve water impasse for sake of the people

**KUALA LUMPUR:** All political differences should be set aside to resolve the water issue stalemate in Selangor, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He added that the crisis had risen due to the difference in view between the Federal and Selangor governments.

"Because it's a serious problem, we should set aside political issues and differences to settle this.

"We must look at the request of the people more than anything else,"

he said after the Barisan Nasional Convention here yesterday.

Najib was responding to Sultan of Selangor Tuanku Sharafuddin Idris Shah's warning that the water transfer project between Selangor and Pahang could cause a water crisis if not resolved fast.

In Klang, state Water Review Panel member Charles Santiago said Selangor would be forced to spend more money if the water impasse continued.

Santiago, who is also Klang MP,

said a clause in the concessionaire agreement between Selangor and Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor (Syabas) allowed for a penalty to be charged if a scheduled increase in tariff did not take place.

"This took effect at the end of 2008 and given this, the state government must pay the penalty for 2009, 2010 and so on until the issue is resolved," said Santiago. Santiago, who is also the Coalition Against Water Privatisation (CAWP) coordinator, said it was crucial for Selangor

to take over the state's entire water industry in order to ensure that the people received cheap and good quality water.

"If the state government does not take over, there will be a 37% tariff increase followed by a subsequent 25% and 20% increase within the next six years," he said.

He added that with the state managing the water industry, the tariff increase would only be an initial 12% followed by 12% and another 12% within the same time frame.

"The state will not make any profit but merely produce and provide cheap and clean water for the people," he said.

"Water security is a non-issue at the moment as we are not facing any water rationing or shortage."

In the event of a water crisis, he said it could be because of climate change and not other factors.

Given that more than 90% of water for consumption comes from rivers, he said it was crucial that they are kept clean.