

PM's Department unit to decide on DBP-Dawama crisis

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 4 — The Dawama-DBP printing and marketing concession crisis has been handed over to Prime Minister's Department's Public-Private Partnership Unit (UKAS) to be resolved, said Deputy Education Minister Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi.

UKAS is a federal agency formed in 2009 and tasked with handling public-private partnership programmes and privatisation projects.

Puad told *The Malaysian Insider* that DBP, or Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, cannot decide on its own whether to end its agreement with Dawama Sdn Bhd.

Dawama holds a 12-year contract to print and market DBP's books and magazines until 2014.

"DBP cannot decide whether to end (the concession with Dawama) or otherwise," said Puad, who held an hour-long meeting with the Dawama Workers Association and DBP in Putrajaya last night.

On that note, he also allayed fears that the crisis would affect the supply of school textbooks for the 2012/2013 term, saying that DBP has a "contingency plan" to ensure that all books will be printed and made available by year-end.

It is understood that this involves 53 different textbook titles for 2012 and reprints for a further 175 books.

Puad said the Education Ministry has also urged Dawama's workers to refer their case to the Human Resources Ministry as they were still considered employees of the printing company.

"They cannot just resign or find alternative jobs because if so, they will not be able to seek compensation," he said, adding that it was a baseless excuse by the company to force its workers to take unpaid leave because of the concession crisis with DBP.

"Dawama must take full responsibility because the workers union was not consulted first," he said.

The DBP-Dawama crisis peaked on Monday when Dawama ordered all 380 of its mainly Malay staff to take leave without pay indefinitely owing to financial difficulties.

It is understood that Dawama had cited its ongoing dispute with DBP — an agency under the Education Ministry — over school textbooks as the reason for the action.

In June, *The Malaysian Insider* reported that the crisis between DBP and Dawama, the agency's printing company and distributor, could affect the supply of school textbooks for the 2012-2013 term.

Describing the situation as a "cold war", a source told this news portal that it had likely erupted after DBP appointed another party to print school textbooks, and that this could have "offended" Dawama. In September 2002, Dawama was given a 12-year contract to print and market all books and magazines by DBP. It expires in 2014.

It is also believed that the bad blood between DBP and Dawama reached a critical level after DBP director Datuk Termuzi Abdul Aziz recently gave Dawama a deadline to buck up and overcome a decline in sales of DBP books and magazines over the past couple of years

On Tuesday, Gerakan Darurat Bahasa (GDB) called on the government to stop the privatisation exercise of the printing and marketing of DBP's books.

GDB administrative secretary Hasni Abas said the move had clearly failed and the activity should be handled by DBP on its own.

Bernama Online has also reported Puad as saying that Dawama has been facing financial difficulties and has been using DBP as a scapegoat to save itself.

He disputed the contents of Dawama's letter to its employees, which, among others, claimed that DBP did not allow it to print its English science and mathematics textbooks and caused it a RM100 million loss.

"Dawama lied. DBP did not get that contract. If it did not, how would it have handed it over to Dawama? So why is Dawama raising this when others got the job?" he said.

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