**Putrajaya's RM120m aid to Syabas will not solve Selangor's water woes, Khalid says**
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 3 — Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim today questioned the federal government's extra allocation of RM120 million to Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor (SYABAS), saying that it will not solve Selangor's water supply woes.

The Selangor Mentri Besar claimed the need for additional aid was proof of SYABAS' alleged failure to manage the state's water resources, insisting that a restructuring of the industry - which includes a takeover of SYABAS by Selangor would be the best approach.

Khalid **(picture)** accused Syabas of not reducing water wastage effectively, saying that the company had failed to cut down its non-revenue water (NRW) despite increase in funds.

"History has proven that although SYABAS received soft loan from the federal government, but the company that has received a concession to manage water in Klang Valley for 30 years still fails to lower the percentage of non-revenue water (NRW) that is currently at 33 per cent."

According to Khalid, SYABAS was bound by a 2004 privatisation agreement between itself, Selangor and the federal government to cut NRW levels to 19.98 per cent in 2011.

Khalid claimed that Syabas' failure to trim NRW down was not due to a lack of funds, but was caused by the company's alleged weakness in carrying out plans to reduce NRW.

The PKR leader claimed that SYABAS' purported failure to cut NRW had caused Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya to miss a chance to save around 663 million litres of water per day, which he said would ensure continued supply of treated water up until 2017.

Khalid demanded full transparency over SYABAS' use of the RM120 million fund.

"If Najib insists on continuing the RM120 million loan, the Selangor government will ask SYABAS to give a detailed breakdown of expenditure that will be spent using that fund to prevent penyelewengan (abuse)," he added.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced a RM120 million allocation for SYABAS, on top of a total of RM606 million previously allocated to the company.

Earlier today, Khalid's political secretary Faekah Husin told *The Malaysian Insider* that with the RM120 million, Najib appears to be admitting that Syabas is not financially competent.

She said that Khalid's main concern was that the RM120 million could possibly translate into higher charges for water in Selangor.

"MB's major concern is (that) since the amount is an additional loan, obviously that will reflect to the increment of tariff," she said.

When asked to comment on Najib yesterday saying that 430 projects have been delayed over the state's water supply problems, Faekah said that was an old issue.

"Yes, previously there were some projects pending because Syabas refused to give clearance. That issue has been solved, Syabas is no longer the authority to give clearance but the Penyelia Air formed by the State. PM is talking bout yester-year issue," she said.

Faekah, who is also Khalid's aide, confirmed that there are currently no projects delayed over water supply concerns.

"Yes, and if there still is, the aggrieved party should inform the state. We will investigate," she added.

Treated water supply in the country's most developed state has become major campaign fodder in the run-up to Election 2013 after utility company SYABAS raised the alarm in 2011 of a possible crisis in the near future due to near-zero reserves at the state's water treatment plants.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) promised domestic consumers free water up to 20 cubic metres on a monthly basis after it took over the Selangor government from the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition in Election 2008.

PR has recently locked horns with the BN federal government and SYABAS, the sole supplier of treated water in the rich state as well as the two neighbouring federal territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, for the past four years over the Klang Valley's water crisis.

The blame game between the private firm and the Selangor government has gone on for months and took a new turn earlier last month when the Khalid administration mooted a media drive, relating the state's version of events plus a weekly update of the water problem, alleging that a recent disruption was due to SYABAS's poor upkeep leading to faulty pumps in urban Wangsa Maju and Pudu Hulu Baru.

Continuing the attacks, Khalid announced on Wednesday his administration's plan to buy over SYABAS and other water concessions in the state to sustain its cheap water policy.

Khalid was yesterday reported saying that his administration had yet to receive a formal response from Putrajaya over Selangor's plans to buy over SYABAS.

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