

## **Govt OKs takeover of Selangor water players**

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**By Khairul Khalid**

The federal government has officially invoked WSIA (Water Services Industry Act) for a forced takeover all four private water concessionaires in Selangor, according to Energy, Green Technology and Water (Kettha) minister Maximus Ongkili in a statement today.

“The federal government does not wish to allow the protracted negotiation on the restructuring of the water industry between the Selangor government and the concessionaires, as well as the on-going water supply crisis plaguing the three regions, to cause the people and the national economy to suffer,” Ongkili said.

The decision was made during a cabinet meeting last Friday. WSIA allows for a federal intervention in cases of national interest.

The federal government enacted WSIA after three out of the four concessionaires failed to agree on the latest offer of RM9.65 billion stated in the MoU (memorandum of understanding) to resolve the longstanding water restructuring issue.

Selangor’s water concessionaires are Konsortium Abass, Puncak Niaga, Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor (Syabas) and Syarikat Pengeluar Air Selangor (Splash).

Ongkili also said that WSIA invocation is conditional upon the terms contained in the MoU signed between state and federal governments last February, including a heads of agreement and approval of the Langat 2 water treatment plant.

Nevertheless, Ongkili did not give specific details on who will be in control of the water industry once WSIA is invoked and the timeline for the federal takeover exercise

There have been conflicting messages in recent weeks from both state and federal government on who will assume control of Selangor’s water industry.

According to Klang MP Charles Santiago, Ongkili has indicated to him in a private discussion outside parliament that the federal government will control Selangor’s water assets and the leading agency will be SPAN (National Water Services Commission).

On the other hand, Selangor Menteri Besar (MB) Khalid Ibrahim has been insistent that Selangor government will be in full control.

“I have been given a draft of an agreement between the state and federal government related to the MoU signed last February. The state government will evaluate the agreement thoroughly before signing and will put the rakyat’s interest as the highest priority,” said Khalid in a statement.

The Selangor MB has also urged the state’s residents to be patient and continue saving water while the state government improves its water services.

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