Panel to study looming water crisis

Reps from Selangor Govt not invited to join Cabinet committee, says minister

By TASHNY SUKUMARAN and TEN EING HOCK

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cabinet has set up a committee to discuss the looming water crisis in Selangor, said Green Technology, Energy and Water Minister Datuk Seri Peter Chin.

Referring to Syabas’ proposal to ration water and the Selangor Government’s request to take over Syabas operations, Chin said: “We are studying these two matters and all issues regarding water supply in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.”

Chin will be in the committee that will be headed by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

The others in the committee include Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Noh Omar, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department and Pemandu CEO Datuk Seri Dr Jidin Jala and Federal Territories Minister Datuk Raja Nong Chik.

Datuk Seri Jamaluddin Jarjis will represent the Prime Minister’s Office.

Chin said representatives from the Selangor Government were not invited to join the Cabinet committee, which will hold its first meeting on July 5.

“If we need to hear their views, we will call them,” said Chin.

“The Cabinet decided on the committee at its meeting on Wednesday,” Chin said on the sidelines of the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers Conference 2012 here yesterday.

He added that the committee would tackle the issues in a “holistic manner”.

“In response, state executive councillor Elizabeth Wong said that without engaging the state government, any discussion by the committee would not have a meaningful come.

She said the state government would time pursuing its takeover of Syabas’ operations “with full speed” and that Syabas’ water rationing exercise was unjustified.

Meanwhile, Selangor Barisan Nasional (BN) executive council chairman Datuk Yap Tian Hong accused the Pakatan Rakyat-led state government of resorting to propaganda by saying it was taking over Syabas’ operations.

“This move does not completely solve water problem,” he said in a statement he said Yap was not executive councillor T.C. Koh had “ridiculously claimed” that the Pakatan Rakyat and Syabas would be colluding to take advantage of the coming general elections by creating water problems to cause “fear” among the public.

He added that another exco member Ronnie Liu, had visited the dams and has evidence that the Syabas was not facing water shortage.

“Issues and propaganda and political statements is only prove that they are uncaring to the state,” Yap said.

State govt bent on taking over Syabas operations

PUTRAJAYA: The Selangor Government is forging ahead with its planned takeover of water operations from concessionaire Syabas, preventing a memorandum to the Federal Government outlining their plan.

State executive councillors Dr Xavier Jayakumar and Ronnie Liu handed the memorandum to Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Seri Peter Chin here yesterday.

Dr Xavier reiterated that it was within the state’s power to take over Syabas’ operations as provided for under the concession agreement.

He said the agreement - signed between the state and federal governments and Syabas - empowered the state government to step in if Syabas failed to deliver.

“Syabas has gone against several conditions, so we have decided to take action, and under Clause 32 of the concession agreement, we have the power to take over Syabas’ management to improve the water industry and services in Selangor,” he said after handing over the memorandum to a senior ministerial official.

Dr Xavier said the state would give the ministry two weeks to respond, pointing out that everything was in place for a smooth transition of Syabas operations to state hands.

Liu claimed that even without the minister’s consent, the state had the power to take over Syabas’ operations to see if Syabas’ claims of a water crisis were true.

In a statement later, Dr Xavier said the state had told the Federal Government to set up a committee chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin that had failed to respond.

“Syabas was not facing water shortage, therefore there is no need for a federal committee,” he said.

He also disputed Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Noh Omar’s involvement in the special committee, claiming that he had been actively lobbying for construction of the Langat 2 water treatment plant.

The state government has refused to build the Langat 2 project to go ahead unless it was a state-owned services industry in Selangor is restored.