

# Central govt to appeal water verdict

Corry Elyda

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Following two private water companies, the central government has decided to file an appeal against a Central Jakarta District Court ruling that canceled the privatization of water in the capital city.

Central Jakarta District Court spokesman Bambang Kustopo said on Friday that besides PT PAM Lyonnaise Jaya (Palyja) and PT Air Aetra Jakarta (Aetra), the President, Vice President, finance minister and public works and public housing minister had also filed an appeal.

"They filed the appeal sometime last week," he said.

He said, however, that none of the plaintiffs had submitted an appeal memorandum, a document required for the appeal. "They have 14 days [from last week] to submit the legal memorandum," he said.

Last month, judges at the Cen-

tral Jakarta District Court ruled in favor of the Coalition of Jakarta Residents Opposing Water Privatization (KMMSAJ), ordering the annulment of a cooperation between city-owned PAM Jaya and the two private water operators that began in 1997 and was set to expire in 2023. The lawsuit was filed with the court in March 2013.

The plaintiffs were the President; Vice President; finance minister; public works and public housing minister; Jakarta administration; City Council; and city-owned water operator PAM Jaya, with the two private operators as codefendants.

In the verdict, presiding judge Iim Nurokhim said the cooperation was a form of negligence in fulfilling residents' right to water.

"The court has ordered the defendants to end the privatization of water in Jakarta and return the operation of water distribution in Jakarta to PAM Jaya, in accordance with

Bylaw No. 13/1992 on city-owned water operators," he said.

Attorney General's Office (AGO) spokesman Tony Spontana confirmed that his office had proposed an appeal against the ruling.

He said the lawyers were still completing the memorandum.

"The point is the Attorney General's Office does not agree with some parts of the panel of judges' ruling," he said.

KMMSAJ lawyer Arif Maulana expressed his disappointment about the central government's move to appeal.

"By filing an appeal, it means that [President Joko] Jokowi [Widodo's] administration has opposed the residents' voice and denied the constitutional order," he said.

Arif said the coalition hoped that the central government instead helped the city administration and PAM Jaya to end water privatization in Jakarta, which has caused tril-

lions of rupiah of state losses.

"The central government must admit that water privatization is a mistake from the old government," he said, adding that the appeal would benefit the private water operators.

Separately, Jakarta Governor Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama said that the city administration and PAM Jaya would not file an appeal.

"We want to end water privatization as soon as possible. The appeal will lengthen the process," he said, adding that the appeal would also cost money.

Ahok said the verdict would benefit Jakarta residents if it could be implemented directly. "However, if the legal process takes years, it will make us suffer," he said.

Ahok said the city administration's plan to acquire the shares was also to speed up the process. However, the acquisition cannot be executed because of the ongoing legal process.