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PBA halts excavation, reclamation works off Macallum coast

Penang Water Supply Corporation chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa (Right) said the project contractor, Wira Syukur (M) Sdn Bhd (WSSB), has voluntarily decided to halt all works at the area. Pic by STR/Zuhainy Zulkiffli

By BALVIN KAUR - April 1, 2019 @ 5:05pm

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) has stopped all excavation and reclamation works off the Macallum seafront.

Its chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the project contractor, Wira Syukur (M) Sdn Bhd (WSSB), has voluntarily decided to halt all works at the area.

“PBA and WSSB have not received any official stop work order from the authority.

“On March 30, WSSB did informed PBA it had received a letter from Penang State Lands and Mines Office (PTG), dated March 29, notifying them to apply for a Permit 4B, which was for the removal of sea sand.

“WSSB had applied for Permit 4B via the northeast district and land office but has yet to receive a reply,” he told a press conference at Komtar today.

On Thursday, some 2,000 fishermen, from Batu Uban to Kuala Sungai Pinang in Balik Pulau, claimed that sand dredging activity, about one nautical mile in the sea off Weld Quay, was causing problems to the fisherfolk on the island.

They claimed the sludge from the sand dredging resulted in more than 50 per cent drop in their catch, and that the spillover effect from the sludge could also be felt by fishermen in Balik Pulau.

To compound matters, they claimed the sludge also contained harmful substances, resulting in their catch being infected by bacteria such as E-coli and Salmonella.

Penang Fisherman Association chairman Nazri Ahmad had said that the problem started early last month, with no solution in sight.

It was reported that State Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh had said that it was not sand dredging activity but an undersea piping (tunnel) project to supply water from the mainland to the island by PBA.

He said the project was approved back in 2015.

Meanwhile, when asked on why excavation works were carried out before securing Permit 4B, Jaseni said “They had conditional approval.”

When asked to elaborate on the nature of the conditional approval, Jaseni declined to comment.

He said the excavation and reclamation works were related to the third Penang Submarine Pipeline Project, and not sand mining.

He said the state water authority were undertaking the submarine pipeline project for the benefit of the state and its people, in view of growing water demand.

“PBA is investing RM125 million into this project to deliver an additional 315 million litres of water per day to the island.

“Phase 1 and 2 of the project, with regards to the laying of the new pipelines on land in Butterworth and Penang, have been completed.

“Phase 3 involves the laying of twin 1,200mm undersea pipeline across a 3.2km stretch of the channel between Butterworth and Penang,” he said.

He said the seabed excavation works were necessary to dig a trench across the channel to encase the twin submarine pipeline below the seabed.

“This measure will protect the pipeline and prevent the pipeline from floating upwards,” he added.

Jaseni said part of the excavated material would be used to reclaim land at the Macallum seafront, which will house the landing point of the pipelines onto the island as well as an operations base for the project after it is commissioned.

“When the pipelaying works are completed, we will surrender the reclaimed land to the state government,” he added.

The other part of the excavated material, he said, would be disposed off at a sea-fill site approved by the Department of Environment (DoE) and the Northern Region Marine Department.

Jaseni said PBA and WSSB had been complying with the DoE’s condition for work, including submission of an independent monthly report, which also contains test results on seawater samples taken at three depth in a location 150 metres away from the worksite, the latest of which showed minimal variation in key seawater quality parameters compared to the baseline submitted in Nov 2018.

https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2019/04/474997/pba-halts-excavation-reclamation-works-macallum-coast