

1.4.2019

PRESS STATEMENT

by DATO' IR. JASENI MAIDINSA,
CEO of PBA Holdings Bhd and PBAPP.

3RD PENANG SUBMARINE WATER PIPELINE PROJECT, NOT SAND MINING

PENANG, Monday, 1.4.2019: The excavation and land reclamation works at the Macallum seafront area are related to the 3rd Penang Submarine Pipeline Project, and not sand mining.

Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) is undertaking the 3rd Penang Submarine Pipeline Project for the benefit of the State of Penang and its people, in view of growing water demand.

PBAPP is investing RM125 million into this project to deliver an additional 315 million litres of water per day (MLD) to the island.

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

Phase 3 involves the laying of twin 1,200mm undersea pipelines across a 3.2km stretch of the channel between Butterworth and Penang.

Seabed excavation works are necessary to dig a 3.2km trench across the channel to “encase” the twin submarine pipelines below the seabed. This measure will protect the pipelines and prevent the pipelines from floating upwards.

Reclaimed Land will be State Land

Part of the excavated material will be used to reclaim land at the Macallum seafront. This reclaimed land 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 pipe laying works are completed, the reclaimed land will be surrendered to the Penang State Government. In other words, all the land reclaimed for this project will eventually become state-owned land.

The remainder of the excavated material will be disposed at a sea-fill site approved by DoE and the Northern Region Marine Department.

So, please note that this is not a sand mining project. It is a public service water supply management project that has been approved by the Penang State Government.

Excavation and Land Reclamation Works Stopped Temporarily and Voluntarily

On 30.3.2019, Utusan Online and Sinar Online published reports stating that the Marine Police had immediately stopped “sand mining works” at Weld Quay or Jelutong.

These stories are inaccurate and misleading.

It is true that excavation and land reclamation works at the Macallum seafront worksite have stopped since 30.3.2019.

However, Wira Syukur (M) Sdn Bhd (WSSB), the contractor for the project, stopped these works on a “voluntary” basis. PBAPP and WSSB have not received any official “stop work” order from any authority.

On 30.3.2019, WSSB informed PBAPP it had received a letter from Penang State Lands and Mines Office (PTG) dated 29.3.2019. In that letter, PTG notified WSSB to apply for a “Permit 4B for the Removal of Sea Sand from Penang”. WSSB had applied for “Permit 4B” via the North-East District and Land Office but has not received any reply yet.

As such, PBAPP instructed WSSB to voluntarily stop all excavation and land reclamation works until WSSB obtains the permit from PTG.

DoE and Seawater Quality Test Results

On 18.12.2012, the State Department of Environment (DoE) issued a conditional approval for the “Design and Construction of Submarine Pipelines from Butterworth to Penang”.

On 29.3.2019, following allegations that “sand mining in Weld Quay” had affected fishermen’s catches, DoE personnel visited the Macallum worksite.

WSSB has been complying with DoE's conditions for work including submission of independent monthly "Environmental Monitoring Reports".

These reports contain tests results on seawater samples taken at 3 depths in a location 150 meters away from the worksite. The report for March 2019 showed minimal variations in key seawater quality parameters when compared to the baseline report submitted in November 2018.

As such, it is highly unlikely that the works could have affected fishing in areas that are many kilometers away, such as Batu Uban, Teluk Bahang and Balik Pulau.

However, please allow me to clarify a key point:

It is not possible to properly lay 3.2km of 1,200mm twin submarine pipelines in the sea without stirring up sand or disturbing the seabed.

The key is to manage the environmental impact and minimise adverse effects.

Kindly note that this is Penang's third submarine pipeline project. Two other submarine pipelines (that are in operation today) have been successfully laid across the same channel, using the same method, without incurring widespread environmental damage.

Thank You.

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29.3.2019: 3rd Penang Submarine Pipeline Project (Macallum seafront worksite).



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