

No sand mining but project to boost Penang water supply -- PBAPP

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PENANG

GEORGE TOWN, April 1 (Bernama) -- News reports claiming that a sand mining project is currently taking place at the Macallum seafront area are baseless as the excavation and land reclamation works is actually for a water supply management project, Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang (PBAPP) said today.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the RM125 million project, which had been approved by the state government, involved the laying of the third 1,200mm twin submarine pipeline across a 3.2km channel between Butterworth and Penang Island to deliver an additional 315 million litres per day.

"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," he told a press conference, here.

Jaseni said part of the excavated material would be used to reclaim land at the Macallum seafront, which would house the landing point of the pipelines onto the island, as well as an operations base for the project once it had been 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," he added.

Jaseni also denied news reports that the Marine Police had stopped the so-called 'sand mining project' immediately, explaining that the project contractor, Wira Syukur (M) Sdn Bhd (WSSB), had halted it following a letter from Penang State Land and Mines Office (PTG) on March 29 requesting them to apply for a specific permit.

"In that letter, PTG notified WSSB to apply for a 'Permit 4B for the Removal of Sea Sand from Penang'. WSSB had applied for the 'Permit 4B' via the North-East District and Land Office but has not received any reply (from PTG) yet," he said, adding that the Department of Environment (DoE) had issued a conditional approval for the project on Dec 18, 2012.

Meanwhile, Jaseni also dismissed an allegation by a non-governmental organisation, Aliran, that Penang did not have a water master plan when instead the state was already having one based on the Master Plan Study for Potable Water Supply in Penang until the Year 2050.

He said the findings, data and recommendations from the master plan study had been publicly quoted by the state government and PBAPP since 2009.

"It is untrue that water security is being downplayed in Penang. On the contrary, it is being prioritised as a critical requirement for the 'Penang 2030 Vision' to become a family-focused green and smart state that inspires the nation," he added.

-- BERNAMA