

Benoa Bay plan can proceed with conditions: Pastika

Bali Governor Made Mangku Pastika has officially sent a letter to the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry saying the plan to reclaim Benoa Bay could continue provided several conditions were met. The Bali administration spokesperson, Dewa Gede Mahendra Putra, told The Jakarta Post recently that the governor's letter had been sent in early June, as requested by the ministry.

"As the ministry asked for the governor's considerations, the governor provided this. He said the reclamation plan could be considered for approval on several conditions. It is not an approval of the reclamation. The governor was not in the position to agree to or reject the reclamation plan," Mahendra said. Mahendra explained that the governor did not have the authority to issue a permit for land reclamation in Benoa as the bay was located in a national strategic area, as per Law No. 26/2008 on spatial planning.

The authority to issue the permit rests with the ministry, which must take into consideration the thoughts of the local administration. As Benoa Bay is located across two administrative areas, Badung and Denpasar, the authority to provide this input belonged to the governor. Mahendra claimed that the matter had been discussed with officials from the Badung and Denpasar administrations. The letter from the ministry requesting the governor's input was made after PT Tirta Wahana Bali Internasional (TWBI) proposed a development plan requiring the reclamation of 810 hectares of land in Benoa Bay.

There were four aspects to be considered prior to any permit issuance, according to the governor, these being spatial, ecosystem, accessibility and the sustainability of life and the livelihoods of communities around the bay. Spatial considerations noted in the letter referred to legal aspects such as Law No. 26/2008 on spatial planning that stipulates Benoa Bay as a national strategic area, as well as Article 63 of Presidential Regulation No. 51/2014 on the Sarbagita area.

"Article 63 of the Presidential Regulation stipulates that the revitalization of Benoa Bay area can encompass a maximum 700 hectares. Thus, if the reclamation is to go ahead as planned, there should be a presidential regulation," Mahendra said. Consideration was also made of provincial Bylaw No. 16/2009 on spatial planning. Meanwhile, Bali does not yet have a bylaw on coastal area zoning. However, Badung regency and Denpasar municipality both have spatial planning bylaws designating Benoa Bay a conservation area.

Mention was also made of the many ecosystems around the bay, including the coral reefs around eastern Tanjung Benoa outside the bay area, as well as flora such as padang lamun, mangroves, benthos, plankton and others. With regard to accessibility, the governor considered the provincial spatial planning bylaw, as well as the spatial bylaws of Badung and Denpasar, which state that Benoa seaport is an international seaport used for tourism, exports and imports and fishing, among other uses. The governor also made mention of the many facilities constructed in the bay area, including roads, fuel facilities, as well as the navigation infrastructure for Ngurah Rai International Airport. "The reclamation proposal can be considered as long as it maintains the sustainability of the coastal ecosystem and gives attention to the Tahura Ngurah Rai mangrove forest and the Benoa seaport development plan," the letter states. The final consideration is related to the sustainability of life and the livelihoods of communities around the bay, stating there were four groups of fisherman, consisting of 240 people, seeking a livelihood from the bay. "The reclamation plan should maintain the livelihoods of all these fisherman," Mahendra said.