

Tangerang to reclaim Cipondoh lake

The Tangerang municipal administration is preparing a class-action legal suit in an attempt to reclaim Cipondoh lake and maintain its function as a water catchment area.

Mayor Wahidin Halim said on Friday that the legal suit would be filed at the Supreme Court against the National Land Agency (BPN), requesting the court cancel existing certificates granting the right to use and manage the lake, which the BPN had issued to private developing firm PT Griya Eka Paksi.

"It was really surprising when we found out that the private developer had used the certificate as collateral for its loan," Wahidin said.

Suspecting corruption in the deal, Wahidin said that his office was now collecting related documents on the lake management.

"We will continue to collect evidence to push the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) to look into the case, on top of the legal suit against the BPN," he said.

Wismar Sawirudin, head of land management at Tangerang municipal BPN office said that there were two kinds of certificates that BPN had issued concerning lake Cipondoh.

"They are Right to Control the Land [HPL], which is owned by the municipal administration, and Right to Use and Manage [HGB], which belongs to Griya Eka Paksi," he said.

He said that the administration would never lose its ownership of lake Cipondoh, but added that there was a regulation that under the HPL, the lake could be managed by other parties for a certain term.

According to Wismar, PT Griya Eka Paksi planned to build a water recreational area on the lake before it transferred its rights to other firms that planned to build a hotel and water recreation center on the lake.

However, Wahidin argued that the certificates did not give the developer the right to construct a building on the lake.

"If the developer builds a hotel on the lake, that would mean that it would have to reclaim some part of the lake.

"The lake used to span 176 hectares, but now it has shrunk to 76 hectares due to illegal reclamation and occupation by local residents. If the plan goes ahead, the lake will lose its function as a water catchment area and this would surely affect everyone," he added.

Located at the center of the fast growing Tangerang municipality, the once beautiful lake Cipondoh now looks like an abandoned swamp, ringed by shanties and shacks.

Currently, the lake, which is located direct opposite the office of the Cipondoh administrasstion on Jl. KH Hasyim Ashari, is a popular fishing spot for locals.