



## **Banda Aceh to Meulaboh Road Project has Entered 'Blasting' Phase**

**The work is running smoothly and safe**

Sunday, April 15, 2007

BANDA ACEH – The Banda Aceh-Meulaboh Road Project, which is being funded by US government through USAID for the amount of US\$ 254 million, is reported to have entered a crucial phase with the commencement of blasting work.

This work is being done by the road construction contractor, PT. Wijaya Karya (WiKa), in order to level the surface on which the road will be built as well as remove scraps of stone which are found around the margins of the right-of-way. Blasting work started on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March and, up to now, is reported to be running smoothly and safely.

WiKa Safety Manager, Hannan Muchtar, in his statement to Serambi on last Saturday April 14, 2007, said the project is being forced to carry out blasting in order to ensure a safe road design. As well, along the west-to-south coast road alignment there are variations in width from 20 meters to 60 meters. So to ensure road users will be safe and comfortable in the future, we are leveling the ground to eliminate the need for a lot of inclines and curves, he said.

He said blasting trials have been underway since Tuesday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, at station 63+550-700, which is located in the rocky hill area near Meunasah Lhok, Pasi, and Pudeng villages, Lhoong Sub-District, Aceh Besar. The blasting is meant as cutting process in these areas, as well as a number of other areas along west-to-south coast alignment and will take a half year to complete, said Hannan.

Hannan Mukhtar explained, cutting along the Banda Aceh-Meulaboh Road, actually could be done in one of two ways. First, it could be done manually, using a stone-breaking device but this would require a long time (two years), and is inefficient. Second, a blasting process can be used which speeds up the leveling process so it only takes five months. "A blasting process is appropriate for this road project, as the final solution to speed up the work," he said.

### **Socialization**

About five days before the blasting started, the USAID Road Project Outreach Team, together with the Safety Manager, and accompanied by a WiKa team, made a site visit to meet and dialogue with the communities in Meunasah Lhok, Pasi and Pudeng. The purpose of this visit was to socialize the blasting, so that, when the work started, the local population would not be caught off guard or attempt to approach the blasting location.

In addition to the meeting, the contractor WiKa installed street banners and danger signals alarms near the blasting sites so that they can be seen from the Geureutee hill curve which lies at the border between Aceh Besar and Aceh Jaya Districts. The USAID safety socialization effort with these residents has also included the distribution of brochures, leaflets, and a newsletter on issues connected to the blasting activities.

Blasting for the USAID Road Project will take place over the next half year. In addition to blasting at station 63+550-700, mentioned above, blasting will be carried out at stations 62+00-62+075,

62+200 and 62+500. During the execution of blasting activities, we will stop the traffic for few minutes. We ask the community to be aware and heed the warnings issued by the safety officers, and keep their children away from that blasting location, he added.

Meanwhile, USAID Road Project staff, have been asking that during the blasting, high priority be placed on public safety, especially that of children and the environment. As the blasting is taking place in semi-populated areas, it is being conducted by a subcontractor that has experience executing infrastructure projects, but they still need to be careful in carrying out these dangerous tasks.

Related to that issue, blasting master for Banda Aceh-Meulaboh USAID Road Project, Setyabudhi in his presentation of the Blasting Safety Plan, explained that there are three main elements that needed to be considered in order to guarantee that blasting is carried out in as secure a manner as possible: Choosing the direction of flying rock, how the blasts are loaded and environmental activities at the location.

Furthermore Setyabudhi explained, safe blasting requires tight procedures. Normal travel becomes dangerous in blasting areas. The following procedures are being used to warn people about upcoming blasting: whistles, radio, red-green flags and megaphones signaling danger, and all of these signs about blasting safety signaling have been made up in writing were installed along the road prior to blasting commencement. .

With the systematic implementation of the Safety Blasting Plan prior to starting blasting and monitored throughout the blasting work, which will be carried out over the next half year, the residents along the Banda Aceh-Meulaboh Road and the road's users will be assured their security and safety, as long as they are complying with the cautions and announcements that are issued by Road Project.



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