

Ministry insists Bekasi deserves Adipura

The Environment Ministry has admitted that it increased the score of Bekasi municipality so that it would qualify for the Adipura cleanliness award, even though its mayor has been detained for allegedly bribing officials to get the prestigious award.

The ministry said that raising the score was an incentive for the Bekasi administration in regard to its policy to turn methane produced by garbage into an energy source.

Ministry spokeswoman Inar Ichana Ishak said it was the prerogative of Minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta to increase Bekasi's score since the Adipura award was only an incentive instrument to encourage more administrations to protect the environment.

"Increasing the score (of Bekasi) was not due to a bribe. It was an incentive for Bekasi in its waste to energy policy," Inar told reporters on Monday.

"The move to capture methane in Bekasi is good as it supports the government's goal to cut emissions by 26 percent," she said. Methane produced by garbage has been identified as a major contributor to atmospheric damage causing climate change. The gas is thought to be more dangerous than carbon dioxide emissions produced through the burning of fossil fuels.

Inar said there was nothing wrong with the ministry increasing the score of Bekasi city because the Adipura award was only one incentive instrument used to improve the environment. "It is up to the minister whether to increase scores or not," she said.

The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has named Bekasi Mayor Mochtar Muhammad a suspect for alleging using money from the city's 2010 budget to bribe the award organizer to win. The KPK has been holding Mochtar in a detention center in Salemba, Central Jakarta, but has not revealed specifics, such as the amount of the alleged bribe or the name of the recipients.

On Monday, the KPK continued its investigation by questioning a number of ministry officials at the KPK office.

The Adipura award is the most celebrated environmental award and was launched in 1984. The ministry stopped presenting the award in 1997 due to the economic crisis.

In 2002, it became mandatory for all cities to participate in award proceedings. Over the years, Bekasi had been considered one of the dirtiest cities in the country due to the poor waste management at the Bantar Gebang landfill. Bantar Gebang, which is 108 hectares, receives 4,500 to 6,000 tons of garbage per day from Jakarta.

The Bekasi administration called its waste management the clean development mechanism (CDM) project, in which methane is captured and turned into energy. Under the CDM regulated by the United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC), Bekasi administration would be entitled to a financial incentive for each ton of methane captured from the garbage site.