

## **Environmental Damage : Photo expo reveals destructive force of mining**

Providing vivid photographic evidence, Mining Advocacy Network (Jatam) listed 29 destructive impacts of mining operations — legal and illegal — occurring in the country, in a recent call on the government to stop prioritizing mining as a major income source.

Jatam made its argument — presenting photo evidence for each point — during a four-day-long exhibition and dialogue at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Central Jakarta.

The photos showed 29 destructive impacts of mining, including flooding, landslides, poverty, health damage, food and water shortages, deforestation and forest damage, and damage of ocean ecosystems.

“These are real pictures of the impacts of mining activities; not a lie,” Siti Maimunah from Jatam told reporters on Friday.

“Therefore, it would be a suicidal choice if the government continued to rely on mining to prop up the country’s income.”

Jatam said mining operations greatly damaged river basin areas, which caused flooding, citing mining in Kalimantan as an example.

Of the total 318 river basin areas covering 3 million hectares in the country, 60 are heavily damaged and in critical condition, Jatam said.

“The damage of Sangatta River in Samarinda [East Kalimantan] due to a coal mining firm has caused residents to suffer annual flash floods,” Jatam said.

Jatam also challenged claims that mining operations were improving local welfare, saying that 48 percent of people in East Kutai, East Kalimantan, were impoverished despite the presence of massive coal mining firms in the regency.

“Of the 10 provinces ranked the poorest, eight provinces have rich deposits of natural resources. Papua and West Papua are listed as the poorest provinces despite their huge natural resources,” it said.

In a dialog organized by Jatam, Rev. Yohanes Kristo Tara from East Nusa Tenggara said promises of poverty alleviation had been used as the reason for allowing mining companies to tap natural resources in East Nusa Tenggara and other provinces.

He cited the example of one mining company that had been operating for 11 years in Sirise, East Nusa Tenggara. He said the local community had received nothing in return, and that most children could not afford higher education.

Yohannes said regents of East Nusa Tenggara had sold mining permits without consulting the public.

West Manggarai has issued 10 mining permits, Manggarai regency (23), East Manggarai (15), Ngada (11), in Timur Tengah Utara regency (82), East Sumba (1).