

## Downpours leave Indramayu submerged

Flood waters more than 1.5 meters deep have left thousands of homes in Indramayu, West Java, inundated since Tuesday evening, following two days of heavy downpours. Waters up to a half-meter deep still swamped several residential complexes as of Wednesday afternoon

“We have yet to calculate the financial losses caused by the flooding, but it is estimated to be in the billions of rupiah,” Ari Nurjaman, assistant to the Indramayu regency secretary for community affairs, said on Wednesday.

He said the regency administration was still focused on saving victims, and providing them with food, clean water and medicine. Flood victims have been evacuated to several public facilities including subdistrict halls, school buildings, district administration offices and worship houses, he added.

The Bugel, Bongas and Maaseta rivers — all tributaries of Cilalanang river that originates in Sumedang, West Java — were blamed for the floods that inundated five districts. The five districts were Kandanghaur, Anjatan, Bongas, Patrol and Sukra. More than 3,000 homes were still under water as of Wednesday.

The floods also destroyed thousands of hectares of rice fields and fish ponds. Indramayu natural disaster chief Mujahid said evacuations were still in process and hundreds of personnel from the police, military, search and rescue teams, public order officers and disaster response officials have been deployed.

“We are still collecting data on the survivors,” Mujahid said, adding that the floods on Tuesday were the largest in the last five years. He also blamed the flood on two consecutive days of heavy downpours that caused the three tributaries of Cilalanang river to overflow.

Environmental activist Yoyon Suharyono attributed the floods to environmental damage.

“Apart from extreme weather, damage to the rivers and forests is one of the major causes of the flood,” said Yoyon, who is a member of the West Java Water Council.

Indramayu was prone to floods because it is located along damaged riverbanks and might easily be inundated during rainy seasons, Yoyon said.

“The rivers, which are getting shallower and shallower, are no longer capable of accommodating and distributing the water.”

He added that nearly all the rivers that passed through Indramayu were seriously damaged.

The sedimentation level, he said was relatively high in the rivers due to damage to the surrounding environment and to the upper stream regions, which was also as serious.

“Almost all the rivers originate in the mountainous areas of Sumedang and Kuningan regencies, West Java, have been seriously damaged,” he said.