

City to summon firms over waste

The Jakarta Environment Board (BPLHD) is in the process of summoning 836 companies in the city for dumping liquid waste into the city's rivers without permit. Peni Susanti, the chairwoman of the board, said the city administration would hold a meeting with representatives of the companies on Wednesday in response to a Supreme Audit Agency (BPK) report that showed that 931 companies in the city did not have liquid waste dump permits and 105 other companies were late extending their permits.

Peni said the administration had not included addressing river polluting as one of its priority programs for its 2007-2012 working plan. "However, the administration has begun designing steps [to address river pollution] in the coming years," she said.

BPLHD data showed that more than 80 percent of pollutants entering the city rivers came from domestic waste, dumped as a result of lacking or poor sanitation facilities.

She added that the board would cooperate with the Environmental Ministry and West Java BPLHD to manage the cleanliness of the Ciliwung River, the city's main river.

"We expect the Environmental Ministry will help with the issuance of a presidential regulation for the management of the Ciliwung," Peni said.

She said this cooperation would clean the river of garbage and illegal settlements on its banks.

The BPK announced last year that Jakarta's environment board and relevant institutions under the city administration had failed to control river pollution throughout the previous year.

The agency also found that administration officials had been slow to identify the sources of the pollution. Separately, Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi) executive director Ubaidillah said on Thursday that the BPK's findings were consistent with surveys published by non-governmental organizations.

"We can clearly see how the clear water in Ciliwung in Depok quickly turns dark and murky as it enters the city," Ubaidillah said.

He said the administration was slack in monitoring the polluting companies. "The administration has yet to require the companies to make routine reports about their waste dumping," he said.

Walhi urged the city to tighten its monitoring of the companies' waste-dumping activities.

"The city could at least ask the companies to make tri-monthly reports about their waste dumping," Ubaidillah said. Many communities in Jakarta flush their human waste and rubbish into the rivers. On top of that, industries dump large amounts of industrial waste containing hazardous substances into the city's river system every day. As a result, the heavily polluted rivers are not suitable for producing drinking water.

"It really is a shame; Jakartans should be able to use their rivers as a source of clean water," Ubaidillah said. The majority of the city's tap water supply comes from Jatiluhur dam in West Java, which is then piped to various water treatment plants.