

UNESCO to promote Merangin Geopark

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has approved the application for Merangin Geopark in Jambi, which is currently a national-level geopark, to be listed in the Global Geoparks Network, the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry's Geology Agency secretary, Yunus Kusumahbrata, said on Saturday.

"After reviewing a five-book application for Merangin Geopark, UNESCO conducted an in-depth study and it was very positive for Indonesia," he said after a visit to the site, which is located in Air Batu village, Renah Pembarap district, Merangin regency.

He was upbeat about the application, and said a team from UNESCO would visit the geopark area, which is home to unique rock formations, in June.

"A Global Geopark is a unified area with geological heritage of international significance. Geoparks use that heritage to promote awareness of key issues facing society in the context of the dynamic planet we all live on," UNESCO said on its website.

Merangin Deputy Regent Khafid Moein confirmed that the application had been accepted. However, a field visit was still required, he said.

"We will improve the road to the geopark area as well as other facilities. The UNESCO team visiting Merangin will be led directly by the UNESCO president," he said.

Meanwhile, Merangin Regent Al Haris said that Dr. Ibrahim Komoo, from UNESCO's Global Geopark Network, was impressed with the geopark.

"Dr. Ibrahim Komoo has visited the site and said that Merangin Geopark was the most unique and complete in the world based on his years of involvement in geoparks," the regent said.

Haris said various preparations were under way ahead of the UNESCO team's visit, such as cleaning up the geopark area, encouraging the involvement of local residents in the geopark, as well as repainting residential houses along the route to the geopark site.

UNESCO will announce official results during an international conference on geoparks to be held on Sept. 19-22 at the Stonehammer Geopark in Canada.