

# Jakarta sees milder flooding

The Jakarta administration is optimistic that flooding in the city will be no worse than Monday's, despite only being in the early stages of the peak of the rainy season. The administration is attributing the less severe floods, which have hit 36 areas or 42 subdistricts, to the city's revitalized reservoirs and waterways. In January last year, flooding affected 73 subdistricts and forced 15,423 people to leave their homes.

On Monday, 5,547 people were evacuated but some were able to return home later the same day as water levels subsided. As of Tuesday, only about 3,000 people were still living in shelters, according to National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) head Syamsul Maarif. The agency also launched on Tuesday a rain-modification program to prevent flooding, which will continue until the end of the peak of the rainy season in March.

The BNPB earmarked Rp 20 billion (US\$1.6 million) for the program to disperse clouds and reduce rain intensity, and another Rp 30 billion to provide food and medication for displaced Jakartans.

"We prepared the weather modification technology [TMC] in December, but we had to wait [to use it] until the city administration announced a flood alert," said BNPB spokesperson Sutopo Purwo Nugroho at the Halim Perdanakusuma Air Force base on Tuesday.

Sutopo said that his agency, in coordination with the Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology (BPPT) and the Air Force, began work on Tuesday after Jakarta Governor Joko "Jokowi" Widodo had declared the flood alert status the day before. Jokowi issued on Monday an emergency flood letter to enable the BNPB to use city funds to finance the rain-modification program.

"The letter will activate all parties involved in flood-mitigation efforts to start work," Jokowi said.

During his visit to the Mangga Dua sluice gate in Central Jakarta and the Pluit pump house in North Jakarta, Jokowi said the city would gradually open the sluice gates in the West Flood Canal (KBB), the water in which flows into the Pluit Reservoir, North Jakarta, to prevent the Ciliwung and other rivers from bursting their banks.

"Seven pumps in Pluit are functioning well, but we will use only four of them as that is sufficient." According to him, the Pluit Reservoir could hold up to 1.2 million cubic meters of water, despite only 20 percent of the reservoir having been dredged so far. Jokowi also reiterated the fact that the responsibility for flood mitigation lay not only with the city administration but also with the central government and members of the public.

"The 13 rivers [that run through Jakarta] are managed by the central government, while we take care of the 884 connecting waterways."

Jokowi urged the Public Works Ministry to speed up its projects relating to the city's rivers, including the rebuilding of a section of the KBB in Latuharhari, Central Jakarta, which collapsed in January last year.

"The ministry promised us rebuilding work would be finished on Jan. 15, but it is not even near completion," he said.

The general director of mineral water resources at the Public Works Ministry, Mohammad Hasan, said that his ministry would complete the Latuharhari project within two weeks.

"We've finished the construction at the headwaters. For the collapsed section near the Karet sluice gate, we have finished plastering," he said.

Hasan said that his office was currently restoring four rivers in the city — the Pesanggrahan, Angke, Sunter and Ciliwung rivers — with work due to be completed in 2016. Floodwater has also disrupted clean water supplies in several parts of Jakarta after inundating the Cilandak water treatment plant in South Jakarta.

Private water firm PT PAM Lyonnaise Jaya (Palyja), which serves the western part of Jakarta, has temporarily halted its operations at the plant. The water company announced that it would resume operations once conditions returned to normal.

"We are trying our best to handle the situation," the company's spokesperson, Meyritha Maryanie, said. (nai)