

## **Drought declared as water crisis worsens**

Villages in a number of districts in West Nusa Tenggara are facing clean water shortages, prompting the provincial administration to declare a state of emergency effective from early June to December. Severe drought has hit villages in East Lombok and Central Lombok regencies, as well as districts in Dompu and Bima regencies on Sumbawa Island.

“The drought disaster emergency status has been set through a gubernatorial decree since early June, following the spread of drought conditions to a number of regions on Lombok and Sumbawa. It has not only threatened agriculture, but also people’s clean water needs,” the province’s Disaster Mitigation Agency (BPBD) head Werdha Magma Ardi told The Jakarta Post in Mataram on Thursday.

Werdha said that according to a BPBD analysis from data compiled by the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) and the Water Resources Information Center, the drought would peak in October and November.

In handling the emergency, the BPBD and Social Services Agency are planning to focus on residents’ water demands, the Agriculture Agency on irrigation, while the Public Works Agency will develop local ponds and new water sources.

“We also have proposed a budget of Rp 10 billion [US\$870,000] to the BNPB that will be used to mitigate the water crisis in West Nusa Tenggara, provide water supplies to affected areas as well as drill a number of deep wells,” said Werdha.

Separately, The Civil Registry, Population and Social Agency head Bachruddin said dozens of villages in East Lombok and Central Lombok have been facing water shortages ever since the arrival of the second dry season earlier this year. In East Lombok, the water crisis has hit at least four villages in Sambelia district and eight villages in Jerowaru district, while in Central Lombok, drought has affected dozens of villages in Pujut, East Praya and Northwest Praya districts.

Bachruddin said water shortages were an annual phenomenon on Lombok was during every dry season from July until its peak in November. However, this year, the dry season has come early and intensely, starting in April.

From July until September last year, he added, drought affected more than 18,000 families in 25 villages found in North, West, Central and East Lombok regencies.

“We are always impeded by a limited tanker fleet and that many of the locations are hard to reach,” said Bachruddin. According to him, the Social Services Agency only has five tankers to transport potable water, each with a capacity of 5,000 liters. One of the difficulties in supplying the clean water is that many drought-stricken villages do not have large reservoirs.

This year, the Social Services Agency has asked for additional funds of Rp 145 million for the procurement of 30 water tanks, each with a capacity of 2,500 liters, for a number of affected villages in East Lombok.