

City to take over waste management

The Jakarta administration will continue its plan to take over waste management in the capital city from private operators, which are deemed to be underperforming. Jakarta Deputy Governor Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama said recently that the performance of the private companies that transfer garbage from the city to the Bantar Gebang landfill in Bekasi, West Java, was not satisfactory.

Ahok said the city spent around Rp 1.2 trillion (US\$101.42 million) of its budget paying private companies to take care of the garbage, while subdistricts each paid around Rp 200 million per month for private companies to transfer garbage to Bantar Gebang.

"If each subdistrict has a private operator for garbage transfer, why is Jakarta not clean at all?" he asked.

The city, reported to have a population of 12 million people during the day and 10 million at night, produces 6,000 to 6,500 tons of garbage daily. The waste comes from households, offices, industries and other commercial entities in the capital.

Ahok said the excuse for the private companies' underperformance was their lack of garbage trucks. "I am confused; how did these companies win the tender without having garbage trucks?" he said.

According to the deputy governor, the Sanitation Agency hires over 3,000 freelance workers daily to help the private operators do their job.

Ahok said that based on the various considerations, it was better to self-manage garbage transfer operations by buying more garbage trucks.

The Sanitation Agency has a total of 824 garbage trucks, after procuring 92 new trucks in December. Jakarta Governor Joko "Jokowi" Widodo previously said the agency would add 200 more trucks to support the self-managed program.

However, the plan has halted as the procurement plan is not listed in the 2014 city budget proposal.

"While we wait to request the funds for procuring 200 trucks in the revised city budget in the middle of the year, we will rent trucks for the current operations," Ahok said. Councilor M. Sanusi of the Great Indonesia Movement (Gerindra) Party said he supported the steps being taken by the governor.

"I think the Sanitation Agency will be able to operate garbage transportation in the city as it will gain support in terms of finances and management," he said. "The question is whether the agency is brave enough to get out of its comfort zone," he added.

Sanusi said the agency simply needed managerial skills in order to deal with the garbage. "It is easy actually, as the private companies only employ a truck driver, an assistant and a garbage collector in each subdistrict to do the task," he said.

On the other hand, City Council deputy speaker Triwisaksana said he urged the administration and the City Council to sit together to discuss the matter.

"A self-managed system was conducted by the old administration but the Sanitation Agency was overwhelmed and eventually handed it over to the private firms," he said, adding that he did not want the same situation to occur again.

He said the city administration's workload would increase as it would have to handle human resources, the trucks and maintenance.

Triwisaksana, who is also the chairman of the Regional Legislation Body at the council, said he personally believed the city administration should form a city-owned company (BUMD) to operate the garbage transfer. Indonesian Solid Waste Association chairperson, Sri Bebasari, said self-management and handing the task over to private companies both had benefits and weaknesses.