

Mud, looters, starvation threaten flood victims

Puddles of water and thick mud are not the only problems flood victims in Manado, North Sulawesi, face, as looters are also reportedly wandering around housing areas. "Some of my valuables are gone. I fled to safer ground when the floods hit and I had no time to pack up all my important belongings," Pengki, a resident of Tateli village in Mandolang district, Minahasa, said on Saturday, as quoted by tribunnews.com.

Other residents filed similar complaints, saying that their valuables and money had been stolen from their cupboards. "How could they do this to us? We've been suffering from this [disaster] and they stole our money," said Florens, another resident. Meanwhile, residents in Wawonasa, Manado city, reportedly ran out of food as the food items provided at the emergency post were limited.

"We haven't eaten anything since last night. Maybe it's alright for us adults, but not for the children," said Ivan. Tateli and Wanowasa are two areas in Manado that were struck by a massive flash flood on Wednesday. The flooding also caused Bailey Bridge in the Boulevard area to collapse. The collapsed bridge cut off traffic from Malalayang to the city center, thereby affecting the city's economy.

The Army deployed personnel on Saturday to help the city administration rebuild the bridge, Antara news agency reported. Besides flash floods in Manado, landslides also hit Tinoor, which connects Manado and Tomohon. The road from Manado to Tomohon was cut off, while several bridges in Minahasa broke. On Saturday afternoon, the search and rescue team found the body of a woman identified as Linda Tan, 61. There are still around 15 people missing in the area.

Meanwhile, Public Works Deputy Minister Hermanto Dardak said that the ministry was set to heighten the dike around Tondano Lake to prevent further flash floods in Manado and would carry out a river normalization program. He added that the ministry planned to build a dam with a capacity of 23 million cubic-meters.

"We have set aside a budget of Rp2.8 billion [US\$231,577] for land acquisition and another Rp 700 million for the certification process," Hermanto, said as quoted by Antara. The project, he went on, was expected to begin in 2015 and might require a budget of Rp 1 trillion. Vehicles were also seen along Jl. Martadinatha in Paal Dua. However, traffic did move slowly as motorists had to avoid passing through the remaining mud left by the flood.