

Govt urged to revitalize Ciliwung, Cisadane

Failing to approve the proposed construction of a big tunnel connecting the Ciliwung River in Jakarta with Tangerang's Cisadane River, governor Joko "Jokowi" Widodo and Banten officials called on the Public Works Ministry to stabilize the water levels of the two rivers in an attempt to reduce flooding and its impacts in the two provinces during the rainy season. In a meeting on Saturday, Jokowi, Banten Deputy Governor Rano Karno, Tangerang Mayor Arief R. Wismansyah and Tangerang Regent Ahmed Zaki Iskandar were of the same opinion that it was critical to stabilize the two rivers since it was impossible to construct the big tunnel.

According to them, the stabilization consisted of dredging the two rivers and building strong and high dikes to prevent them from overflowing into housing and farming areas.

"After seeing the real condition in the field and listening to explanations from Banten officials, I believe now that the proposed construction of a big tunnel is not the solution. Tangerang regency and mayoralty could be left under water if the tunnel is constructed to reroute a part of Ciliwung water to Cisadane," Jokowi said after the meeting here. Jokowi met the Banten officials after they opposed the tunnel project, which was proposed in the Katulampa coordination meeting. He said the Banten officials opposed the tunnel project because they had yet to get a plausible explanation on the whole situation from him.

He also said previously that the city administration would likely construct a deep tunnel connecting Ciliwung with the East Flood Canal (KBT) to reroute part of the Ciliwung water to the KBT during the rainy season, if Banten rejected the tunnel project in Cisadane. Jokowi met with the Banten officials after they failed to show up at the coordination meeting at the Katulampa sluice gate in Bogor last week and opposed the proposal raised in the meeting.

The coordination meeting agreed to construct two big reservoirs in Ciawi and Depok to intercept rainwater during the rainy season. The proposed construction of two reservoirs and the big tunnel was once raised at a similar forum in 2000, not in the 1970s as was reported previously, but it was suspended after several regions objected to the proposal. Before the meeting, Jokowi, who was accompanied by Banten officials, visited Cisadane's Pasar Baru sluice gate where he was greeted by a demonstration of a score of Tangerang residents who opposed the tunnel project.

Meanwhile, Rano said that the Banten provincial administration would support the central government's development programs, including the proposed tunnel project as long as it would bring benefits and not negative impacts to the people in the province. "If the central government decides to construct the big tunnel, the two rivers must be dredged first and the dikes along the river must be strengthened and heightened," he said. Tangerang Mayor Arief said that besides dredging the river, the central government should repair all sluice gates to ensure they functioned well after the river's dredging.

Several public policy analysts shared a similar opinion with the Banten officials and said the tunnel project would be a short-term solution because it would increase the annual flooding that hits Tangerang during the rainy season.