

Floods cause chaos across Greater Jakarta

The floods returned on Wednesday after incessant rain hit the capital overnight, forcing hundreds of residents to wade back to evacuation shelters. Unlike the recent flooding, more commercial districts and main thoroughfares were affected by floodwater that snarled up traffic for several hours in the morning.

“It took seven hours for me to drive to Jl. Senopati [in South Jakarta] from Bekasi. The traffic jam was unbearable. It was the worst ever congestion this month,” Fika, a commuter, said.

The city police’s Traffic Management Center (TMC) reported dozens of inundated locations. The underpass of Cawang toll road from Halim heading to Rawamangun was under 60 centimeters of water, while in the Pondok Jaya area in Mampang Prapatan, South Jakarta, floodwaters reached a depth of 100 centimeters.

Some streets, including Jl. Patra Raya in Duri Kepa in West Jakarta and Jl. Kemang Raya in front of Kem Chicks supermarket in South Jakarta, were paralyzed as the inundation was between 50 cm and 70 cm. Transjakarta bus operators had to reroute seven of 12 corridors to avoid flooding, while commuter rail operator PT KAI Commuter Jabodetabek canceled the service from Bogor in West Java to Kampung Bandan in North Jakarta as the latter station was flooded.

According to Hari Tirta, head of the meteorology information subdirector with the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG), the flooding was a result of heavy rainfall that particularly hit downstream areas in West, East, Central and South Jakarta.

The intense rain was forecast to continue during the evening and into the next two days, he said. According to data from the Jakarta Disaster Mitigation Agency (BPBD) the number of evacuees rose by over 600 to 9,985 from 9,368 on Tuesday. They were spread throughout 21 subdistricts in 11 districts and were currently being looked after in 34 shelters.

Most of the evacuees were from 14 subdistricts in East Jakarta, including Kampung Melayu, Bidara Cina, Cipinang Melayu, Cawang, Kramat Jati, Kampung Rambutan and Pondok Bambu. The depth of floodwater in those locations varied from 20 cm to 200 cm. The BPBD reported that 51,526 people were affected by the floods, a jump from the 18,759 people on the previous day.

Neighboring Bekasi, Tangerang and South Tangerang municipalities were also affected. Two meters of floodwater hit the Total Persada housing complex in Tangerang, only three days after the previous flood had receded. The residents had just returned after spending a week being accommodated at SD Total Persada elementary school.

“This [use of the school as a shelter] really disrupts the school activity. Our children could not go to school because the classrooms were being occupied by the evacuees,” Rita Zahara, a parent of a student at the school, said. Neighboring Mutiara Pluit, Periuk Damai and Pondok Arum housing complexes were all inundated to a depth of 1 meter.

Tangerang Mayor Arief R. Wismansyah said on Wednesday that the Public Works Ministry had earmarked Rp 1.9 trillion (US\$156.17 million) to dredge the Cisadane River, which should help to mitigate the perennial flooding in the municipality.

“The river normalization project will start in 2015 and is expected to be complete in three years,” he told a plenary session of the Tangerang Legislative Council.