

Government struggles to stop wildlife poaching

The government and Komodo National Park management are seeking ways to stop poaching in the biosphere reserve for the sake of sustainability in the park. This issue was recently discussed during a workshop titled Management of Conservation Areas Assigned as Biosphere Reserves in West Manggarai regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). Director of Conservation Area and Forest Protection at the Forestry Ministry Bambang Dahono Adji said that for the sake of a sustainable economy, biosphere reserve management in Indonesia, especially in the Komodo biosphere reserve, should involve various stakeholders, including members of the community, local administrations, non-governmental groups and relevant agencies.

Indonesia is home to eight biosphere reserves, namely Komodo, Cibodas, Tanjung Puting, Lore Lindu, Siberut island, Mount Leuser, Giam Siak Kecil-Bukit Batu and Wakatobi. Director general of Forest Protection and Natural Conservation at the Forestry Ministry Sonny Partono said conservation areas played an essential role as a wildlife species protection shield in efforts to conserve the biodiversity and ecosystem of a particular area.

National Committee on Man and Biosphere Program (MAB)-UNESCO Indonesia program director Y. Purwanto said the issue of wildlife poaching in the internationally recognized Komodo biosphere reserve required coordination between regencies. He added, should wildlife species, such as deer, be wiped out of the Komodo biosphere reserve, the mystical Komodo dragon would gradually become extinct.

“The local administration should immediately coordinate with regency administrations facilitated by the Forestry Ministry,” Purwanto said. The status given by UNESCO to Komodo National Park as a world biosphere reserve has given hope to the government in its efforts to managing the transition zones so as to improve the welfare of the people in West Manggarai, especially those living around the national park.

Head of the Biological Research Center at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) Bambang Sunarko said the biosphere reserves would remain sustainable if large-scale mining activities, which are environmentally damaging, were not carried out near biosphere reserves. Sunarko said since Komodo had been recognized as an international icon, activities carried out around the Komodo biosphere reserve must be environmentally friendly. Komodo National Park should apply the biosphere reserve management concept by including a core zone, buffer zone and transition zone. The transition zone is the area for activities carried out by members of the community. Sunarko said that the three zones should be well managed so as to prevent conflict with local residents, adding that park managements should also involve neighboring regencies. Meanwhile, Komodo National Park office head Sustyo Iriyono said that Labuan Bajo city had turned into a center for meetings and international and national events thanks to the 2013 Sail Komodo international event.