

The rivers and the damage done

As the floodwaters recede, the city administration is left with a huge task on its hands: repairing the damaged roads. Deputy Governor Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama said Monday that the city planned to start the repair work soon, despite the fact that the rainy season will continue until March.

"We will work when it is dry and stop when it rains, otherwise [the repairs] won't happen," Ahok said after a meeting with officials from the Jakarta Public Works Agency at City Hall.

While acknowledging that most roads in the capital were shoddy, Ahok pointed out that the city planned to overlay 3 percent of Jakarta's roads with concrete.

"Concrete is better than hot mix [asphalt] as it can last more than five years. It's a bit more expensive but that is not an issue for Jakarta. We target to overlay 144,000 square meters, or 3 percent, of Jakarta's roads," he said, adding that the Transjakarta bus lanes would be included.

There are 119,448 square meters of damaged roads in 40 locations across the city. North Jakarta is the worst affected with a total of 80,557 square meters in need of immediate repair.

The deputy governor said the repairs could be completed in a timely manner by using up-to-date methods, which would enable the work to be completed within a few hours instead of days.

"With the latest technology, the [asphalt concrete] can be dry within six hours," he said, claiming that the concrete would also absorb water.

Jakarta Public Works Agency head Manggas Rudy Siahaan said that the agency would prioritize roads that suffered the most from floods during the rainy season.

"We will prioritize busy roads that are usually inundated, for example Jl. Abdullah Syafei [connecting Tebet in South Jakarta and Kampung Melayu in East Jakarta] [...] also Jl. Gunung Sahari [North Jakarta]," Manggas told reporters, adding that the agency would coordinate with the Public Works Ministry to repair national roads.

Manggas said that the project would benefit the city administration as it would reduce maintenance costs but declined to reveal the detailed budget for the road repair project.

University of Indonesia road construction expert Heddy R. Agah said that asphalt concrete would not guarantee roads free from pot holes and scars.

"Whatever the form is, when inundated by water, it will get damaged. The key point is the waterways, which should be functioning so that the water can drain away and not damage the asphalt," he told The Jakarta Post.

He pointed out that while concrete roads cost more than hot mix asphalt, maintenance fees would be much lower.

"Asphalt concrete is three times more expensive than hot mix asphalt, however, it is three times stronger than asphalt. When designed properly, it can even last up to 40 years," he said.

To avoid inundation and maintain its quality, Heddy said, "roads should be built at a gradient of 2-3 degrees".