

Dozens of illegal villas to be demolished

Dozens of illegal villas in Bogor regency, which were built in green areas, are to be demolished this month, the regent has said.

Bogor regent Rachmat Yasin said on Tuesday that his administration was set to bulldoze 93 illegal villas owned by 31 different individuals built in green areas in his regency.

“We have identified some 400 illegal villas built on green areas in Bogor regency, none of which were owned by my constituents. Bogor residents breathe fresh and cool air everyday, they don’t need a villa here,” he told reporters during a tree-planting ceremony at the upstream area of the Ciliwung River in Tugu Selatan village, Cisarua, Bogor.

The regent, however, declined to confirm whether or not middle-to-upper class Jakartans were among the illegal villa owners in the area.

During a recent visit to City Hall, Rachmat cited that he aimed to demolish up to 800 illegal villas built on green spaces, mostly in Puncak.

He acknowledged that the demolition project had been met with opposition and from villa owners, however, he reiterated his commitment to continue the plan.

“If we do not act, we will never get to develop Bogor and help ease Jakarta’s floods,” he said.

Rachmat also said that his administration had planned to provide jobs for the Bogor residents who worked at the villas.

During the ceremony, which was attended by Governor Joko “Jokowi” Widodo, the regent emphasized his commitment to expand the regency’s water catchment areas, not only to help Jakarta ease its annual flooding but also “to manage my region’s spatial planning”.

“We, Bogor residents, don’t want to be scapegoats for Jakarta’s flooding,” he said. Environmental experts have blamed the worsening annual flooding in Jakarta on illegal buildings in the Puncak area because they reduce the capacity of the water catchment areas in Bogor, where there is a higher volume of rainfall.

Jokowi welcomed the regent’s efforts, saying that both administrations needed to focus on resolving the issue. “Let’s start working,” he went on.

To help demolish the illegal villas, the Jakarta administration will provide Rp 5 billion (US\$409,735) in grants to the Bogor regency to demolish them.