

Government to evaluate West Flood Canal

The Ciliwung and Cisadane Rivers' control office at the Public Works Ministry plans to evaluate the West Flood Canal (KBB) this year following the collapse of two sections of the embankment in 2013. "We will assess the KBB to determine the embankment's stability, elevation and the strength of the land. I can't say exactly when the study will begin, but I hope it will run this year," T. Iskandar, head of the control office, told The Jakarta Post over the weekend. He said the inspection road passing along the embankment had been burdened by traffic, adding that the state of the inspection road at the East Flood Canal (KBT) was better than the one at the KBB, which was older.

"The inspection road at the KBB is under greater pressure due to a larger local population and higher mobility in the area. Heavy vehicles should not use the inspection road as it comes under the authority of the provincial administration," he said. Iskandar said workers were now striving to finish a new embankment along Jl. Latuharhari in Central Jakarta, which is targeted for completion this month.

The embankment on Jl. Latuharhari collapsed during heavy rainfall and a high debit of water from Bogor in West Java. As a result, some central areas, including the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle, were paralyzed by flooding. On Thursday morning, a 100-meter stretch of the embankment near the Karet sluice gate on Jl. Administrasi in Pejompongan, Central Jakarta, collapsed. There were no casualties, but four cars that were parked on the inspection road at the time of the collapse were dragged down into the river. Iskandar said the embankment inspection road on Jl. Administrasi had a heavy burden as it was used for piles of dredged mud and for parked vehicles.

On Thursday, workers started to measure the depth of the new embankment on Jl. Administrasi, marking the spots where concrete sheet pilings for the new embankment would be erected. Jakarta Public Works Agency head Manggas Rudy Siahaan said he planned to plant some greenery on the inspection road to prevent its use as a parking site.

Iskandar said the KBB and KBT were generally in good shape and would be able to contain normal volumes of rainwater, but he could not forecast the canals' performance under extreme flood conditions. He said the restoration of the Ciliwung River, which is the upper stream of the KBB, would help ease flooding in the city. The project is being carried out along 19 kilometers of the river from the TB Simatupang toll road to the Manggarai sluice gate in South Jakarta.

The West Flood Canal, which was built during the Dutch colonial era in 1920, spans 17.3 kilometers from the Manggarai sluice gate to Muara Angke in North Jakarta. It was built by way of compensation following the turning of a rubber forest into a tea plantation in Puncak, West Java. The central government increased the canal's capacity between 2007 and 2009, to enable it to contain a capacity of 507 cubic meters per second of water at the Manggarai Sluice gate; 734 cubic meters per second at the Karet Sluice gate, and 1,019 cubic meters per second in Pantai Indah Kapuk, North Jakarta.

Urban planning expert Yayat Supriatna, from Trisakti University, has urged the central government to evaluate the sturdiness of the embankments along both the canals. "The central government has to evaluate the land alongside the canals. The embankments along the canals may be damaged as they are not deep constructions and they have gradually been eroded by the continually flowing river water," Yayat told the Post recently.

He said the central government and the city administration may be focusing their efforts on dredging rivers and reservoirs now, but they should also consider the impact of growing populations and the changing structure of land. "We must learn from the collapse of Jl. RE Martadinata [in North Jakarta]," he said, referring to a section of road connecting Ancol with Tanjung Priok Port that subsided 7 meters in 2010.