

Illegal mining in Jambi causes flooding

Rampant illegal gold mining activities in Jambi have been blamed for floods that have hit a number of villages in Pangkalan Jambu district, Jambi.

Heavy rain in the upstream area of the Batang Masumai River over the past few days caused it to burst its banks, inundating hundreds of homes up to a meter high.

The villages, which are part of the illegal gold mining area, are Baru; Bukit Perentak; Bungo Tanjung; Limo; Sungai Jering; Tanjung Mudo; and Tigo Alur. The only village in Pangkalan Jambu district spared by the floods was Birun.

The worst affected were Tigo Alur and Baru, where the floods swamped dozens of homes and damaged roads and bridges.

In Tigo Alur village, a suspension bridge connecting Pulau and Nangko hamlets, was also severely damaged as its columns almost collapsed due to the strong river current. A stretch of embankment, built in 2013, was also damaged.

The river cut two lanes — measuring 30 meters and 1.5 m — due to the strength of the flow. Another suspension bridge was also damaged by the river. In Bukit Perentak village, a tap water pipeline was damaged, thus, disrupting clean water supply.

Merangin regency Disaster Mitigation Agency (BPBD) head Makmur said the floods in Pangkalan Jambu district were the result of illegal mining activities in the area.

“Arguably, the river banks has been badly damaged by the illegal gold mining activities, so during heavy rain, the river cannot retain water, thus, causing the river to burst its banks and flood the surrounding areas,” Makmur said.

Makmur added that the flood waters had receded and residents had begun the arduous task of cleaning up.

Pangkalan Jambu district chief Andre said the number of affected homes could number in the hundreds.

The water level might have ebbed but heavy rain in the upstream area might cause more flooding, Andre added.