

Group set up to conserve coral reefs

The Raja Ampat regency administration in West Papua has set up a public-supervision group to protect and conserve its coral reefs.

“Local fishermen, who used to engage in destructive fishing practices, have been persuaded to help protect the coral reefs by joining the public-supervision group. They also help to patrol the surrounding waters,” Syafri Tuhurea of the Raja Ampat maritime and fishery office stated on Monday.

The local fishermen had stopped practicing destructive fishing methods, but those from other regions sometimes fished illegally in the waters of Raja Ampat by using bombs, he remarked.

“They are driven away if they are spotted by the local fishermen. But they frequently sneak back when the local fishermen and officials are not around,” Syafri was quoted by Antara as saying.

“In the past, there were many traditional fishermen who engaged in destructive fishing practices by using bombs. Now their number has decreased significantly,” Syafri said.

The Raja Ampat administration had carried out public-awareness campaigns for the conservation of coral reefs over the past five years, he added.

Raja Ampat’s marine conservation area amounts to almost 1.2 million hectares. The best-preserved coral reefs are found in Dampier Strait located between Waigeo and Batanta isles.

In the southern part of Raja Ampat, Misool Island has endemic coral reefs, which are unique to the area.