

Govt soon to release containers of toxic waste

The government will soon release thousands of containers full of toxic waste, which are currently being held at Tanjung Priok port in North Jakarta, in a bid to recover supplies of raw materials for industrial use.

To accelerate the verification of the containers, the authorities would refer to survey data on the imported containers that have been jointly prepared by surveying firms PT Surveyor Indonesia and PT Sucofindo, Industry Minister MS Hidayat said on Sunday.

The government would continue the legal process against importers who were accused of ordering hazardous and toxic waste, he added.

“While the legal process is being conducted, we will still issue the recommendation to release those containers containing non-hazardous and toxic waste, which are at present being retained by the Environment Ministry for production importers. This will allow production activities to continue,” Hidayat told The Jakarta Post in a text message.

Earlier in January, custom officials at Tanjung Priok Port confiscated 113 metal shipments contaminated with hazardous and toxic waste — of which 89 were shipped from Britain and the rest from the Netherlands. These shipments were imported by PT HHS, which was slated to recycle the scrap for further processing by the local steel industry.

Following the discovery, custom authorities have detained more than 7,000 containers at three other ports — Tanjung Belawan in Medan, Tanjung Emas in Semarang and Tanjung Perak in Surabaya — in addition to Tanjung Priok port.

Out of the 7,000 containers, which originated from Senegal, Mauritius and the Netherlands, only around 1,124 containers were checked and have undergone physical examination. The first 113 containers were recently sent back to their exporting countries, according to Environment Ministry records.

The larger part of the containers contained steel scrap sorely needed by the local steel industry, which has suffered short supplies of raw materials.

The local steel industry has complained about the long process of scrutinizing cargo, as they have seen shortages in scrap metal, the basic material for steel making. Domestic producers import around 70 percent of a total 7.5 million tons of scrap metal needed to produce 6 million tons of steel billets and slabs as domestic supplies cannot fulfill industrial demand.