

Indonesia to monitor used electronics

Indonesia will be better protected against electronic waste (e-waste) after the global ban on electronic waste exports was agreed to in Colombia last month, an official at the Environment Ministry says. More than 170 countries agreed to accelerate the adoption of a global ban on the export of hazardous waste such as old electronics to developing countries. The environmental group Basel Action Network called the deal, which was brokered by Switzerland and Indonesia, a major breakthrough.

Ministry data showed that in 2006, Indonesia had 80 large and 150 small- and medium-sized electronics manufacturers located mainly in Java, North Sumatra and Batam. Many spare parts are imported, which opens loopholes for illegal imports of electronic waste. Reports also showed that far-flung islands such as Batam and Wakatobi have similar facilities for recycling electronic waste. No exact data has been recorded as to the amount of illegal electronic waste entering Indonesia.

Ministry deputy Masnellyarti Hilman said that the ban was a follow up to a conference of parties (COP) decision to forbid Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries from dumping electronic waste in developing countries even for recycling, reuse or recovery purposes. "Every year, developed countries want to send their waste to Indonesia. Due to our lack of awareness, they sometimes sent the waste illegally and others falsely claimed that the waste was basic materials," she said.

She said that the flow of waste into Indonesia had lowered the age of landfills in the country and caused health problems among scavengers.

"With the ban coming into force, perpetrators will be punished. We can also return the waste. It was not easy to get this ban accepted because not all developed countries understand the issue," she said.

She added that the ministry was cooperating with the Trade Ministry to draft a regulation on Secondhand Workable Electronic Stuff to prevent the flow of electronic waste to Indonesia.

She said that cathode ray tubes were included in the stuff that could not enter because they contained lead.

"The secondhand workable electronic stuff must be no more than five years old and should still be in one piece. Other countries oblige importers to send the stuff in good packages. We have a bit looser regulations because we received many protests from businesses," she said.

Masnellyarti said that the ministry was also drafting a ministerial regulation on domestically produced electronic waste management. She said that the regulation could create alternatives for distributors to pull their products or to provide information to people on where to dump their electronic waste.

"We are going to give permits to companies for use or processing. We also plan to take inventory of electronic waste. We expect to complete it by the end of this year," she said.

Dyah Paramita from the Indonesian Center for Environment Law (ICEL) said that Indonesia should make electronic waste definitions to prevent the flow of electronic waste into the country.

She said that the definition for secondhand workable stuff should be expanded to other products that were used daily.

"Actually, now I'm more worried that the electronic waste will enter Indonesia through donations," she said.

She said that to prevent the flow of electronic waste, the Environment Ministry should work with the Trade Ministry and customs.