

USAID helps curb deforestation rate in Kalimantan

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) mission director, Glenn Andres, seemed to enjoy the multiethnic dance being performed in the ballroom at the Hotel Aston Ketapang in West Kalimantan on Monday during the initiation of the Indonesia Forest and Climate Support (IFACS) scheme in Kalimantan.

He said the dance, performed by teenagers, was inspirational. He said curbing the rapid pace of deforestation should be carried out together with a variety of stakeholders from various backgrounds.

"As was depicted in the multiethnic dance that was full of diversity, we call on every party to work together to curb deforestation and boost economic growth, because West Kalimantan's natural wealth can provide for future generations," Glenn said.

The IFACS launch was a manifestation of a US\$40 million program, which covers Kalimantan, Aceh and Papua over a four-year time span. For West Kalimantan, USAID-IFACS will work in five regencies – Ketapang, Melawi, North Kayong, Sekadau and Sintang.

"Cooperation between USAID and the Indonesian government has been established for 20 years. The recent memorandum of understanding [MoU] between President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and United States President Barack Obama has made the partnership more comprehensive," said Glenn.

Although he did not present data, Glenn claimed that the cooperation had significantly improved the management of national parks and forest areas. The only regency head who attended the event was Sintang Regent Milton Crosby.

"We are aware of the impact of global warming, so we need a precise strategy and policy to curb deforestation. On the other hand, when managed wisely, forestry resources, which support life, can be a means of development and absorb manpower," Milton said.

He explained that Sintang regency, in which forested areas span 1.32 million hectares, or 61 percent of the regency's total size, has a national park, tourist forests, protected forests, production forests, industrial forests and community-based forests.

USAID-IFACS had earlier signed an MoU with the West Kalimantan administration on Aug. 8, 2011. West Kalimantan's deputy governor for economics, development and people's welfare, Lensus Kandri, said the province, which was quite vast and part of the earth's lungs, spanned 14,687 square kilometers, or 7.5 percent of Indonesia's total territory.

"The province, which is 1.13 times larger than the island of Java, is facing various forestry issues, such as forest fires, illegal logging and poaching of wildlife," Lensus said.

The USAID-IFACS launch also coincided with the signing of technical documents between the donor organization and five regency heads.

The partnership program is part of cooperation between the Indonesian government and the US in terms of forestry and climate change and is an integrated program for sustainable forest management and reducing carbon emissions.