

City parks neglected due to lack of funds

Budget constraints have resulted in the city's 240 parks sliding into an appalling condition, a city official said. Head of the City Parks and Cemetery Agency, Catharina Suryowati, said that out of the 800 parks in Jakarta, around 30 percent do not receive proper care. "We are allocated only a small amount of the budget for their maintenance and upkeep," Catharina said.

She said that the paltry budget that the agency receives means that there is very little to spend on each park in the city. "At times, we stretch earmarked funds to two or three parks, meaning we can only hire sweepers with no regular schedule," she said. Catharina also said that private partners were also to blame for the parks' dreadful conditions.

She said that most of the city's partners in park maintenance had reneged on their contracts. The city government will go after the companies, she said. "If they fail to meet their obligations, the city will not endeavor to meet its obligation to them," Catharina said. Separately, Jakarta's Deputy Governor Prijanto said that he had ordered the City Parks Agency to get tough on truant partners.

"I have told the agency repeatedly to impose penalties on their truant partners. Verbal threats won't be enough for them," Prijanto said. Urban analyst and green activist Nirwono Joga said that conditions in the city's parks was even worse than the city is willing to admit. "We carried out an evaluation of all the city parks and found that around 50 percent were in bad shape," said Nirwono, who is also the coordinator for non-profit organization, Jakarta Green Map (JGM).

JGM found only a few parks in the city that were in a good condition, namely: National Monument Park; Menteng Park; Lapangan Banteng; Surapati; and Situ Lembang in Central Jakarta; Ayodya Park; Sepeda Melawai; and Semanggi Park in South Jakarta; and Kampung Sawah Park in West Jakarta.

Currently, only 10.95 percent of Jakarta's open space is utilized as green areas, which fails to meet an earlier spatial planning target to reserve 13.9 percent of the city for green areas by the end of 2010. The City is working, however, to meet the target of providing 13.9 percent of its 662 kilometer-square area as green space.

Jakarta has been moving slowly toward creating green space, including the restoration of river banks and the conversion of 27 former fuel stations into green areas. Despite the slow progress, the Jakarta government has set a new target for 34.51 percent of the city to be green space by 2030 — an adjustment to the previous target of 13 percent. The administration plans to open new parks in five municipalities, including a new, 13.6-hectare park in Kampung Kebon Pisang, North Jakarta, this year.