

Seaweed in Karimunjawa under threat

The Central Java provincial administration has been urged to pay serious attention on the condition of seaweed in the waters around the Katimunjawa Islands, Jepara regency, that have been severely damaged allegedly due to waste from local hotels.

Head of the Central Java environment agency (BLH) Djoko Sutrisno said that waste from hotels operating in Karimunjawa, including garbage and waste from washing activities, were simply dumped into the sea. "That's why they are damaging the sea biota," Djoko said in Semarang late last week.

Djoko said that the damage could have been avoided if the hotels in the area had been developed according to regulations, especially with regard to the requirement to build waste water management installations (IPAL), which process the waste before it is released into the environment.

"The Jepara regency administration was too reckless in issuing licences to hotels having no IPAL," said Djoko, adding that the damage to the seaweed plantation in Krimunjawa had reached a dangerous level as it had been infected with a virus that continued to grow.

Djoko also said that the environment in Karimunjawa needed to be well-preserved because the area had been named as a national park area according to Forestry Minister Decree No. 78/1999. The decree deems Karimunjawa to be a conservation, recreation and production area whose usage must not violate natural preservation and sustainability principles.

Head of Karimunjawa district Nuryanto confirmed the damage to the seaweed in his region but said he had no idea what caused the damage. He also underlined the need for replanting the seaweed to help restore its condition.

He said local people had been regularly replanting seaweed in the area, but it did not grow well. "Maybe because the seedlings we plant are not of good quality, we always experience failure," he said.

Nuryanto expressed concern at the situation especially because the majority of Karimunjawa's population of 11,000 depended for their livelihood on seaweed which had always fetched a good price in the market.

Wet seaweed is priced at Rp 1,200 (US 14 cents) per kilogram while sun-dried seaweed gets between Rp 12,000 and Rp 13,000 per kilogram.

Nuryanto said his administration planned to replant seaweed in the region in November and December. He also expressed hope that the provincial administration would come up with a solution to the problem.

Separately, Central Java Governor Bibit Waluyo said that he had asked the BLH to find the best solution to the problem. "We have heard about the problem. Let's find the best solution for it," Bibit said.