

Areas under overpasses to be kept green



Barren lands: Some Transjakarta passengers pass an erstwhile flower garden on their way to the ticket booth under the overpass at Slipi intersection in West Jakarta on Tuesday. (JP/Indah Setiawati)

As the Jakarta administration struggles to provide more open space in the densely populated capital, potential green areas under overpasses remain under-utilized.

“The program to manage areas under flyovers started in 2007, but the city merely builds parks without giving them proper maintenance,” urban planning expert Nirwono Joga told The Jakarta Post over the telephone on Tuesday.

Nirwono said that plants under flyovers needed special treatment because they received little sunlight and were exposed to pollution, while the land should be cultivated regularly to prevent it from hardening.

“The city usually only prioritizes the maintenance of prime areas such as Monas [National Monument], Suropati park, Sudirman and Thamrin. Since parks under the overpasses are located outside the prime areas, they get less attention,” Nirwono said.

He said the ratio of the amount spent on parks by Jakarta and Singapore was 1:20. Nirwono said that areas under overpasses currently do not have an ecological function that could reduce pollution and ease flooding.

“Plants selected should be tough ones that can absorb air pollutants. It is also possible to build absorption wells that can contain rainwater on the street without harming flyovers,” he said.

A number of overpasses in the capital have recently received a new coat of white paint, but nothing green can be found underneath. A large open space under the overpass next to Trisakti University in Grogol, West Jakarta, for example, is occupied by parked cars and street vendors, while a long empty area can be seen under the overpass at the Slipi intersection.

While the areas under the overpasses in Tomang, West Jakarta, and Kuningan, South Jakarta, have some spots dedicated to plants, they have mostly been given over to empty pavements. The overpasses between Grogol and Cawang, East Jakarta, and the Pancoran flyover may be the greenest in Jakarta.

The head of the city’s Parks and Cemeteries Agency, Widyo Dwiyono Budhi, said that the agency could not handle large parks.

“We try to ask for the participation from companies through their CSR [corporate social responsibility] programs. We cannot just rely on the city budget, because it requires a long process and time,” Widyo told the Post at his office in Petamburan, Central Jakarta.

He said that regular flooding meant that the agency could not re-green the area under the Grogol overpasses. “We are afraid that it will be useless, as the plants will be flooded during rain,” he said, adding that the agency plans to build a park under the Slipi overpasses this year.

He pointed out that the agency had created health parks under the Cideng and Jatibaru overpasses in Central Jakarta and the Kuningan flyover in South Jakarta.

Widyo said that 11 percent of Jakarta is comprised of public green space and 7.8 percent of private green space for a total of 18.8 percent green space.