

## RI needs high-tech solution to deforestation

Indonesia needs sophisticated remote sensing technology to accurately locate the damaged parts of its rain forests so that forest sustainability programs can be more effective, a workshop has heard.

The Bogor-based Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation monitoring and evaluation division head, Baba Saiful Barkah, said that satellite remote sensing technology could penetrate clouds that covered an area, and locate forests that had been damaged from deforestation and illegal logging, accurately.

“Without the help of a satellite, it is difficult for people in the field to pinpoint specific locations as it is not clear enough,” he said on Thursday during the workshop, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation — Fast Logging Assessment and Monitoring Environment (REDD-FLAME) held at the International Convention Center of the Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) in Bogor. “Operational costs for fuel, speedboat rentals and other things are such a waste.”

The workshop marked the end of the REDD-FLAME program in Mawas, Central Kalimantan, under which the advanced technology was used.

The project was part of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development for collaborative research on space science (FP7-SPACE) funded by the European Commission. The workshops will also be held in Mozambique in February and then in Brazil in March.

Remote Sensing Applications Consultants Ltd. (RSAC) senior consultant Tim Pearson, who is also the REDD-FLAME program coordinator in Indonesia, said it was time for Indonesia to take up the high-technology as soon as possible because it could support forest monitoring initiatives both at the national and regional levels.

The technology, he said, could also assist with making credible measurements, reporting and verification reports of REDD activities.

A senior researcher at the Forestry Ministry’s Research and Development Agency, Ari Wibowo, agreed with the use of the technology to at least reduce the pace of environmental degradation.

But he said that Indonesia’s coffer was just too little to fund the use of the technology to cover its vast forests.

“The technology is so expensive that the government has not been able to finance it, citing the vast forests it has,” Ari said.

Pearson said it needed US\$50,000 per square kilometer to use the technology when the REDD-FLAME program was carried out in Mawas for around two years. Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan said last year that the area of Indonesia’s forests stood at around 45 million hectares (450,000 square kilometers), a sharp decrease from the 130 million hectares the ministry recorded in 2010.