

Northern coastal areas of West Java vulnerable to flooding

A number of regions on the northern coast of West Java are exceptionally prone to flooding during the rainy season. Quite apart from the weather, the threat of floods is also due to severe environmental damage, especially in forests and river basin areas.

“Areas that are prone to floods on the northern coast of West Java include Cirebon city and Cirebon and Indramayu regencies,” said West Java river water resources management coordinating team secretary Yoyon Suharyono on Friday.

The biggest cause of the flooding, added Yoyon, was environmental damage in areas along river-basin areas. Yoyon said that Cirebon city and Cirebon and Indramayu regencies had become flood-prone areas because they were located in such damaged river basin areas.

“The environmental damage in these three areas has severely silted up the rivers, so they can no longer retain water during the rainy season. Consequently, water will overflow and swamp surrounding areas,” he said. According to Yoyon, there are currently at least 12 major and minor rivers that empty into the sea along the northern coast of Cirebon city and Cirebon and Indramayu regencies that have become severely silted up.

In Cirebon city, severely damaged river delta areas can be found along the Sukalila, Krian, Kalijaga and Cipadung rivers. In Cirebon regency, severely damaged areas can be found along the Cisanggarung, Ciwaringin, Pekik, Kalijaga, Cimanis and Cipager rivers, and in Indramayu regency seriously damaged rivers include the Cimanuk, Cipanas and Cipunegara rivers.

“All the rivers that empty into the northern coast of West Java have been badly silted up due to high sedimentation,” he said. Yoyon added that the sedimentation was also exacerbated by worsening forest destruction in upstream areas.

Nearly all the rivers that empty into the sea on the northern coast of Cirebon originating from Mount Ciremai in Kuningan regency, the forested areas on the highest mountain in West Java, are currently in a severe condition. The damaged condition of the forests has impaired the function of forests as catchment areas.

“Damage in upstream areas has caused a high level of erosion and accelerated river sedimentation,” said Yoyon. The further deteriorating condition of forests on Mount Ciremai was attributed to logging, sand quarrying and forest fire, Yoyon said. He added that the current extent of forest destruction on Mount Ciremai had reached 4,000 hectares out of a total of 15,000 hectares. The damage has caused erosion due to runoff during rain. “These are the factors that have caused rapid river sedimentation,” he said.

Separately, Cirebon Public Works Office head Wahyu said his office was making efforts to restore the severely damaged river basin areas to prevent flooding, through measures such as reforestation and dredging the badly silted up rivers. “We will dredge the severely silted-up rivers,” he said. In Cirebon city, of the total of 22 subdistricts in five districts, 10 of them are prone to floods. The flood-prone subdistricts are Kesenden, Sukapura and Kebon Baru subdistricts in Kejaksan district; Lemahwungkuk, Kasepuhan and Pegambiran subdistricts in Lemahwungkuk district; Sunyaragi and Kesambi subdistricts in Kesambi district; and Larangan, Kecapi and Kalijaga subdistricts in Harjamukti district.