

South Korea to help in restoring Ciliwung River

The Jakarta administration has begun preparations for the restoration of part of the city's Ciliwung River, with the help of the South Korean government. Governor Joko "Jokowi" Widodo said the restoration would be on a stretch of the Ciliwung between Istiqlal Mosque and Pasar Baru in Central Jakarta. "South Korea has good, clean rivers that have become tourist attractions. We want to emulate that here in Jakarta," Jokowi told reporters at City Hall after meeting South Korean Ambassador Kim Young-Sun on Friday.

The governor said he had visited Seoul on a number of occasions and envied the pristine river banks he found there. "If we want it, I think we can also build a jogging track along our river," he said. Kim said that the Seoul-Jakarta cooperation was an extension of the South Korea-Indonesia cooperation. "The governor and I discussed a number of agendas for possible cooperation. The administrations of both cities will have more intensive talks over the matter soon," the ambassador said.

In December, Indonesia and South Korea signed an agreement to restore the Ciliwung River. The agreement commits about US\$10 million to cleaning up the river, which is heavily polluted. Environment ministers from both countries signed a memorandum of understanding on the pilot project. The cooperative venture plans to restore a total of 13 rivers, beginning with the Ciliwung.

The Korean government will disburse US\$9 million in grants to finance the project on the Ciliwung, while Indonesia's Environment Ministry will be contributing around Rp 10 billion. Environment Minister Balthasar Kambuaya had said the Ciliwung restoration project was expected to be completed in 30 months, including the building of a domestic wastewater facility and a learning center along 500 meters of the river.

Jokowi also said that Jakarta was intent on more cooperation with Seoul in other areas like transportation, especially railways. "However, we will focus first on the river restoration project," the governor said. Jakarta has other projects with its foreign counterparts on the pipeline. The Ciliwung River is also one of the places where the administration is considering using bacteria to treat polluted water in a bid to find alternative sources of drinking water for the city.

Deputy Governor Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama said the administration had invited a Chinese company to hold trials in a Ciliwung tributary near the State Palace. The river, which flows from Puncak, West Java to Jakarta Bay, will be the focal point of a massive project to dredge and revitalize Jakarta's rivers – a project that has been stalled since last year.

Hundreds of thousands of people living in slums along the river banks will be affected by the \$190 million Urgent Flood Mitigation Project (JUFMP), which is primarily financed by a loan from the World Bank. The JUFMP will involve building dikes, dredging canals and overhauling four reservoirs over the next five years. The repair work on the Ciliwung River is expected to return the width of the river to its natural 50 meters.

The central government and the Jakarta administration are planning to construct affordable apartment buildings to provide housing for residents who live along the banks of the Ciliwung and are facing eviction due to the dredging project.