

Regions will still see floods, landslides



Wiped out: A farmer picks through a storm-damaged paddy field in Kajongan Bojongsari, Purbalingga, Central Java, on Tuesday. Dozens of hectares of rice paddy have been destroyed due to strong winds. The rice was due to be harvested and severe losses have been caused to farmers. (Antara/Idhad Zakaria)

Flash floods, strong winds and landslides are still plaguing a number of regions across the archipelago.

In Semarang, Central Java, the Disaster Mitigation Agency (BPBD) declared that the city was on flood alert status as the surface of the West Flood Control Canal, which had just been normalized to accommodate more rainwater, was already level with the ground.

“Stagnant waters are seen across Semarang,” municipal disaster mitigation agency head Iwan Budi Setyawan told reporters on Tuesday.

As of Tuesday afternoon, some 4,000 houses in North Semarang district, which has been regularly hit by floods, were still inundated up to 40 centimeters deep.

Although some residents stayed at their homes, others chose to take shelter at refuge posts.

North Semarang district head Djaka Suka Wijaya said that seven out of the district’s eight subdistricts had been inundated.

“We are coordinating with the BPBD for further measures,” Djaka said, Tuesday.

Locals were seen establishing evacuation centers and public kitchens in a number of locations including Dadapsari, Tanjung Mas, Bandarharjo and Panggung Lor subdistricts. Other affected districts include East Semarang, Tugu, Mangkang and Genuk.

The West Flood Control Canal was expected to accommodate rainwater during heavy rain has apparently failed to do so although a normalization program was only completed in December.

The thick sand sediment in the river basin has been blamed for the situation. Dredging had not been completed sufficiently during the normalization works and the sediment was still relatively thick and lessened the river’s capability to hold more rainwater during heavy downpours.

Meanwhile, in East Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), 431 people from Rakas village, Golo Paleng subdistrict, Lambaleda district, left their homes on Monday due to landslides.

Heavy rain over Kota Komba district on Saturday and Sunday had also caused landslides over the Waekoe irrigation facility in Watungene subdistrict.

As a result, water from the irrigation ditch overflowed in to the nearby Padarambu rice field, posing the threat of harvest failure to local farmers if the situation is not addressed.

Deputy chairman of Padarambu water user maintenance committee (P3A), Antonius Sale, said that local people had been trying to clear the ditch of debris for the whole day and afternoon on Tuesday.

Padarambu neighboring unit chairman Jhoni Setarman said that he had asked all owners of agricultural fields in Padarambu to assist in mending the irrigation facilities.

Meantime, the threat of an outbreak of sanitation-related diseases haunts residents in Jambi. According to Erwan Mujio, head of the Health Issue Control at the Jambi Health Agency, the most common diseases attributed to floods are skin infections, influenza and diarrhea.

“We call on residents to keep their environment clean and healthy to prevent the diseases,” said Erwan.

Besides flooding, many Indonesians currently have had a hard time dealing with the strong winds that hit some areas. Bantul BPBD head Dwi Daryanto called on Yogyakartaans to be aware of the possibility of strong winds that might hit the province.

“In 2012, we recorded 145 instances of strong wind across the province. This will still occur this year,” Dwi said, adding that the province saw 66 landslides last year.

The Emergency and Logistic head at the Sleman BPBD, Makwan, said that his agency had established 34 disaster care communities as part of the agency’s disaster-risk management plan. “Through this, we hope that residents will be prepared in facing natural disasters,” said Makwan.