

## City criticized for poor air quality control



*Quality control: Technicians perform a regular check on the air-quality monitoring equipment near the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle in Central Jakarta on Tuesday. The city administration has placed more monitoring equipment in the other four municipalities to receive better readings on air pollution levels. Each set of equipment costs Rp 3.6 billion (US\$375,120). Maintenance checks on the devices are held every one to two weeks. (JP/Jerry Adiguna)*

Environmentalists have expressed their disappointment over the city's poor air quality, saying that the city administration has been dragging its feet in issuing additional policies and enforcing existing laws.

"The air quality has slightly increased, but the law enforcement to maintain it is still very poor," said the regional director for the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi) in Jakarta, Ubaidillah, on Wednesday. "The Jakarta administration needs to do more."

He added the city administration was lax in enforcing the laws, such as on vehicle emissions control, which according to the regional regulation, is a must every six months. "Emissions from motor vehicles contribute 70 percent to air quality degradation," he said. "But Walhi now sees that the enforcement of this no longer exists." Ubaidillah said that the regional regulation obligated the city administration to enforce car-free days, which he said were working well, as well as checking vehicle emissions control every six months and providing 30 percent of the city's area for open green spaces. "Plantations are the best emission absorber," he said. According to a report by the Community for Leaded Gasoline Eradication (KPBB) in July, research has shown that air pollution in Jakarta is relatively high in certain parameters.

Although admitting that the air quality in some areas was below the central government's parameters, the community says that those numbers still exceed the standards issued by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to the WHO's air quality guidelines released in 2006, quality air should not exceed 50 ug/m<sup>3</sup> in 24 hours for the particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) parameter and remain below 100 ug/m<sup>3</sup> in eight-hours for the Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) parameter.

For Jakarta, the administration has set the number at 150 ug/m<sup>3</sup> for the PM<sub>10</sub> parameter. Hence, although the pollution level in the city is low in certain areas as per the agency's standard, other areas slightly exceed the WHO guideline numbers, which the KPBB says is still dangerous. As a result, the KPBB said in the report that in a study from 2001 to 2010, citizens of Jakarta were proven to only enjoy fresh air for less than three months the whole period.

Meanwhile, head of the Jakarta Environmental Management Agency (BPLHD) Joni Tagor said that the city administration had been continuously monitoring air quality using equipment placed in four parts of Jakarta and concluded that the air quality in the city was still good. The automatic air quality monitoring equipment sets are placed in Kelapa Gading, North Jakarta; near Lubang Buaya, East Jakarta; at the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle, Central Jakarta; and in the Jagakarsa area, South Jakarta. "The agency is now building one more set in the Kebon Jeruk area, West Jakarta, and is slated to start operating early next year," Joni told The Jakarta Post on Wednesday. "The equipment is used to record air quality samples in the areas for us to study before deciding what to do," he added.

According to Joni, each set of equipment costs Rp 3.6 billion (US\$375,120). The devices receive one to two weeks maintenance respectively, depending on the condition. Joni, however, pointed out that the city administration's 150 ug/m<sup>3</sup> standard was "only following standards" set by the Environment Ministry regarding quality air. "We keep studying data from the devices and checking the source of the pollution," Joni said, adding that there were times when the agency could not do anything. "If the source comes from the sun, then we cannot do anything except warn society." (fzm)