

Tangerang, S. Jakarta get clean air award

As a resident of Kebayoran Baru in South Jakarta for 15 years, Nancy Gultom was proud to hear that the municipality was named the second best metropolitan city for air quality.

“I think South Jakarta deserves the award. It’s not because I live there, but because I know that the air there is cleaner, fresh as it has more trees compared to other parts of the capital,” she said.

Nancy also noticed that in the past few years, she had seen some improvements in the municipality’s spatial planning. “There are more small parks in some neighborhoods. I also noticed that some housing compounds and main roads in South Jakarta are cleaner,” she said. But she still has some notes for further improvement; she would love to see better management of Blok M bus terminal and public transportation that is environmentally friendly.

“Anytime I go near the Blok M terminal, I can smell the change of air quality as there are so many buses that produce thick, black smoke,” Nancy said. Under the Langit Biru (Blue Sky) program, the Environment Ministry recognized Tangerang, South Jakarta and Medan in North Sumatra as the top three metropolitan cities with the best air quality on Monday.

Commenting on the award, the regional director for the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi) in Jakarta, Ubaidillah, said that despite better air quality in South Jakarta compared to other municipalities in the capital, he criticized the massive change of land use in the area.

“South Jakarta is a water catchment zone, and has better air quality than others to some extent. But as we can see, the construction of new buildings is massive there,” he said. “If there is no intention of stopping it, the award will mean nothing.”

The areas along Jl. Fatmawati, Jl. TB Simatupang, Jagakarsa and Lenteng Agung are where construction of office buildings, apartments and shopping centers are out of control, Ubaidillah said.

For the award, Tangerang got 8.47 points, South Jakarta got 7.16 and Medan got 6.12 points. To determine the points, a team was assigned from March through October to conduct a direct evaluation on 44 cities across the archipelago. The team consists of representatives from the ministry, city administrations, police offices, transportation agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The assessments process covered direct carbon emission checks on 500 vehicles for three days, roadside air quality monitoring, traffic performance monitoring in several artery roads, air quality monitoring, air pollution reduction efforts and people awareness.

The Langit Biru committee chairperson Sulistyowati said that motor vehicles and industrial activities were the biggest contributors to air degradation.

“This award is to encourage cities to improve the management of air quality and apply sustainable transportation systems,” she said.

Tangerang deputy mayor Arif R Wismansyah said that a clean air program in the city had been conducted since 2010.

“One of the programs that we have done is methane gas processing at landfill sites. We have asked communities and schools for greater involvement in making the air cleaner by planting trees or by reuse and recycle programs,” he said. Despite the award, a report by the Community for Leaded Gasoline Eradication (KPBB) in July has shown that air pollution in Jakarta is relatively high in certain parameters.

In addition, the report also says that citizens of Jakarta were proven to only enjoy fresh air for less than three months in 10 years.