

NGO reports seven mining firms to minister

An environmental NGO on Monday reported seven mining firms to Environment Minister Gusti Hatta Radjasa, accusing them of polluting farms and water supplies vital to hundreds of residents based near the companies' operations. "The ministry should conduct an investigation into water polluting in the area as soon as possible because hundreds of families have no access to clean water," newly-elected Jatam coordinator Andrie S. Wijaya said Monday. He said Gusti had the authority to order regents to halt operations of mining companies deemed to be causing environment damage.

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In a letter to Gusti, the Mining Advocacy Network (Jatam) asked the minister to send letters to the regents of the regencies where the 7 companies were operating ordering them to temporarily stop the companies' operations.

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Four of the reported firms are coal mining companies operating in East Barito regency, Central Kalimantan province.

Jatam said the four companies had siphoned toxic waste into paddy fields belonging to 120 families in Pangkan village.

Jatam accused a foreign-owned mining company in Pacitan regency, East Java, of polluting the Grindu River, the main source of clean water in the area.

It also accused a coal mining firm in Tabalong, South Kalimantan, of polluting the Balangan River with nickel.

The latest sample analysis showed that the level of nickel in the river was 1.32 milligram per liter, far higher than the tolerable limit of 0.00 mg/l, Jatam said.

The NGO also asked the minister to investigate a gold mining company in Wanggameti, East Nusa Tenggara, where 400 local people staged a rally at the regency office to protest the company's presence in the region.

The residents there claimed that the mining company had polluted and shrunk water sources in the area.

Responding to Jatam's reports, Ilyas Asaad, an environmental compliance official at the Environment Ministry, said that his office would send a team to the locations this week to verify the data.

The ministry has been under protracted pressure for failing to ensure companies comply with regulations stipulated in the law on the environment.

Minister Gusti has conducted two random inspections at coal mining companies in Kalimantan.

In his statement to the press, Hatta admitted that most small coal mining enterprises in East and South Kalimantan had not issued environmental impact analysis reports.

The reports, which are used to judge whether business activities are harmful to the environment, are mandatory under the environmental law. The ministry said that it would use its authority to revoke business permits from companies it deemed to have violated environmental standards.

source:

Adianto P. Simamora, The Jakarta Post, Jakarta | Tue, 05/11/2010 9:47 AM | National