

Govt accused of selling islands to investors

The Jakarta Post, Jakarta | National | Thu, November 07 2013, 7:53 AM

National News

An NGO has accused the government of selling small islands to investors under the guise of a Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry program to boost tourism in 100 small islands across the archipelago.

The People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice Indonesia (KIARA) said that under the program, local inhabitants of the islands could suffer discrimination.

"The program violates the 1945 Constitution, which protects the basic rights of every citizen. Allowing private or foreign companies to build resorts on small islands means that local residents whose lives depend on the sea, such as fishermen, will no longer be able to access the sea," KIARA secretary-general Abdul Halim told The Jakarta Post on Wednesday.

According to KIARA, the 100 small islands include 92 outer islands across the country such as the Alor Islands in East Nusa Tenggara, the Mentehage Islands in North Sulawesi and Maratua Islands and Sebatik Islands, both in East Kalimantan.

Abdul said the rights of small island inhabitants had been upheld by the Constitutional Court, which ruled in 2010 that natural resources on the islands must be used for the prosperity of local residents.

The court revoked a number of articles in Law No. 27/2007 on the management of coastal zones and small islands, especially those which could provide legal grounds for the commercialization of coastal zones.

An example of the privatization of small islands marginalizing local residents was the opening of a tourist resort in Gili Sunut in East Lombok.

"Fishermen from around 190 homes have been evicted from Gili Sunut in Pemongkong village, Jerowaru subdistrict due to the plan by the Ocean Blue Resorts company to build infrastructure like hotels, resorts and diving sites with a total investment of US\$120 billion," Abdul said.

According to data from the ministry, Indonesia has a total of 17,508 islands, of which around 1,300 are inhabited and around 13,446 have been registered with the United Nations.

Contacted separately, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry director of the utilization of small islands Rido Batubara said the development of infrastructure on small islands would be quicker if the management of the islands was handled by private firms.

"To develop small islands in Indonesia we need massive investment, that's why we encourage investors to invest in these small islands. We don't want to burden the government," Rido told the Post.

Rido denied the allegation that the ministry had put many islands up for sale: "There's no a way that an island could be sold because there isn't a mechanism to do it. We only give permits for investors

for around 30 years to develop remote islands," he said.

He did, however, acknowledge that violations of the basic rights of local residents were possible during development projects initiated by local governments.

"The ministry will make sure that local governments will issue regulations which are pro-people," he said.

Sumber:

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/11/07/govt-accused-selling-islands-investors.html>