

IPB Criticized the Handling of Forest Fire in Riau

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Forest fire in Riau Province that has occurred since January 2014 until now has not been successfully dealt with thoroughly. This happened because the government considered the land and forest fires were not serious problems. This was delivered by Prof. Dr. Bambang Hero Saharjo, Professor of Forest Protection, Faculty of Forestry, Bogor Agricultural University in the discussion with the Reporter, Monday (17/3), in Rimbawan Room, Faculty of Forestry, Campus of IPB Dramaga.

"The government must seriously overcome this fire. If not, the burned area will increase in size and uncontrollable," asserted by Prof. Bambang. This fire was always recurring and arrived on time and on target. It was on time when it began to clear land. On target, this fire would come in the place where the corporation (company) would open the land. Truly bizarre. Prof. Bambang added, with the fact, increasingly convinced that the land and forest fires might not occur by itself, it fixed intentional. "Indeed there is a natural factor and human negligence, but it can be ruled out because the factor is very small." Alleged was getting stronger intention, because the results of monitoring and research of Prof. Bambang showed, the clearing cost were very expensive and needed more time, compared to not burn. For comparison, for opening one hectare of land without burning it was necessary the cost of Rp 50 million and the time around one month. "While, if clearing the land by burning, the cost is around Rp 1 million and definitely shorter time," he added.

According to Prof. Bambang, the government had set strict rules that when a fire broke out at the district level so the regent would be in charge. When the smoke had passed to the district in the province, the government should be in charge. If the smoke had crossed the provincial or cross-country boundary, the Ministry of Forestry and the Ministry of Living Environment should be foremost in addressing this issue. Further, Prof. Bambang said that it should be the central government that could enforce the rules strictly. Not only to punish and penalty for the common people, but it had to dare to impose the sanction for the license issuer or the decision maker in the district and province levels.

Chair South East Asia Wildfire Network, Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) further explained, the fact in the field showed not a few of them really did not do anything. Even it did not want to fight for funding to fire control in its territory. They even let the corporation for burning rather than losing them (investor). Anyway, in the end the central government would come to help because it did not want to lose face in the international eyes due to the smoke that had crossed into neighboring countries. "The process like this is almost every year and repeated and not just happened in only Riau Province but also in other provinces in Indonesia," he concluded. (wly)