

Press Release

Minister Bambang Explains Importance of Completing Initial New Capital City Development Process in 2024

BALIKPAPAN – The Minister of National Development Planning/Head of Bappenas Bambang Brodjonegoro spoke at the "Readiness of East Kalimantan as State Capital (IKN)" talk show on Tuesday, (1/10), detailing the necessity of commencing relocation operations by 2024.

"We will see firsthand the place that will become the center of government and capital of our country in 2024. We hope that by that time, the areas of Penajem Paser Utara and Kutai Kertanegara will already see construction on government facilities such as the State Palace, the House of Representatives (DPR) headquarters and other ministerial offices," Minister Bambang said.

He also reiterated that the location was chosen after careful consideration, avoiding areas that are too isolated and hard to access.

"Learning from Brazil's Brasilia, when it was built in the middle of nowhere, it took a long time for Brasilia to eventually become a big city and become an economic driver for the surrounding area," he added.

The event, which was attended by several experts and figures including editors-in-chief of mass media organizations and local government representatives, aims to be a bridge to dispel information and convey public aspirations in order to ensure the new city fulfills its goal of becoming a "smart, green, beautiful, and sustainable" city.

Minister Bambang gave an example of Brazil as a good practice for a country that is able to successfully move its capital city, from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia in 1960, to overcome inequality issues that exist between the country's wealthier coastal areas and the inner areas around the Amazon River.

"They began the process of moving their capital in 1956, to the area where Brasilia currently stands, which was then vast, vacant land. It turned out it took them almost five years to actually get the city up and running. It only takes five years. The Brazilian government felt that there were extraordinary levels of inequality in areas around the Amazon River which was almost forgotten by the Brazilian government, prompting the government to place the city in that area and establish a more significant presence," explained the Minister.

The Minister also gave an example of another country that was able to relocate their capital city in the space of four years.

"When Pakistan became independent, its initial capital was Karachi, located on the edge of the Indian Ocean. Karachi developed into a city of trade and business, but the government would later see development in the city become out of control, making the city less manageable. So, it was decided that they will move their capital city in the 1960s by building the city from scratch. That city is Islamabad, which is itself a well-designed city because it was designed and laid out carefully from the start and has been relatively well-managed to this day," he said.

Karachi has a larger population than Jakarta, with 17 million people recorded as of 2017, compared to Jakarta's 10.3 million people. Today, Islamabad has a population of over 1 million. When Brasilia was first established in 1960, its population was only 160,000. Fifty years later, it has now grown to host 4.5 million people, becoming Brazil's 3rd largest city.

The road leading up to the beginning of the IKN's planned construction in 2024, explained the Minister, will not be an easy job, despite the successful experience of two countries in doing so. A larger challenge awaits in establishing that city as the definitive center of government.

"Other countries can move their capital cities within five years or less in a period that is not as technologically advanced as today. With more advanced technology, better workforce skills, and better infrastructure support, we should be able to realize that goal, building the new capital city in East Kalimantan in almost the same time as Brazil and Pakistan did. We hope that by 2024, we will have already relocated the governmental structure to the new city. This means the deadline is tight, so there must be a clear indication that everyone is on board to make this happen," Minister Bambang said.

In the end, the government chose East Kalimantan over Central Kalimantan and South Kalimantan, because of the existence of two major cities on the island, namely Balikpapan and Samarinda.

"We see that there are already two functional cities in this province, so that later the logistics costs of developing the city can be cheaper. Likewise, when the city begins operating, I imagine that it will be impossible for the city to be complete in its first year of operation. There will be shortcomings here and there. But Balikpapan is only 60km from the Sepaku district of the Penajam Paser Utara regency where the new capital will be built, and is well connected by airports, ports, and freeways. It is very possible that in the beginning, when the city is still under construction, some government activities will be carried out in Balikpapan," the Minister claimed.

He assured that the construction of the new capital city will not encourage deforestation, but will instead encourage reforestation. It will be built with the concept of being a forest city, not a city in the forest.

"Therefore, the goal is not to create urban forests, but developing the city within the forest so that the forest elements would not be disturbed. We are committed to not disturb the area's forests, which are categorized as protected forests and we will make sure that 50% of the new city's land will be dedicated to green spaces," Minister Bambang said.

The talk show was held as part of a series of working visits by the Minister of National Development Planning/Head of Bappenas to oversee the prospective location. It was also attended by figures such as East Kalimantan Governor Isran Noor, Penajam Paser Utara Regent Abdul Ghofur Masud, Kutai Kartanegara Regent Edi Damansyah, Balikpapan Mayor Rizal Effendi, National Professional Journalism Forum chair Margiono, moderator Usman Kansong, as well as participants from several ministries, government institutions and the national and regional press.

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