

Earth day observed in Jakarta

Jakarta (ANTARA News) - Hundreds of people grouped in the Sahabat Walhi (Friends of the Indonesian Forum for Environment) staged a rally to commemorate Earth Day at the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle here Sunday.

ANTARA News reported Walhi, the NGO which held the rally, used a theme "Save Forests By Your Own Hands".

Participants of the rally carried seedlings and distributed leaflets on data on forest destruction in Indonesia to passers-by and motorists.

South Kalimantan chapter of Walhi chairman Berry N Furqon said in his oration that forest redemption was a very urgent step as today the rate of forest destruction had reached 3.7 percent a year.

"Only 40 percent of South Kalimantan forests remained," he said.

Meanwhile, Walhi executive director Cholid Muhammad said uncontrollable deforestation in Indonesia year after year has rapidly reduced the tropical forests.

The deforestation rate in Indonesia in the 1997-2000 period reached 3.8 million hectares per year, an increase from the 1.6 million hectares per year in the 1985-1997 period, he said.

"The rate has turned Indonesia into a country with the highest deforestation rate in the world," he said.

Data of the Landsat satellite image showed that 101.73 million hectares of forests and land in Indonesia in 2000 were damaged, including 59.62 million hectares of forested land.

Walhi therefore asked the government to carry out a moratorium on logging in the industrial sector.

"The moratorium is only a process not the final aim. A moratorium offers a chance to carry out all reform and government commitment in the forest sector," he said. (*)

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