

Cooperates with Asia-Pacific Islands Countries, UGM Develops Ecotourism

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Centre for Tourism Studies UGM cooperates with the countries in Asia-Pacific islands to develop ecotourism, which is tourism in harmony with the environment. The countries which are invited to cooperate are Malaysia, Fiji Islands, Samoa, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, and Timor Leste.

Head of the Center, Dr. M. Baiquni, M.A, said the pilot Asia-Pacific countries cooperation with Indonesia in the development of nature-based tourism aims to boost the economy of rural communities in these countries. "What's interesting about this ecotourism is that in addition to providing environmental awareness, this sector is expected to provide economic benefits to society that we call 3p, profit, people, and planets," said Baiquni in the International Conference on Ecotourism on Wednesday (27/4) at Prambanan Room of Inna Garuda Hotel.

Although ecotourism has been developed in Indonesia for quite a long time, the cooperation with several countries is expected to provide geopolitical position of countries in this region in diplomacy with the developed countries, in terms of commitment to anticipate climate change and global warming. "Through the International Conference on Ecotourism, we urge the developed countries and the world's major industrialized countries to provide awareness of ecotourism, because the impact of climate change actually threatens the existence of small islands in the Asia Pacific region," he added.

Furthermore, Baiquni explains ecotourism is expected to attract tourists to visit the small islands in the Asia Pacific region. While in Indonesia, ecotourism has been implemented in NTB, NTT, Bali, Manado, and so forth. "Yogyakarta itself has already presented mountain tourism, ecotourism, and other natural attractions," he said.

Observer and also tourism consultant from Nepal, Thakur Prasad Devkota, said the tourism industry currently becomes the source of some countries' economic income. There were 924 million tourists visit each year worldwide. He cites a data of World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourist visits to Asia Pacific countries reached up to 182 million people in 2007 and then increased to 184 million tourists in 2008.

Meanwhile, Director General of Information and Public Diplomacy, Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Andri Hadi, said that developing countries have the potential for tourism development through cultural charms, natural beauty and biodiversity. In addition, tourism development is expected to reduce poverty, especially in rural areas.

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