

## **Minister of Tourism Welcomed The Decision To Keep Komodo Island National Park Open for Tourists**

**Jakarta, 5 October 2019** - The Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, Arief Yahya, welcomed the decision to keep Komodo Island National Park in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) to remain open for tourists from Indonesia and overseas.

Based on the closed meeting on 30 September 2019, held at the office of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, led by Luhut Pandjaitan, Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs, and attended by Siti Nurbaya, Minister of Environment and Forestry, Arief Yahya, Minister of Tourism, and Viktor B. Laiskodat, Governor of East Nusa Tenggara, the meeting agreed to keep Komodo Island open.

“We positively welcomed the decision on this matter. Furthermore, it was also agreed that there would not be any relocation of the people, but there will be a concurrent revitalisation of the natural tourism”, stated by Minister Yahya and was delivered by Guntur Sakti, the Minister’s Expert Staff for Multicultural Affairs and the Acting Head of the Public Communication Agency of the Ministry of Tourism, in Jakarta on Saturday, 5 October 2019.

This matter needed to be readdressed as there are still several questions from several stakeholders, including from potential tourists and Visit Indonesia Tourism Officer/VITO overseas.

The confirmation that Komodo Island National Park will remain open for tourism will certainly help tourism industry operators as well as international tour operators in promoting tourism packages to Indonesia, which may have been planned from the previous years.

Guntur Sakti highlighted that the decision from the meeting at the office of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs, in principle are aligned with the result from the research team, which stated that Komodo Island does not need to be closed because there were no basis for closure from an ecological, social, and economic aspect.

Based on the result from the komodo population monitoring by the Komodo National Park Centre and Komodo Survival Programme (KSP), it was found that over the past five years, the komodo population fluctuated in a relatively stable trend, between 2,400-3,000 Komodos.

The presence of tourist in the tourism area within the Komodo National Park is not a factor in the decrease of the komodo population.

From a management point of view, the national park should be managed based on Ecosystem Base Management. The people of the Komodo Village should be part of the island's ecosystem, thus the management should be an integrated management.

The development of Komodo National Park as an exclusive nature tourism area could be reached through the provision of infrastructure and tourism services based on international standards and supported by general facilities which are needed by tourists, such as accommodation, transportation, information, entertainment, banking, etc.

Thus, the management of Komodo Island National Park should be integrated with the development of Labuan Bajo Tourism Destination. This is in-line with the opinions of Miller and Hamilton (1999) which viewed that the management of conservation areas should be integrated with a broader landscape. The Integrated Tourism Master Plan Labuan Bajo-Flores is currently being developed, and is expected to be finalised by 2020.

Meanwhile, over the past five years, tourism arrivals to the national park experienced a significant increase. 80,626 tourist was recorded in 2014 and 95,401 tourist in 2015. In 2016, 107,711 tourist was recorded, in which 11.60% used cruise ships, in 2017 there were 125,069 tourist, in which 13.70% used cruise ships, and in 2018 there were 176,830 tourist, in which 9.17% used cruise ships. The recent data, in August 2019, 107 cruise tourist came to Komodo Island.

The increase of tourist has impacted in the growth of the business sectors linked to tourism in Labuan Bajo, such as hotels, transportation, tour operators, etc. There are currently 84 hotels (47 star hotels, 17 low cost hotels, 19 inns, and 1 hotels), culinary facilities in 72 location (38 restaurants and 34 diners), sea transportation, such as motor boats (813 unit). Meanwhile, there are 67 tourist guides, 120 souvenir sellers, and 60 komodo statue sculptors, which are part of the ecotourism in Komodo National Park.

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