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Best practices in city management discussed in Batam

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Representatives from 16 pilot cities within five ASEAN countries — Indonesia, Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam — are discussing best practices in regional administrations in a two-day forum in Batam, Riau Islands province, on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The forum is facilitated by the Democratic Local Governance in South-East Asia (Delgosea), which is jointly funded by the European Union and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) via the German Development Cooperation Ministry, for network development and information sharing in regional administration best practices.

Delgosea's project officer Novianty Manurung said that in Indonesia, there are four pilot cities for the program: Wakatobi, Kupang, Tarakan and Pangkal Pinang. As such, they replicate the working programs of their respective partner cities from other participating countries considered applicable for replication. "Our task is to provide capacity building for supervising, monitoring and evaluating the participating cities," Novianty told The Jakarta Post, on Monday.

In the Delgosea program, Pangkal Pinang replicates a program to maximize marine potential in Tubigon City, the Philippines, called the Mariculture Project. Tarakan and Kupang, on the other hand are replicating an ecosaver project, while Wakatobi is replicating Muangklang on a low-carbon city program.

"The program transfer process is not an easy thing to carry out, especially due to the challenging cultural and climatic differences," Novianty said.

Meanwhile, the success of a street vendor relocation program by Surakarta Mayor Joko Widodo has become a best practice replicated by a number of cities in Thailand; and a successful e-government program from Yogyakarta municipality is being replicated by a city in the Philippines.

The forum in Batam is the third regional conference of its kind that has been carried out since March 2010 and is due to end in August 2012. The conference will be followed by a one-day workshop on monitoring and evaluation.

Delgosea's project manager Susanne Stephan said that for the best practices exchange program involving 16 cities, Delgosea allocated US\$1.8 million. "Political will on the

part of each of the participating mayors and regents is a key to the success of the program,” she said.

Delgosea, according to Susanne Stephan, considered that regional autonomy had been well implemented in Indonesia. This, she said, could be seen from the existence of a regional government working program that can be used as a reference by other regions.

She added that the program had helped to eradicate the prevailing political barriers among the participating countries. For example, a city in Vietnam could replicate a program from a city in Cambodia.

“Political differences are no longer a consideration when a regional administration working program is considered good,” she said.

The selection of the participating cities was carried out by the association of regional administration institutions. The program also receives support from a number of regional administration associations from the five partnering countries.