Timor Leste’s Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Ir. Mariano Sabino Assanami expects IPB in the future to continue sending its students, ranging from the levels of D-III to S3 to conduct research on forestry related to the development of ecotourism in the country.

"I also hope Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) is willing to accept new students from Timor Leste," he said at the seminar via teleconference between Bogor, West Java, Indonesia and Dili, East Timor, on Friday.

The international seminar was held in Direccao Nacional de Floresta, Dili to discuss the results of the study by 10 students of IPB, both from the Republic of Indonesia and Timor Leste, who have been doing the study over the last four months at the Nino Konis Santana National Park, Lautem District in the east bordering with Australia.

In his speech read by Junior Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Ir Marcos da Cruz, M. Agr it, Mariano Sabino Assanami revealed that research results of fieldwork by the 10 students of the Department of Forest Resources Conservation and Ecotourism (KSDHE) IPB is very important.

Now, the National Directorate of Forestry in Timor Leste desperately needs such data as the basis for forestry development planning in the future.

He said that during the field work, in addition to field observations to collect data, they have also helped the Department of Forest Protection and National Parks to design the logo of the national park that will be used.

"They have shown very satisfactory results. The results of this fieldwork can become the basis for forestry development planning, particularly in Timor Leste as
well as information for the IPB to take further cooperation," he said.

Mariano Sabino Assanami expressed the highest possible appreciation to the IPB for the trust given to the National Directorate of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Timor-Leste as the host.

"Especially to Ricky Avenzora as the main supervisor and the students participating in fieldwork, I hope that in the future IPB could send more students to do research in the field of forestry and ecotourism in Timor Leste," he said.

He added, hopefully the results obtained by the IPB students are not only to the interests of students as a graduation requirement for them.

Further, such research activities can strengthen the relationship between IPB and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Timor Leste for future cooperation as the results of research by the students of IPB are very valuable to all parties in both countries.

Building Mutualism

Meanwhile, the supervisor for student research, Dr. Ricky Avenzora, said that as a country that is improving itself, Timor Leste is potential and important for Indonesia to build a harmonious and responsible mutualism in developing the tourism sector, and vice versa.

"I also believe that Minister and the Government of Timor-Leste as well as the whole community will agree with my view that the various lack of optimum progress happening in Indonesia can become a lesson learned for Timor-Leste in building a variety of tourism potentials available," he said.
To that end, he highlighted several points for example to launch a tourism development one should not necessarily be trapped in the less useful debate "which comes first between egg and chicken?" Similarly, in the context of tourism, the question is always which must go first between the infrastructure and facilities rather than the "actual demand" which will be served.

Next, building tourism is not (and never oriented) to build various infrastructure and facilities for the tourists expected to come.

"Indeed, building tourism is to build a region and the community itself in a unique, efficient and effective way as well in the interest and harmony needed and expected by the community for their welfare and happiness," he said.

If such uniqueness, harmony and interest can be manifested in every existing aspect of development, including in the socio-cultural aspects of society, tourists will surely come accordingly

He asserted that ecotourism is not simply and solely in the form of tourism activities related to forest, nature, or any other various narrow definition.

"Ecotourism includes all forms of tourism activities in a variety of space and time as well the community (either city or rural), which are objectively justifiable in terms of economic sustainability, ecology and environment as well as the socio-cultural aspects," he said.

Therefore, he suggests that Timor Leste not be trapped and never let the development of narrow-minded ideas in ecotourism which tend to restrict the opportunity of the local people to be in touch with the changing times and modernity.

He also said that the students’ research is not yet in the best of their optimum capabilities. "With all their shortcomings, we will surely encourage and help them to
improve it later on when they returned to Bogor," he said.

Two IPB students from Timor Leste involved in the research are Sergio Pereira with the research topic "Tourism Planning in Lake Iralalaro Nino Konis Santana National Park" and Higino Barros with the research topic "Planning of Cultural Heritage Based Tourism at the Nino Konis Santana National Park."

Meanwhile, eight other Indonesian students of IPB are of the D-3 level in their final academic year of Ecotourism major, who have been for four months doing research at the Nino Konis Santana National Park in Timor Leste.

They are Ratna Agustine with the research title "Planning of Mammal-Based Ecotourism in Nino Konis Santana National Park", Bagus Panuntun with the title "Planning of Cultural Tourism in the Nino Konis Santana National Park", Dina Sri Suprajanti with the title "Planning of Tourism Promotion through Leaflets in National Park and Ehsan Ilahi Zahir with the title" Planning of Trekking Tours in Tutuala Nino Konis Santana National Park. "

Then, Listiany has the research title "Planning the Design of Ecology-Based Promotion Media with Booklets and Photography at Nino Konis Santana National Park", and Rima Pratiwi Batubara with the title "Planning of Fabric-Based Tourism at the Nino Konis Santana National Park."

The remaining researchers are Holidusin Alfahrezi with the title "Planning of Trekking Tourism in Com, Nino Konis Santana National Park", and Halim Perdana Kusuma with the title "Planning of Marine Coral Reef Tourism in the Jaco Island of Nino Konis Santana National Park." (mtd)