Indonesian Worker in Taiwan Paralyzed After Alleged Abuse

By Markus Junianto Simbolon on 06:05 pm Jan 27, 2014
Category Crime, News
Tags: Indonesian domestic worker, Indonesian maid abuse, Taiwan

An Indonesian migrant worker was left paralyzed and unable to speak after enduring torture at the hands of her Taiwanese employer, according to a member of the House of Representatives’ commission on manpower and labor issues.

Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) lawmaker Riekie Diah Pitaksaka, of Commission IX, said at a press conference on Monday that Sihatul Alfiah, 27 — from Banyuwangi, East Java — left for Taiwan in 2012 as a legal migrant worker through maid agency Sinergi Bintang to work as a caretaker for the elderly.

But when she arrived in Taiwan, Riekie said, she was told to milk cows and clean a cowshed outside Liouysing, Tainan City, in addition to her caretaking responsibilities.

She cleaned the cowshed, which housed 300 cows, every day from 3 a.m. to 10 a.m. before moving on to her next job, which ran from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Riekie said that Sihatul was often tortured by her employer, Huang Dong Jin.

Sihatul reported the abuse, he said, prompting the agency to meet with her employer, which only exacerbated the problem.

“When calling us at home, [Sihatul] said that her employer often became outraged,” Sihatul’s mother Satiah said, according to news portal Tribunnews.com. “When she was angry, she often slapped and kicked her. But I was informed that my daughter was in a coma because of her weak heart.”

On Sept. 21, 2013, Sihatul fell into a coma after being beaten with a blunt object, according to Rieke’s account. She was taken to Chimney Iyen Tainan hospital in Liouysing, where a doctor found injuries on the back part of her head.

A month later, she woke up from the coma fully paralyzed and unable to speak and in the care of a nursing home.

Doctors informed the Indonesian government that her condition was the result of heart disease.

Suhendik, Sihatul’s husband, said that he did not know why his wife was no longer receiving treatment in a hospital.

“What I know is my wife has no history of heart disease, and she was often tortured by her employer,” he said.

The director of Indonesian citizen protection at the Foreign Affairs Ministry denied that Sihatul had experienced abuse.

After receiving a report by Sihatul’s brother, Saipul, about the alleged torture, the ministry asked the Indonesian Commerce and Economy Body (KDEI) to look into the possibility of abuse.

“There was a meeting between the employer, an agent and the police,” Tatang said. “No solution was found in the mediation because the employer denied that she had violated the contract.”
Tatang said that doctors found no evidence of abuse, contrary to Riske's and Sihatul's family's accounts.

Indonesia Migrant Care accused the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI) of circumventing the legal process in dealing with the employer and work agency through mediation rather than in court.

"BNP2TKI secretly conducted mediation between the family of the victim and the work agency and agreed not to involve civil organizations in this case," Anis Hidayah, director of Migrant Care, said on Monday.

Anis said that Migrant Care had received a report that a BNP2TKI representative in Taiwan had tried to mediate privately between the victim and the employer, asking the employer to pay for hospital expenses rather than pursuing charges through the local legal system, despite the fact that Sihatul's brother had filed a police report in Taiwan.

"Therefore, we urge all sides to solve this case thoroughly," Anis said.
Akil Mochtar Named Drug Suspect

By Novianti Sutarni on 05:28 pm Jan 18, 2014
Category: Crime, News
Tags: akil mochtar, Indonesia drugs, National Narcotics Agency BNN

The National Narcotics Agency (BNN) on Friday named disgraced former Constitutional Court chief Akil Mochtar a drug possession suspect.

"[Akil] was named a suspect today," BNN spokesman Sumirat Dwiyanto said on Friday at the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) headquarters.

Akil was charged with accepting bribes to rig the results of election disputes heard at the Constitutional Court, undermining the democratic process in a widening corruption scandal that has tainted the reputation of one of the nation's highest courts and threatened to take down a powerful family dynasty in Bantam province. He is currently in detention.

Sumirat said that Akil would now be charged for narcotics offenses in addition to corruption and money laundering charges.

BNN officers visited the KPK offices on Friday to investigate Akil for drug possession but failed to move forward with their investigation because Akil's lawyers were not present.

"He was willing to be questioned, but we must wait until his lawyer comes, and maybe we will reschedule for next week," Sumirat said.

Sumirat said that BNN had gathered 15 witnesses in the case so far, including KPK investigators and Constitutional Court officers.

The KPK arrested Akil on Oct. 2. A search of his offices yielded two methamphetamine pills and four marijuana joints.

Akil tested negative in an initial drug test but further BNN investigation uncovered a genetic match between the judge and one of the joints.

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KPK Seizes 17 Cars From Ratu Atut’s Brother

By Ricky Amelia & Benjamin Soloway on 04:20 pm Jan 28, 2014
Category: Crime, Featured, Jakarta, News
Tags: Banten, Banten Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah, tubagus chaeri wandana

Wawan’s mansion on Jalan Depokan IV in Kuningan, Central Jakarta was deserted on Tuesday afternoon, the day after the KPK confiscated 17 cars from the money-laundering suspect. (Photo/Benjamin Soloway)

Money-laundering suspect Tubagus “Wawan” Chaeri Wardana — the brother of detained corruption suspect Banten governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah — had his fleet of 17 cars confiscated by anti-corruption investigators on Monday and Tuesday morning.

“At the moment, there have been 17 cars confiscated including some luxury cars such as a Lamborghini [Aventador], a Ferrari, a Bentley and a Rolls-Royce,” Barnbang Widodojanto, deputy chairman of the commission, said on Tuesday.

Investigators began their search on Monday afternoon at Wawan’s two houses on lanes off Jalan Depokan, a Kuningan, South Jakarta thoroughfare known for its hellish traffic bottleneck and exorbitant property prices; the street counts the Singapore embassy among its tenants.

Both properties, one large, the other mammoth, were deserted by Tuesday afternoon. Curtains were drawn, no lights were on, guard posts were left unmanned and there were no cars in sight. The larger of the two properties had a four-car garage — a rarity in Jakarta.

The KPK also searched at least five other addresses, including the office of Wawan’s wife, South Tangerang Mayor Airin Rachmi Diany; his employee Yayan Rodah’s houses in Grand Serang Asri and Griya Serang Asri; and two houses in Taman Graha Asri, Serang, owned by another employee, Dauding Prihatna.

The commission confiscated a Harley-Davidson motorcycle and three cars from the Kuningan addresses: a Toyota Land Cruiser, a Nissan GTR and a Lexus Sedan. A Honda motorbike remained in front of the smaller of the houses on Tuesday.

KPK spokesman Johan Budi said the other ten cars confiscated included two Mitsubishi Pajeros, a BMW, a Honda Freed, three Toyota Kijang Innovas, a Toyota Avanza, a Ford Fiesta and a Toyota Fortuner.

Four luxury cars were confiscated from a warehouse in Tanah Abang, Central Jakarta, Budi said.

“They were found in various places, even in a warehouse, but the most important thing is they have been found,” Barnbang said. He would not comment on the commission’s view of the possibility that Wawan kept vehicles in a warehouse to conceal the extent of his assets.

Maidir Ismail, Wawan’s lawyer, denied that the cars were hidden — he said they had been repossessed by a leasing company because his client was unable to pay.
The cars were parked on Tuesday at the KPK headquarters in Jakarta. Aside from the vehicles, the KPK also confiscated documents detailing Wawan's assets.

Wawan has been named a money laundering suspect in two cases: the rigging of medical equipment contracts and attempting to corrupt the country's democratic system by exchanging billions of rupiah in bribes for a favorable ruling in a disputed election in Lebak district, Banten.
Nazaruddin Levels $1 Billion Kickback Accusation at Anas

By Naviarto Setiawidj & Markus Junianto Simaleho on 11:11 am Jan 18, 2014
Category Crime, Featured, News
Tags: Anas Urbaningrum, Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), Muhammad Nazaruddin

Nazaruddin, the former Democratic Party chairman, is accused by former treasurer Muhammad Nazaruddin of rigging Rp 64 trillion worth of state contracts. (JG Photo/Andi)

Former Democratic Party chairman Anas Urbaningrum has denied an accusation by his former treasurer and business partner, Muhammad Nazaruddin, that he pocketed almost $1 billion in kickbacks for allegedly rigging a combined Rp 64 trillion ($5.31 billion) worth of government contracts.

Speaking to reporters following his questioning on Friday at the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) office in South Jakarta, Anas said the money went into “Nazaruddin’s own pocket.”

He said the string of shell companies that Nazaruddin had on Thursday accused him of using to win government contracts and farm them out for a profit were all listed in Nazaruddin’s name, not his.

Nazaruddin, who was convicted of bid-rigging in 2012 and sentenced to seven years in jail, said it was “a fact” that Anas had managed to take charge of dozens of lucrative government contracts worth a total of Rp 64 trillion, for which he received kickbacks amounting to Rp 12 trillion.

He said they included the contract for the construction of a sports center in Hambalang, Bogor, worth Rp 2.5 trillion; a project to issue electronic identity cards, or e-KTP, to all Indonesians above the age of 17, worth Rp 5.9 trillion; and a project to build emergency facilities to develop a bird flu vaccine, worth Rp 2.3 trillion.

Anas was named a suspect last February in the Hambalang case and detained by the KPK earlier this month.

Nazaruddin said on Thursday that all the details were listed in a ledger seized from Anas’s house by KPK investigators.

He called on Anas to follow his example and reveal all he knew about other corruption cases and those involved in them.

Nazaruddin’s own litany of allegations has seen Democrat legislator Angelina Sondakh convicted and jailed in a separate bid-rigging case, and Anas and Andi Mallarangeng, the former sports minister, detained and awaiting trial in the Hambalang case.

Anas, following his arrest on Jan. 3, issued an ominous message of thanks to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who in March last year ousted him from the party after he was named a suspect.

Observers say this, combined with Nazaruddin’s own carefully worded hints, suggest the pair may level graft allegations against Edhy Reckikno Yudhoyono, the president’s son and secretary general of the Democratic Party.

Asked on Thursday whether he had anything to say about Edhy, Nazaruddin remained typically guarded, saying he would “explain everything” if Yusril Ihza Mahendra, a former justice minister and widely considered one of Indonesia’s top lawyers, took on his case.
Yusri said on Friday that he was open to the idea, adding that Nazaruddin had written him a letter two weeks earlier outlining his intention to blow the lid on a number of corruption cases.

"I have duty to help anyone who wants to reveal a crime, especially corruption," he said.

"But only as long as they have proof to back up their claims, and aren't just engaging in slander."

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Cars, Cash and Celebrities: Wawan’s Case Widens

By Jakarta Globe on 04:34 pm Feb 13, 2014
Category Corruption, Featured, News
Tags: Banten Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah, Indonesia corruption, Money Laundering, tubagus chaeri wardana

A security guard walks by a line of luxury cars confiscated from Wawan by the KPK. (IG Photo/Afradi Hilmal)

Jakarta. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) on Wednesday confiscated yet another car connected to money-laundering suspect Tubagus “Wawan” Chaeri Wardana — this one from the Kemang, South Jakarta, residence of soap opera star Jennifer Dunn — as tangled details continued to emerge in the investigation into detained Banten governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah’s brother.

“This evening, in relation to the money laundering case of T.C.W., KPK investigators confiscated a Toyota Alphard Vellfire,” KPK spokesman Johan Budihardjo said on Wednesday night. “The car was confiscated from the house of Jennifer Dunn in Bangka, Kemang, South Jakarta.”

Johan said that Jennifer would be questioned by the KPK. He did not reveal any further information.

“We can’t explain the connection between Jennifer and Wawan, we are waiting for the investigation process first,” he said.

The commission has confiscated 17 of Wawan’s cars, including a Lamborghini and a Ferrari, in January, and another five earlier this month.

He has been charged in four cases so far, including the bribery case connected to the election dispute in the Banten district of Lebak, which involved former Constitutional Court Chief Justice Akil Mochtar, and health equipment-procurement contracts in South Tangerang and Banten. The KPK has also charged him with money laundering, which typically carries a heavier prison sentence and gives investigators greater capacity to reclaim assets.

Maqdir Ismail, Wawan’s lawyer, said on Wednesday night that he was unaware of a connection between Wawan and Jennifer.

“My client never talked about Jennifer, I will ask him how she is associated with him,” he said.

Jennifer’s neighbor Wawan told news portal Liputan6.com that Wawan often came to Jennifer’s house.

“He visited her at night and stayed until 1 or 2 a.m.,” he said, adding that Wawan usually drove a black Toyota Alphard when he stopped by.

Jennifer Dunn landed on the public’s radar in 2009 when she was busted for drug possession.

Famous names

Jennifer’s is not the only celebrity name to come up so far in the investigation — singers Aura Kasih and Syahrini reportedly received money transfers from Wawan’s bank account, as well.
Aura Kasih first emerged as part of the case when Agus Santoso, the deputy chairman of the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK), said that her name was mentioned in a report on suspicious money transfers, submitted by the center to the KPK.

"It's difficult to know whether [the transfer recipients] are artists or not, because they tend to use stage names, while the official data uses their real names," Agus said, as quoted by news portal viva.co.id.

He said that he was often surprised when people summoned to the KPK turned out to be celebrities.

Aura took to twitter over the weekend to deny the allegations.

"I was said to receive a money transfer from Bapak Wawan, whoever he is!!! For God's sake, I never knew Bapak Wawan!!!" she tweeted on Saturday from the handle @aurakasih87.

Syahrini also denied any connection to Wawan.

"Who is Wawan? I never met him, talked to him, or even fixed him," she said. "It's impossible. It's a lie. I don't know Wawan."

She said that she sang at Ratu Atut's birthday party in 2011 but that she was not introduced to Wawan.

"The value of the contract was not really fantastic, standard only," she said.

Other names, supposedly from Agus's report, have been batted around by the Indonesian press, with names difficult to sift from fact.

News portal Tempo.co reported that Wawan bought singer Cynthia Aksa a Porsche worth Rp 4.5 billion ($373,500), an apartment for model Catherine Wilson and both a car and an apartment for model Yasmin Wildblood.

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In Banten, an Education System Plundered by Graft

By Benjamin Soloway & Josua Gantani on 10:55 pm Feb 18, 2014
Category Corruption, Editor's Choice, Education, Featured, News, Politics
Tags Banten, corruption, education, Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah

Lebak, Banten. As we make our way from Jakarta to the heart of Banten province — which stretches from Tangerang, the capital’s sprawling western suburb and a large city in its own right, to the waters of the Sunda Strait, which separate Java from Sumatra — wide boulevards give way to dirt lanes that taper to narrow, muddy tracks, almost impassable by car.

Just six hours from Jakarta’s expanding multitude of high-rise towers and malls, Lebak looks much
like it must have for centuries: goats and chickens wander freely through villages made up of small clusters of traditional homes surrounded by forests and rice paddies.

We’re in Lebak to see what conditions are like in schools here — schools that rely for their funding on a district made infamous by an election-rigging scandal that brought down Akil Mochtar, the former chief justice of the Constitution Court, in the province where detained governor, political matriarch and corruption suspect Ratu Atut Chosiyah leads an administration that allegedly skimmed off a third of the social aid and grant budget in a single year, boldly taking money intended for the poorest residents of an area where poverty is on the rise.

“In Banten, especially in the villages, you see things like dangling suspension bridges and roads full of potholes,” Haji Asep, the chief of the village of Sangkanwangi — a typical community of several thousand in Lebak’s Cimarga subdistrict — tells us over tea in his home. “Children have to pass through them every day to go to school.”

One such bridge, in Serang, the provincial capital, collapsed into the Cibanten River last month, killing two people.

“Why is it so difficult to build this kind of facility for residents? I know the Banten government can afford the bridge, but they don’t care,” Ayib Najib, a member of the Banten provincial legislature, told the Jakarta Globe at the time.

Sangkanwangi village head Haji Asep in his home. (JG Photo/Benjamin Soloway)

Asep says many of the schools in the area have fallen into a state of dangerous disrepair.

“The schools need better maintenance,” he says. “We hope some help will come, but the government is slow. We don’t know if it is because the budget is not enough. We have proposed, asking for help many times. Yet until now, there is no realization.”
“Many school children come from a poor economic background,” he says. “Their parents work odd jobs. Many are rubber tappers here. Their money is hardly enough to send their children to school. Yet they really want to get their children educated, they don’t want them to stop schooling.”

‘Despite all difficulties’

We ask Asep to take us to the nearest school, but it’s noon, so the building is already locked up for the day. He directs us north to the village of Sangkanmanik, where we visit a public primary school: SDN Sangkanmanik 1, which is tidy and clean, but in visible disrepair.

“A landslide occurred here on January 13,” Sudirman, 32, a school administrator, tells us, pointing to a steep, muddy slope that ends right at the walls of one of the school’s two low-lying buildings.

Rohim, 32, the neighborhood unit head, says the landslide slammed into a classroom, destroying much of it — not for the first time.

“The landslide happened at night; in the morning we found out that the school was heavily damaged,” he says. “But thank God there were no children inside when the incident happened. If the event took place in daytime, it would have been very dangerous for the children.”

A similar landslide, he says, occurred during last year’s rainy season. And just like last time, 50 villagers showed up the next day to repair the building and build a makeshift concrete landslide barrier, which they accomplished in one day, using their own funds.

Neighborhood unit head Rohim shows us a concrete barrier built by villagers at the spot where a landslide crashed through the walls of a classroom. (JG Photo/Benjamin Soloway)
“Because of the landslide, parents are very wary and concerned with their children attending school here,” Sudirman says. “When it rains, everyone is told to leave the classrooms by the principal. We fear that a landslide might take place again if it rains. We have asked for the help of the subdistrict government and the subdistrict Executive Technical Unit [UPT], but there was no help in response.”

The landslide barrier — barely waist-high and engineered by amateurs — is already beginning to crack in places.

“We fixed it using the villagers’ money,” Sudirman says. “We don’t know why there isn’t any financial help from the government... We ask for help every time a disaster hits us. But each time there’s no response. We reported the landslide to the subdistrict government. They came here to observe the situation, but there was no follow-up.”

He says the community has no recourse but to rely on its own minimal resources and hope for the best.

“It has been like this for some time, since 2013,” Sudirman says. “By rights, we should have gotten the funds from the district government. They promised it to us, but until now we’ve received nothing. I don’t know why.”

The black area on the school’s wall indicates the place where the most recent landslide came through. (JG Photo/Benjamin Soloway)

The school, he says, was once in better shape.

“We used to have another classroom and a library, but they collapsed,” he says. “The buildings were too old... The books that we have here have been reused for two to three years. School children don’t own the books, the books are kept and used together in school.”

The children seem mostly unfazed by the poor conditions, according to Sudirman.
“They walk to get here,” he says. “They travel as far as four kilometers to reach school. The roads around here are in bad condition… Yet the children are determined to come to school despite all difficulties. When it rains, they come with their umbrellas. When extra lessons are held, they attend.”

SDN Sangkanmanik 1 school principle Haji Kodir in his home. (JG Photo/Benjamin Soloway)

We visit the school principal, Haji Kodir, in his comfortable home nearby, and he bears out Sudirman’s account.

“I have often sent proposals to the district government,” he says. “I requested aid for school renovations and better infrastructure, but there was no response.”
Seventh-grader Renaldi watches an inter-village football match with his friends. (JG Photo/Benjamin Soloway)

‘All is well’

We head to the subdistrict education office, but we stop along the way at an inter-village girls' football match, where hundreds of spectators — two whole villages, more or less — cheer on their teams, who are playing barefoot in the mud.

“I love going to school,” Renaldi, a seventh grader, tells us before returning to his perch atop a mound of gravel. “After I finish middle school, God willing, I want to become a policeman.”

We arrive to find the education office locked, but in a warung (small shop) across the street we meet Gangsa, who says he is a supervisor in the subdistrict UPT, which oversees the development of schools under the purview of the Banten Education Office.
UPT supervisor Gangsa. (JG Photo/Benjamin Soloway)

“We supervise 38 schools across 17 villages,” he says. “All is well. The schools are progressing just fine. We have enough funds.”

He says he hasn’t heard about any landslides.

“We hope Cimarga will continue to do well in its education sector,” he says.
Schoolbooks in SDN Sangkanmanik 1. (JG Photo/Benjamin Soloway)

‘Fertile grounds for corruption’

“I think it is clear: in Banten, education is hardly the priority of the regional government,” Indonesia Corruption Watch researcher Ade Irawan says. “Education is used by the dynasty for profiteering. If you look at the corruption cases in Banten, education is one of their main targets. There are many government projects related to education in Banten. They are fertile ground for corruption.”

When corruption watchdogs refer to “the dynasty” in Banten, they are talking about detained corruption suspect Ratu Atut, who is still the governor, and her family. Nearly a dozen of her direct relatives hold political office in the province, and her brother, money-laundering suspect Tubagus “Wawan” Chaer Wardana — married to South Tangerang Mayor Airin Rachmi Diaxy — has had almost 40 vehicles confiscated by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in recent weeks. He owns two private islands, his lawyer admitted on Monday.

Airin said in January that the couple’s gaudy assets — which included a Lamborghini, a Ferrari and a Rolls-Royce; a large house and a mansion on lanes off Jalan Denpasar in Kuningan, South Jakarta; and at least 102 properties — “Come from Allah and belong to Allah.”

ICW data show that companies owned by Ratu Atut’s family have controlled public projects in Banten worth $100 million, and ICW alleges that the local government stole some 30 percent of the central government’s allocation for community organizations and social aid programs in the province in one year alone.

While poverty fell in Indonesia between September 2012 and March 2013, it rose in Banten, and was especially high for a region so close to the capital.

Problems in Indonesia’s education system extend far beyond Banten. In the most recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Program for International Student Assessment
rankings, which looked at student aptitude in 65 countries, Indonesia placed 64th, ahead of only Peru. In the UK-based Pearson rankings, which looked at 40 countries in 2013, Indonesia came in dead last.

According to ICW’s investigations, corruption is a major culprit, and in 2013, according to the NGO, Banten had a more corrupt education system than any other province in Indonesia.

Eko Endang Koswara, the head of the provincial education office, was arrested for corruption in 2010, and the education chief in Pandeglang district was detained for alleged corruption last year.

“If you look closely at the regional elections, you might find that the money meant for education purposes is being spent for political purposes,” Ade says. “For instance, school operational funds are spent to purchase banners for the incumbents [seeking re-election]. We have our research; these things are proven.”

He says multi-layered, endemic corruption harms the quality and accessibility of education, and, in some instances, the safety of students.

“In the southern regions of Banten, such as Lebak and Pandeglang, the availability of teachers and decent school buildings is a problem,” he says. “If you look at the corruption pattern in Banten, there are a few layers.

“The first layer involves teachers. Here, teachers place illegal fees on school children. The excuses may include book purchases or exam fees.

“The second layer involves school principal. Here, the school operational fund [BOS] might be embezzled. It is not seldom that school budget funds are embezzled by the school principal.

“The third layer involves government officials at the education agency.

“The fourth layer involves high-level government officials. Projects related to school infrastructure and teaching facilities have been corrupted. The primary consequence of that is it lowers the accessibility of education to the public, especially to the poor. It makes it hard to be well-educated if you are born [in Banten].”

Although corruption can be found at nearly every link in the chain between the regional administration and its constituents, Ade says that corruption at the top causes the most harm.

“If the district leaders are clean and not corrupt, chances are the school principals and the rest will not be corrupt as well,” he says. “Government officials are often hard-pressed to embezzle money for their bosses above them. Their jobs and positions are at stake should they fail to fulfill their bosses' corrupt demands.”
Angga, 13, stands in the ruins of his school the day after it collapsed. (JG Photo/Benjamin Soloway)

"I would have died"

We head from the subdistrict education office to Bina Bakti, where we’ve heard from villagers that a school collapsed on Feb. 5, the day prior.

When we arrive at the site of SLTP Bina Bakti, a small private school with about 90 students that relies on government funding, all we find are remains. The walls still stand but the former classrooms are strewn with wreckage.

"It rained the whole day yesterday and the wind was strong," Ade, who helps run the school, tells us as we pick our way through the rubble. "The school suddenly collapsed at 6 a.m. Luckily, school had not started yet, so there weren’t any children inside."

He says classes are held in shifts in a neighborhood house for now, but he doesn’t know of a plan beyond that.

"The school administration is confused now," he says. "We did receive school operational assistance funds from the government, but it is not quite enough. We hope the government can do more. Take pity on the school children here. The national exams will be coming soon, and they have no school to study in. Their parents are worried."

Nur, 35, the owner of a nearby warung, says her customers have dried up because the school is gone.

"If possible, I hope the reconstruction of the school can be done speedily. We seek the help of the government," she says.

Her son, Angga, 13, standing beside his mother, surveys the ruins grimly.

"Luckily, at the time it happened none of my friends were inside, nobody died," he says. "I was
Three Arrested in Jakarta as Police Find Half Ton of Marijuana

By SP/Fana FS Putra on 03:57 pm Feb 28, 2014
Category Crime, News
Tags: Aceh drugs, marijuana

Officials of the National Police narcotics division display the recovered drugs. (SP Photo/Fana FS Putra)

Jakarta. Three people have been arrested in the Greater Jakarta area after more than half a ton of marijuana was found in trucks en route from from Aceh to Java, police said.

"The prohibited items would then be distributed to some islands and regions in Indonesia," Brig. Gen. Arman Depari said on Thursday.

Two suspects — alleged couriers A.N. and A.J. — were arrested in Beji, Depok, recently with 84 kilograms of marijuana. Police said they had distributed more than 100 kilograms of marijuana to West Jakarta and some universities, including University of Indonesia in Depok and Pancasila University in South Jakarta.

Police reported that the suspects had said they would frequently send marijuana to the two universities — at most six kilograms at a time — and that they were paid Rp 100,000 ($8) per kilogram.

After arresting the duo, police raided a warehouse in Cikupa, Tangerang, in the early hours of Thursday morning. There they found 350 kilograms of marijuana and arrested another suspected, identified as T.F.

Police said A.N. and A.J. had already distributed 200 kilograms of marijuana.

Investigators declined to specify where in Aceh the marijuana had been cultivated.

"It has been happening for 10 years," Arman said. "Traditionally they bring the weeds by carrying it on their shoulders for days. They walked for days and brought along foods and kitchen tools."

Police are still searching for a man identified as Jul whom they believe the be the leader of the organization.

"We have detected his location in North Sumatra and its surrounding region," Arman said, declining to specify a location.

Arman said the three suspects could face death penalty.
Jakarta Governor in Mission to Rid City's Procurement Process of Graft

By Lenny Triati Tambun & Markus Junianto Sihaloho on 10:18 pm Feb 19, 2014

Category Corruption, Featured, Jakarta, News, Politics

Tags corruption, Jakarta, Joko Widodo

The Jakarta administration so far this year has received a total of 656 buses. (SP Photo)

**Jakarta.** Jakarta Governor Joko Widodo is using the investigation of fraud into the Rp 113 billion ($9.6 million) purchase of new buses as shock therapy and leverage to rid the city’s notoriously rigged procurement processes of corruption.

Joko and his deputy, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, vowed to bring those officials involved in the markups in the purchase to justice, an unprecedented move that could set an example of how the country could get rid of corruption in procurement processes, where the state has allocated more than Rp 400 trillion this year alone, making it the biggest potential source of corruption.

Joko vowed on Wednesday to bring all corrupt officials to book, emphasizing the need for stricter monitoring, management control and field inspections as his administration starts to implement a number of high-value projects.

“We need better management. The city’s inspectorate office may be able to handle the smaller ones, but some projects are very big and we don’t have the necessary monitoring measures. That is what we want to do with the project-management office,” Joko said on Tuesday.

Among the bigger projects undertaken by the government this year are the mass rapid transit system, the monorail, the Transjakarta bus network and the construction of low-cost apartments, all of which involve trillions of rupiah from the city coffers.

“This is to assist, monitor, control and audit the bigger projects. But we’re still discussing it,” Joko said.

“The city administration lacks control management, but it is impossible for me to check [on the projects] directly. Even the inspectorate cannot do so. We are assisted by the BPK [Supreme Audit Agency] and the BKPP [Financial Development Comptroller]. The inspectorate currently monitors 57 budgets.”

Indications of fraud have emerged from an investigation by the Jakarta Provincial Inspectorate office into the purchase of new buses, after the units were discovered to be unfit for use shortly after arriving in the capital from China, where they were manufactured.

“I have received the report from the inspectorate about fraud involved in the procurement of the feeder buses and buses for the Integrated City Busway facility. Apparently the irregularity was found in the tender procedure,” Basuki said.

The inspectorate had initially found no issues in the administrative process of the procurement, but eventually discovered several irregularities in tender documents, including a significant increase in prices up to the process of determining the winning tender.

“In China [the buses] are supposed to be priced at Rp 1 billion, but instead it is sold here for Rp 3 billion. So if you look at the documents, of course it is China who benefits most, it is very clear,” Basuki said, adding that he would leave the matter to law
Further review

Basuki also called on the BPKP to subject the documents to further review by auditors and those with knowledge of tender processes.

He also indicated that those involved in manipulating the documents to conceal the impropriety were transportation office officials responsible for the budget and members of the committee involved in the tender process.

“They’re all very smart. The tender committee is also full of problems,” he said.

Chairman of the Jakarta Inspectorate office Franky Mangatas Panjaitan said they would be summoning the goods-receipt committee as well as Transjakarta management to clarify its findings.

“They will be asked to provide information on the goods-receipt procedure and documents pertaining to the inspection of goods that were received,” Franky said.

He called on the public to remain patient while waiting for results from the probe, emphasizing that it was necessary for the institution not rush to any conclusions when making its recommendations.

Franky confirmed that there had been indications of fraud in the tender process.

“However the city administration has not yet received all of the units so we can’t come up with a general conclusion just yet,“ he said. “We will have to run tests [on the buses] and test their performance. Only then will we be able to draw a conclusion.”

The city administration so far this year received a total of 656 buses. However, less than a month into their use, 10 BKTB buses and five Transjakarta buses were found to be unfit for use.

Some people have also called on the city administration to involve the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in its investigation.

“The Transjakarta case is best handled by the KPK. We are calling on Basuki to be proactive and report it to the KPK,” said Habiburrahman, central executive board chairman for the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra), of which Basuki is a member.

The KPK has expressed its willingness to support city officials.

“If they want to report it to the KPK then go ahead. However, as of today, we have yet to receive any reports,” KPK spokesman Johan Budi said on Monday, as quoted by IniLah.com.

The procurement of goods purchased by government institutions has frequently fallen victim to graft.

In the most recent case, the Jakarta High Court sentenced former traffic police chief Djoko Sutrio to an 18-year prison term for his involvement in the graft-ridden procurement of driving simulators.

Meanwhile, in Banten, the KPK has also uncovered allegations of embezzlement in the procurement of medical equipment for state hospitals in South Tangerang.

The central government has allocated a total of Rp 201.88 trillion for the purchase of goods and another Rp 205.84 trillion for capital expenditure in its budget for 2014.

Additionally, the state has also allocated Rp 341 trillion to provinces and districts across the country.

A recent Indonesia Corruption Watch report showed that up to 98.12 percent of the 267 corruption cases reported in the second quarter of 2013 were in regional government institutions, most in North Sumatra and East Java.

Last year, 35 regional chiefs were caught up in graft scandals, prompting ICW to warn of a “corruption emergency” in the country.

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6/13/2014 6:10 PM
Hambalang Suspect Andi Mallarangeng to Stand Trial on Monday

By Ricky Amelia on 04:17 pm Mar 08, 2014
Category Corruption, Featured, News
Tags: andi alfian mallarangeng, Hambalang sports center corruption case

Former youth and sports minister Andi Mallarangeng, (JG Photo/Safir Makkii).

Jakarta. Indonesia’s ex-sport minister Andi Alfian Mallarangeng is scheduled to appear before the Jakarta Anti-Corruption Court on Monday, standing trial over his alleged involvement in the graft-tainted Hambalang sports center construction project.

"The first trial of Andi Mallarangeng will be at Monday at 2 p.m.," defense attorney Luhtu Pangaribuan said on Friday.

Andi, one of the most prominent members of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s ruling Democratic Party to charged with corruption, faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison over a graft scandal that cost the state an estimated Rp 463.66 billion ($40 million) in losses.

The former head of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs reportedly received Rp 9 billion in kickbacks, according to the prosecutors office. The complete indictment will be read out on Monday.

"In the indictment of Andi Mallarangeng we will present related evidence and the charges for him," KPK spokesman Johan Budi said on Friday.

Andi was arrested on October 2013 as part of the Corruption Eradication Commission’s (KPK) widening investigation into the construction project. He is the second corruption suspect to stand trial in the case. The trial of Deddy Kusdinar, the former finance director of the sports ministry, is nearing completion — the verdict is expected to be read out on Thursday.

According to Deddy’s indictment, Andi received billion of rupiah in kickbacks from Global Daya Mangganggai, a company subcontracted by state-run builder Adhi Karya.

The funds were given to Andi’s brother Andi Zulkarnain Mallarangeng — popularly known as Choel — who said he thought the money was a birthday gift.

Share This:
MH370 Search Spans Asia, But Investigation Shows Little Progress

By Anshuman Daga & Nilukshi Koswanage on 09:01 pm Mar 18, 2014
Category: Featured, International, SE Asia
Tags: Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370

Filipino students are seen on a painting of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 at the Benigno Aquino High School grounds in Makati City, south of Manila, Philippines, on March 18, 2014. (EPA Photo/Francis R. Malasig)

Kuala Lumpur. An international land and sea search for a missing Malaysian jetliner is covering an area the size of Australia, authorities said on Tuesday, but police and intelligence agencies have yet to establish a clear motive to explain its disappearance.

Investigators are convinced that someone with deep knowledge of the Boeing 777-200ER and commercial navigation diverted Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, carrying 12 crew and 227 mainly Chinese passengers, perhaps thousands of miles off its scheduled course from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

But intensive background checks of everyone aboard have so far failed to find anyone with a known political or criminal motive to hijack or deliberately crash the plane, Western security sources and Chinese authorities said.

Malaysian Acting Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein told a news conference the “unique, unprecedented” search covered a total area of 2.24 million nautical miles (7.68 million square kilometers), from central Asia to the southern Indian Ocean.

Flight MH370 vanished from civilian air traffic control screens off Malaysia’s east coast less than an hour after take-off early on March 8.

Investigators piecing together patchy data from military radar and satellites believe that someone turned off the aircraft’s identifying transponder and ACARS system, which transmits maintenance data, and turned west, re-crossing the Malay Peninsula and following a commercial aviation route towards India.

Malaysian officials have backtracked on the exact sequence of events — they are now unsure whether the ACARS system was shut down before or after the last radio message was heard from the cockpit — but said that did not make a material difference.

“This does not change our belief, as stated, that up until the point at which it left military primary radar coverage, the aircraft’s movements were consistent with deliberate action by someone on the plane,” said Hishammuddin. “That remains the position of the investigating team.”
Background checks clean

China's ambassador to Malaysia said his country had carried out a detailed probe into its nationals aboard the flight and could rule out their involvement.

US and European security sources said efforts by various governments to investigate the backgrounds of everyone on the flight had not, as of Monday, turned up links to militant groups or anything else that could explain the jet's disappearance.

A European diplomat in Kuala Lumpur also said travel through the passenger manifest had come up blank.

One source familiar with US inquiries said the pilots were being studied because of the technical knowledge needed to disable the aircraft's communications systems.

The New York Times cited senior US officials as saying that the first turn back to the west was likely programmed into the aircraft's flight computer, rather than being executed manually, by someone knowledgeable about aircraft systems.

Malaysia Airlines Chief Executive Ahmad Jauhari Yahya told Tuesday's daily news conference that that was "speculation," adding: "Once you are in the aircraft, anything is possible."

Malaysian officials said on Monday that suicide by the pilot or co-pilot was a line of inquiry, although they stressed that it was only one of the possibilities under investigation.

The Malaysian police have searched the homes of the captain, Zaharie Ahmad Shah, 53, and first officer, Fariq Abdul Hamid, 27, both in middle-class suburbs of Kuala Lumpur close to the airport.

Among the items taken for examination was a flight simulator Zaharie had built in his home.

A senior police officer with direct knowledge of the investigation said the programs from the pilot's simulator included Indian Ocean runways in the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Diego Garcia and southern India, although he added that US and European runways also featured.

"Generally these flight simulators show hundreds or even thousands of runways," the officer said.

"What we are trying to see is what were the runways that were frequently used. We also need to see what routes the pilot had been assigned to before. This will take time, so people cannot jump the gun just yet."

"Needle in a haystack"

Thailand said on Tuesday a re-examination of its military radar data had picked up the plane re-tracing its route across Peninsular Malaysia. The Thai military had previously said it had not detected any sign of the plane.

But the satellite signals that provide the only clues were not intended to work as locators. The best they can do is place the plane in one of two broad areas — one stretching from Laos up to the Caspian, the other from west of Indonesia down to the Indian Ocean off Australia — when the last signal was picked up.

Malaysia has asked countries along both corridors, as well as others with satellite capabilities, to re-examine their data to try to narrow the search area, Hishammuddin said.

China, which, with Kazakhstan, is leading the search in the northern corridor, said on Tuesday it had deployed 21 satellites to scan its territory.

"In accordance with Malaysia's request, we are mobilising satellites and radar to search over the Chinese section of the northern corridor, which the Malaysians say the plane may have flown over," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei.

"Australia, which is leading the southernmost leg of the search, said it had shrunk its search field based on satellite tracking data and analysis of weather and currents, but that it still covered 600,000 square kilometers (230,000 square miles).

"A needle in a haystack remains a good analogy," John Young, general manager of the emergency response division of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), told reporters.

"The aircraft could have gone north or south, and if it went south, this is AMSA's best estimate of where we should look with the few resources we have at our disposal for such a search."

The US Navy was sending a P-8A Poseidon, its most advanced maritime surveillance aircraft, to Perth, in Western Australia, to assist with the search.

The disappearance of the plane was a major topic of conversation at the International Society of Transport Air Trading in San
Diego, an annual gathering of 1,600 airplane makers, buyers and lessors.

"The people that I deal with are looking at this with great concern — it appears considerable efforts may have gone into cloaking the aircraft," said Robert Agnew, chief executive of aviation consultants Morten Beyer & Agnew.

Reuters

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Pertamina president director Karen Agustiawan has revised her initial testimony to the anti-corruption court. (JU Photo/Arief HKmal)

Jakarta. The anti-graft court on Tuesday warned Pertamina president director Karen Agustiawan that she risks being detained if she provides false testimony.

The warning from the Jakarta Anti-Corruption Court’s panel of judges came after Karen revised her testimony in the investigation report.

“As a witness, she is under oath and after saying her oath, there are legal consequences if she decides to provide false testimony or hides information,” judge Mithun Sarniagh said on Tuesday. “She may at least be charged with providing a false testimonial. As a witness, say it as it is.

“Karen is not just some lady, she is the only managing director of Pertamina. How could she just make up stories?”

In the report Karen claimed that several members of House Commission VII, which oversees energy and mineral resources, had asked Pertamina, the state energy company, for money prior to putting together the annual state budget.

She mentioned that House Commission VII chairman Sutan Bhatoegana and former member of the commission Joanny Allen had called in Pertamina investment and management planning director Afdal Bahaudin and marketing and trade director Hanung Budya to one of the rooms of the commission at the House of Representatives.

Additionally, she said Hanung and Afdal were also threatened with removal from office should they fail to comply with the lawmakers’ requests.

The report also covered Karen’s statements on lawmakers’ alleged habits of asking for bribe money from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, who in turn were alleged to have asked for money from various state enterprises such as Pertamina, SKKMigas, Bukit Asam and others.

However, during a hearing for Rudi Rubiandini, former chairman of oil and gas operator SKKMigas, Karen denied her previous statements and said she was never directly asked for money.

According to Karen, she had been nervous during the preliminary investigation at the KPK, and that she was not briefed on the definition of a witness.

“As a professor, being at the KPK building was quite unnerving, I was nervous," she said. “I didn’t know what information they were looking for. In the beginning, I did not know the definition of a witness, which is someone who heard and saw [in person]. It was only during the second investigation that I found out.”

Karen also emphasized that there had been no reports from Afdal and Hanung regarding any requests made by the House and that she had only heard stories.

"I made my own conclusions," Karen said. "However, during my time as a managing director, I have never been asked for funds by
the House Commission VII or the House budget committee until Rudi Rubandini called.

I have clarified things. I cannot provide information about things that I did not see nor hear first hand. There were never any requests for money from the House Commission VII to me."

In January, Rudi Rubandini, through his lawyer Rusli A. Bakar, alleged that Karen often gave money to members of House Commission VII and that she refused to respond to requests from the Energy Ministry, because she had already paid the lawmakers.

Karen conceded she once told Rudi over a telephone conversation that she had personally paid lawmakers money, but insisted she had said such things to avoid Rudi pushing her to give him the funds.

"That was just my strategy so that he would stop chasing me; to stop the conversation with Rudi," she said.

*Correction: this article originally referred to the panel of judges as the Corruption Eradication Commission’s panel of judges. It should have read the Jakarta Anti-Corruption Court’s panel of judges. The Jakarta Globe regrets the error.*

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Indonesia Religious Affairs Minister Wants Right to Issue Halal Certification

By Markus Juntanto Sihaloh on 07:04 pm Mar 03, 2014
Category: Featured, News, Religion
Tags: halal, Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali

Jakarta. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) are engaged in a tug-of-war over the right to issue Halal certificates and to reap the potential economic benefits of the Islamic certification process.

The MUI, the nation’s highest Islamic oversight body, has handled the issuance of Halal certificates for decades — charging companies as much as Rp 5 million ($430) for the seal. But in Muslim-majority Indonesia, which entity should lay claim to the revenue from such certifications has become a hotly debated issue. The MUI wants to continue issuing the certificates, but is facing strong headwinds from the central government.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has broached the subject during discussions on the long-deliberated Halal Product Security Bill. Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali wants the ministry to handle the certification, arguing that keeping the right exclusively in the hands of the MUI could breed jealousy among other Islamic organizations. Recent allegations that MUI auditors extorted tens of thousands of dollars from Australian companies has compounded the issue.

“The government as the prosecutor of regulations should be the one doing the process,” Suryadharma said. “The MUI is merely a civil organization. If we let the MUI become the executor, there might be jealousy from other organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nadhlatul Ulama.”

The central government should be the sole arbiter and reap the attendant benefits, the minister said.

“If it is managed by the government, [the funds] will become non-fiscal state income,” he said.

MUI deputy chairman Ma’ruf Amin said that the MUI was an umbrella group and therefore should not be compared on equal footing to other prominent Muslim organizations.

“The MUI is not a civil organization. It isn’t the same as NU, Muhammadiyah and other [Islamic groups],” he told the Jakarta Globe on Monday. “MUI is a union of a sort, representing a number of civil organizations.”

He questioned why the issue was coming up now, when the MUI had overseen the process for 25 years. He declined to say how much the organization earned from certification issuance, but emphasized that it was not a for-profit enterprise.

“The MUI isn’t targeting revenues, we only want to protect Muslims from non-halal products,” he said.

He said that the MUI should handle assessment, the government should handle enforcement and that certification should be mandatory.

“What's the use of [deliberating] the law if [halal certification] will remain voluntary?” he asked.
Animals must be slaughtered and products must be prepared according to the specific prescriptions of Islamic jurisprudence, as determined by clergy, if they are to be considered lawful for observant Muslims to consume.

Currently, food and clothing companies that sell in Indonesia can apply for Halal certification. The decision whether or not to seek the certification is voluntary, but the MUI — with the backing of some Islamic political parties — is working to change that. The controversial move would effectively push products containing pork onto the black market as supermarket shelves become Halal-only affairs.

The ministry has argued against this change, explaining that the measure should remain voluntary in a country where six major religions are protected by the constitution.

"The MUI wants the label to be mandatory, while the government wants it to be voluntary," Suryadharma said. "Why? Because if a small business can't have it yet, it could become legal trouble for them. Micro-businesses might have to stop their activities and the economy will suffer. We can't let the regulation disturb the economy."

The bill has been stalled for years in the House of Representatives, where several controversial clauses have been the focus of intense debate. It was almost passed in 2012, but renewed arguments pushed it onto the back burner as the ministry continued to seek to wrest control from the MUI.