

Actions, demos, protests...

Indonesia Roundup #2 - February 13-19, 2006

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Jakarta protest tells energy minister to 'go to hell'

Feeling betrayed by the planned increases to basic electricity charges (TDL) around 200 people demonstrated in Jakarta on February 13 telling the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources to "Go to hell!".

The demonstrators came from a number of trade unions including the Mandiri Hotel Trade Union, the Indonesian Metalworkers Trade Union and the Tobacco and Sugar Cane Trade Union. They brought banners and posters with messages like "Purnomo has betrayed the people", "Go to hell Purnomo" and "Purnomo the seller of the people's assets".

In speeches protesters accused Purnomo of being responsible for the planned increases and condemned him for prioritising gas for export rather than domestic needs. "One of the causes for the increase to TDL is the use of fuel for PLN [the state-owned electricity company] generators, whereas if [PLN] used gas the price would be cheaper. Purnomo is responsible for the TDL increases and must resign", said one of the speakers. (Detik.com, 13/2/2006)

High-tension transmission line protesters 'interrupt' discussion

Four victims of high-tension transmission lines (SUTET) who have been on a hunger strike and sewn their lips together protested at the Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology (BPPT) building in Jakarta.

The action was held in the middle of a panel discussion organised by PLN and BPPT on the problems in the use of SUTET and the electricity distribution

system. The action coordinator accompanying the SUTET victims, Mustar Bona Ventura, called on PLN not to waste time lying to the public and using up state money to make television advertisements.

One of the demonstrators, Jimmy, succeeded in gaining access to the BPPT building and interrupting the discussions on the third floor. "Interupsi! Please Sirs don't waste time and money on this event. Rather than wasting money it would be better if it was used [to compensate] SUTET victims", he shouted. Security forces were able to "secure" Jimmy and he was escorted from the room. (Detik.com, 13/2/2006)

Bandung residence demand closure of waste dump

Residents from the village of Mandalajati in the sub-district of Cicadas, Bandung, West Java, closed off the entrance to the Cicabe waste disposal dump on the morning of February 12. The protesters - who included children - were demanding that the dump be closed as it had polluted the local environment.

The director of the Bandung City sanitation offices who spoke with demonstrators said that the Cicabe dump was put into operation in order to deal with garbage disposal after the land slide at the fatal Leuwigajah dump landslide in February last year. (Liputan 6, 13/02/2006)

Students arrested at national police headquarters

Four students from the Student Movement Against Manipulation of State-Owned Enterprises (Geram BUMN) that were holding a demonstration in front of the national police headquarters on February 14 have been arrested by police.

Prior to being arrested, the students had broken down the front gates because there was not one police official that was prepared to discuss their demand that the executive director of PT PLN, Eddie Widiono, be arrested on charges of corruption. (Media Indonesia, 14/02/2006)

Makassar workers demand release of colleagues

Hundreds of former PT Katingan Timber Celebes demonstrated at the East Makassar district police headquarters in South Sulawesi on February 13. They were demanding the release of five colleagues who

were arrested by police when they blockaded PT Katingan's entrance last Friday. Police had forcibly broke up the demonstration that was demanding payment of overdue severance pay. In a speech the protesters condemned the repressive actions by police as a violation against human rights. (Liputan 6, 14/02/2006)

Valentines day action against domestic violence

Domestic violence has become a cultural routine with children being beaten by their parents. In response the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) held a peaceful action against violence at the Hotel Indonesia roundabout on February 14.

Protesters distributed stickers with the message "Stop Violence In The Home" to pedestrians that passed by. They said their aim was for the home to become the safest place for children. (Detik.com, 14/02/2006)

Yogyakarta students call for war against court Mafia

Hundreds of demonstrators from the Muslim Students Association for Reform (splinter group of HMI) held an action in the Central Java city of Yogyakarta on February 14 calling for a war against the court Mafia and the reform of the justice system. They also called on the head of the Supreme Court, Bagir Manan, to be questioned over providing protection to questionable supreme justice members.

After gathering at the intersection of the Jalan General Sudirman, they formed a line and marched to the Yogyakarta Monument. They brought a number of posters with messages like "HMI MPO war against the court Mafia", "Eliminate the court Mafia" and "Complete the government regulation on the reselection of supreme justices".

The demonstrators said that reports that claimed out of 6,000 judges throughout Indonesia more than 60 percent are questionable and rotten was correct because the judicial system in Indonesia is still tightly controlled by the court Mafia.

After giving speeches for around 30 minutes they marched to the Yogyakarta Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) on Jalan Malioboro then ended the rally at the intersection in front of the central post office. (Detik.com, 14/02/2006)

Students protest electricity price hikes in Makassar

Although only comprising 15 people, students from the Makassar Indonesia Muslim University Student Executive Council (BEM) held an action on February 14 by setting fire to tyres in the middle of the road.

The students were protesting planned increases to TDL, which they believe do not side with the people and show that the government does not care about the ordinary people. "Where is the government's concern for the little people? Fuel prices keep going up, TDL will also be increased", said one of the students in a speech. The students marched to the South Sulawesi DPRD where they continued giving speeches. (Detik.com, 14/02/2006)

Twenty-one students arrested at Medan protest

A student demonstration protesting planned increases to drinking water rates at the North Sumatra chief public prosecutor's office in Medan ended in a clash and 21 arrests.

The 30 or so students from the North Sumatra Front (Frostu) were calling for an investigation and audit of the state-owned water company PDAM Tirtanadi. When students who arrived on motorbikes and turned the vehicles to direct exhaust smoke into the offices, security staff tried to remove them. A brawl then broke out between students and security staff. Several demonstrators were detained and taken inside.

Shortly afterwards the sound of stones being thrown could be heard and several office windows as well as protesters' motorbikes were damaged. Both sides ended up pelting each other with stones. Police arrived a short time later and began arresting protesters. Twenty-ones are currently being questioned. (Detik.com, 15/02/2006)

Kalimantan students oppose 'land grab orgy'

On February 14 hundreds of students from Kalimantan studying in the Central Java city of Yogyakarta demonstrated plans to clear 1.8 million hectares of land for palm oil plantations on the Indonesia-Malaysia border.

The students believe the plan is an land grab orgy

by business, the military and central and local authorities. They said that since land began to be cleared for palm oil plantations in the 1970s the people of Kalimantan have only suffered losses and been exploited. (Liputan 6, 15/22006)

Local residents protests cash subsidy 'deductions'

Hundreds of residents in Central Java from the village of Pretek in the sub-district of Bandar, Batang Regency, demonstrated at the DPRD on February 15. They were calling for the Pretek village head, Dasmu'i, to resign from his post. Dasmu'i has been accused of taking a cut from government direct cash subsidies. Poor residents who receive direct cash assistance had 100,000 rupiah deducted on the pretext of paying for a village road project. (Liputan 6, 15/22006)

Student protest in Yogyakarta marred by clash

A clash marred a demonstration by hundreds of activists from the HMI-MPO on February 15. They were protesting against the Supreme Court that they believe is protecting questionable supreme justices and resisting reform of the institution.

The clash occurred when police tried to put out burning tyres and photographs of Supreme Court chief justice Bagir Manan (who is also an HMI Alumni) that were being burnt by students in front of the Yogyakarta central post office. This enraged the students and a fight could not be avoided. Several students and a police officer suffered minor injuries as a result of the clash. (Liputan 6, 15/2/2006)

Student demonstration attacked by unidentified assailants

A demonstration on February 16 by dozens of students from the Haluoleo University in Kendari, South-East Sulawesi, was marred by a clash. The students were listening to an explanation by the deputy speaker of the South-East Sulawesi DPRD, Nur Alam, when they were suddenly attacked by a group of unidentified assailants. The students ran and scattered in all directions.

Prior to the attack, the students had been calling for Alam to be arrested in relation to a corruption case involving 300 million rupiah in education

funding. They were also demanding that the governor of South-East Sulawesi, Ali Mazi, be detained as a suspect in corruption case involving a 1.9 billion rupiah hotel construction project. (Liputan 6, 16/2/2006)

Transmission line hunger strike solidarity protest

Dozens of students from the Jakarta National University (Unas) National Front held an action support hunger strikers who have sown up their mouths in protest against SUTET. Held at the Unas campus in South Jakarta on February 16, the students collected signatures and thumb prints in blood on a five-meter length of white cloth. Dozens of high-school students also joined the action.

According to National Front spokesperson Mora, the action was to demonstrate their seriousness in encouraging other students to struggle for the victims of SUTET. "We are also pushing our campus colleges to join in the hunger strike and mouth sewing [protest]", he said.

The students said that the SUTET victims should receive compensation and that PLN had lied saying that the transmission lines are safe. "PLN is prepared to spend money on advertising [saying that] SUTET isn't dangerous. But the when residents demand compensation rights PLN instead doesn't fulfil them", said Mora. The students plan to continue the action until they have collected 1 million signatures and thumb prints. (Detik.com, 16/2/2006)

Vice presidential visit greeted by protests in Bandung

A Bandung visit by Vice President Jusuf Kalla was greeted by a protest by dozens of students from the Greater Bandung Student Circle on February 17. The students gave speeches and held a theatrical action by closing their mouths depicting the people's lack of empowerment to reject government policies.

Demonstrators were also protesting the government's failure to side with the people with the planned TDL increases that will make things difficult for ordinary people. Because the action was held in the middle of the road and blockaded by police, the vice president's entourage had to be rerouted. (Liputan 6, 18/02/2006)

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