

Actions, demos, protests...

Indonesia Roundup #9 - April 3-9, 2006

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Students protesting Freeport burn photos of president

A demonstration on April 3 calling for the closure of PT Freeport in the South Sulawesi regional capital of Makassar was almost marred by a clash when students burnt photographs of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY).

The action by around 30 students from the Front for Papuan Sovereignty (FKP) was demanding that either PT Freeport be closed immediately or that Yudhoyono resign. "We are only offering two options, Freeport be closed or SBY resigns", said action coordinator Ilyar who comes from Papua.

The action began peacefully with students giving speeches near the gates of the regional military command. They then moved back on to the street where Ilyas brought out a photograph of Yudhoyono that was then burnt.

Security personnel responded by trying to break through a circle that had been formed by students with protesters and police pushing and shoving each other as police tried to grab other photographs. Police were finally able to retrieve the photographs and the students scattered in panic. (Detik.com, 3/4/2006)

Makassar residents protest planned one-way-street

Plans by the Makassar city government to turn Jl. Sungai Saddang Baru into a one-way-street have been opposed by hundreds of residents and shop owners who say it will influence their income.

On the morning of April 4 residents blocked the road for a length of one kilometer by setting up wood roadblocks at each end and setting fire to tyres. Carrying banners and posters, some 150 protesters

then rallied to the South Sulawesi Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) to call on assembly members to meet with them and hear their complaints. (Detik.com, 4/4/2006)

Thousands of Medan workers protests labour law revisions

Thousands of workers from in the North Sumatra city of Medan organised a demonstration against planned revisions to the labour law on April 4.

Around 1,500 workers from the Indonesian Prosperity Trade Union Federation gathered at Independence Square then carrying posters and banners they marched to the governor's office. There they held speeches opposing the revisions that they said would only benefit employers and trample on workers' rights. (Detik.com, 3/4/2006)

Workers occupy East Java regional parliament

Actions opposing planned revisions to the labour law are continuing with around 2,000 workers occupying the DPRD in the East Java provincial capital of Semarang on April 4.

The action by workers from various parts of East Java including Magelang, Semarang, Karanganyar and Pekalongan began in the Simpang Lima area. They then took trucks and busses or walked on foot to the DPRD bringing traffic in the centre of Semarang to a standstill.

Upon arriving at the DPRD building they immediately moved toward the front gates where dozens of security personnel prevented them from entering. Protesters responded by spreading out and cordoning off the DPRD.

After negotiations with police and DPRD security staff, a number of workers were finally allowed to enter where they met with met with DPRD speaker Murdoko and a number assembly members. Satisfied with the outcome of the dialogue, the protesters left the DPRD at around 12.30pm. (Detik.com, 3/4/2006)

East Kalimantan students protest corruption

Dozens of students from the Youth and Students Anti-Corruption Coalition (KPMA) demonstrated at the East

Kalimantan chief public prosecutors' office in Samarinda on April 5. They were demanding that a suspected corruption case involving the release of land in the North Penajam Paser regency be investigated.

Protesters said that law enforcement agencies were not serious about dealing with the case as demonstrated by the release of AR, a suspect that had previously been detained by the East Kalimantan police. They believe that AR who is also a businessperson, was actually sacrificed in order to protect government officials. (Liputan 6, 5/4/2006)

Residents demand investigation of corruption case

Hundreds of residents from the Bolaang Mongondow Social Alliance in North Sulawesi demonstrated at the offices of the Kotamobagu state prosecutor on April 5 demanding that the public prosecutor investigate the embezzlement of as much as 21 billion rupiah from the Bolaang Mongondow regency's state budget. (Liputan 6, 5/4/2006)

South Sumatra students protest fee increases

Around 500 activists from the Sriwijaya University Student Executive Council (BEM) in Palembang went to the governor's office and the South Sumatra DPRD on April 5 to express their opposition to education management contribution (SPP) increases of as much as 308%.

The protesters who were mostly second and fourth semester students, brought pamphlets and banners with messages such as "Reject the capitalist campus", "Reject SPP increases" and "Where is the government's promise to increase education funding to 20%".

They also questioned the university's management of education funds saying that it was neither open nor transparent. They called for an audit to be conducted saying improvements to management had to be made before any SPP increases are instituted. (Detik.com, 6/4/2006)

Muna Island residents burn ID cards

Dozens of residents from Muna Island in South-East Sulawesi who are demanding the formation of a new regency burnt their ID cards on April 5. The

residents were angry because they believe that the Muna Island regent, Ridwan Bae, has neglected the six sub-districts of Muna. In particular residents cited that lack of development and job opportunities.

Meanwhile thousands of Muna Island residents camped overnight at the grounds of the South-East Sulawesi DPRD. The protesters said that they were determined to remain until their demands are met and have even setup a public kitchen on the site. (Liputan 6, 5/4/2006)

Residents blockade Pertamina depot in North Sulawesi

Hundreds of people from Bitung regency who say they are the hereditary beneficiaries of land owners blockaded the front gate of a depot owned by the state-owned oil company Pertamina in North Sulawesi on April 4. As a result of the action, fuel distribution was paralyzed and by nightfall petrol stations in Manado, Minahasa and Bitung had run out of fuel.

The residents - who said they were descendants of Dotu Simon Todus - setup tents on the road in front of the depot preventing fuel trucks from leaving. The blockade ended after the local police chief held negotiations with the residents. Residents had earlier threatened to sue Pertamina and the North Sulawesi government over the case. (Liputan 6, 5/4/2006)

Workers rock Malang

More than 5,000 workers from various organisations in Malang, East Java, spilled out onto city streets on April 5 in protest against planned revisions to the labour law.

The action, which was held at the Malang regional government offices and the DPRD, created traffic jams along Jl. Protokol. Workers also distributed pamphlets with an invitation to oppose the revisions and held a theatrical action depicting collusion between the government and employers. "Workers must to submit to the wishes of the government and employers", said a protester playing the part of an employer.

Later, during a meeting with workers, DPRD member Priyatmoko Utomo said that they supported the

workers demands and would compose a letter opposing the revisions that would be sent to the House of Representatives (DPR). (Tempo Interactive, 5/4/2006)

Papua students call on government to close Freeport

Around 500 Papuan students from Java and Bali held a demonstration in front of the State Palace in Central Jakarta on April 5. The spokesperson for the action, Zeli Harizone, said that the demonstration was an effort to show that the root causes of the problems in Papua lie with Freeport. "We want to take the problem back to its true roots, that is the problem of Freeport", she said.

The protesters made five demands on the government: the total closure of PT Freeport, a thorough investigation of human rights violations in the Timika and Abepura cases, a national and international dialogue to resolve the Papua question, the unconditional release of arrested United West Papua Popular Struggle Front (Pepera) activists and the complete withdrawal of all non-organic TNI (Indonesian military) and police from Papua.

According to Pepera spokesperson Arkilaus Baho, there are currently 300 activists in Papua that have been forced to flee into the jungles. "They were forced to leave because during the incident in Abepura, it was the Papua Front that was deemed to have been responsible", said Baho. (Tempo Interactive, 5/4/2006)

Workers go home, PRD arrives

It was like a relay race, that was the picture conveyed by the demonstrations in Jakarta today. After workers had finished demonstrating over planned revisions to the labour law, protesters from the People's Democratic Party (PRD) arrived to take up the issue of Papua and Freeport.

By 4.20pm workers who had marched from the State Place to the Hotel Indonesia roundabout ended their action and disbanded in an orderly manner. Five minutes later, hundreds of PRD members arrived and began demonstrating. This time banners and flags dominated by the colour red adorned the roundabout. Police, who already begun to relax, were forced to return to work regulating traffic.

The PRD demonstrators shouted slogans such as "Close Freeport now" and sung songs of struggle. They called on the government to immediately resolve the Papua question by ending the contract with PT Freeport. As of 5pm the action was still continuing. (Detik.com, 5/4/2006)

Maluku workers clash with police, six injured

Thousands of workers from the Djayanti Group plywood factory in the West Seram regency of Maluku protested on April 6. The protesters were demanding payment of overdue wages for the last five months. A representative of the company however insisted that they were only owed two months wages.

The demonstration was marred by a clash when police tried to break up the action. Police and workers ended up chasing each other resulting in one officer and five workers being injured. The clash only ended after the West Seram police chief arrived and promised to arrange a meeting between workers and the company management. (Liputan 6, 6/4/2006)

Protesters in Makassar almost ends in clash with police

A joint demonstration that was held by residents and students at the offices of the Maros regent in South Sulawesi on April 6 almost ended in a clash.

The action by around 200 residents and students from Muhammadiyah University BEM was demanding that the Maros regional government resolve the issue of compensation for residents that had been moved off their land to make way for the expansion of the Hasanuddin Airport.

Residents said that the government was only supposed to have cleared 431 hectares of land but in fact had taken over 531 hectares. They also said that the government had not paid them the agreed amount and intimidated some residents into accepting less money.

Despite the heavy rain, it failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the protesters and the atmosphere became heated when they began demanding that the Maros regent, Najamuddin, come out to meet with them.

Police then formed a blockade preventing the

protesters from entering the office grounds. As a result protesters and police began pushing and shoving each other and the fence surround the office was damaged. The situation only calmed down after 10 representatives were allowed to meet with the regent who promised to accommodate their demands. (Detik.com, 6/4/2006)

Former Texmaco employees demand outstanding severance pay

Around 200 former Texmaco employees demonstrated at the department of finance in central Jakarta on April 4 over the company's failure to fulfil outstanding severance pay obligations from three years ago.

"We demand to be paid outstanding severance pay for 11,000 employees of as much as 91 billion rupiah", said the former head of the Texmaco Leather Clothing Textile Work Unit, Muhammad Amin, during a break in the protest.

The workers had wanted to meet with the secretary general of the department of finance, JB Kristiadi because he is also the head of the team handling the Texmaco case, however they were only received by head of the legal division Hadiananto. Around 20 police officers could be seen watching guard over the action although it cause little traffic congestion. (Detik.com, 6/4/2006)

Protest by taxi drivers in Bandung marred by brawl

The dispute between taxi fleets in the West Java provincial capital of Bandung remains unresolved with around 200 Bandung taxi drivers demonstrating at the mayor's offices on April 7.

The drivers are demanding that the mayor withdrawal the operational license for Blue Bird taxis from Jakarta whose presence has cut into their incomes. "We object to the payment system ala Blue Bird. They don't use the set tariff so passengers choose them", said one of the drivers.

The drivers began their action at 8am parking their taxis along the length of Jl. Aceh forcing police to close off part of the road and bringing traffic to a crawl. The action was marred by a brawl when an intelligence officer tried to detain an activist from the Indonesian Youth Solidarity Movement

(GSPI). Police later arrested the agent. (Detik.com, 7/4/2006)

Residents blockade road after TNI demolishes house

Hundreds of residents from Pasuruan blockaded the northern beach road to Probolinggo, East Java, on April 6 using a wagon filled with bamboo. The action was triggered after the navy demolished a resident's home on the grounds that it had been built on land owned by the military.

Police attempted to persuade the protesters to end the blockade but met tough resistance. Residents finally reopened the road after Pasuruan regent Jusbakir arrived and promised to listen to their demands.

A local military commander meanwhile denied that his officers had acted violently against residents but admitted that a Navy circular had been issued to the village head about prohibitions on building on navy land. (Liputan 6, 7/4/2006)

Honorary teachers in Cirebon complain to DPRD

Hundreds of honorary teachers protested at the Cirebon DPRD in West Java on April 6 over civil service entrance exams that they believe are unfair. They said that the government has paid no attention to the welfare of honorary employees that have served in public schools for decades. (Liputan 6, 7/4/2006)

Kendari residents demonstrate over cash subsidies

Dozens of poor residents from the city of Kendari in South-East Sulawesi demonstrated at the local offices of the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) on April 6. They were angry because the BPS had not distributed cards for direct cash subsidies to compensate for recent fuel price hikes. This was despite the fact that they had already been registered with their respective village administrative units. (Liputan 6, 7/4/2006)

East Java farmers demand cheap fertilizer

Around 300 farmers from a number of sub-districts in the Lamongan regency demonstrated at the East Java DPRD on April 6 demanding cheap fertilizer.

The farmers, who were from the Indonesian Farmers

Union (SPI) and the National Peasants Union (STN), almost clashed with police when they forced their way into the DPRD. Police were able to hold them back and the situation calmed down after representatives were allowed into the building.

This is the second protest held by Lamongan farmers. On April 3 they held an action at a fertilizer depot owned by PT Petrokimia Gresik in Deket. According to action coordinator M. Ali, the price of urea fertilizer should be 52,000 rupiah but it is being sold on the market for between 105-110,000 rupiah. "And even then, fertilizer is hard to find", he said. (Tempo Interactive, 7/4/2006)