

Actions, demos, protests...

Indonesia Roundup #20 - June 19-25, 2006

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South Sumatra residents demand return of land

Around 500 people from the villages of Talang Nangka and Jermun held a demonstration in front of the offices of the South Sumatra governor in Palembang on June 19. They were demanding that land in the area of the village that had been seized by a company for a palm oil plantation be returned to the people.

At around 1pm they began gathering in front of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) then marched to the governor's office. "We are asking the government to return the land we work in the area of the village. The land was taken by PT Persada Sawit Mas to be turned into a palm oil plantation, without prior discussion with residents. We are also asked that the 15 people that were arrested after a demonstration in early June be released", said action coordinator Mahudan.

A government official who promised to facilitate a meeting between the residents, PT Persada Sawit Mas and the governor received representatives of the protesters. As of late afternoon the protesters were still demonstrating in front of the governor's office. (Kompas Cyber Media, 19/6/2006)

Papuan students protest in Jakarta

For the umpteenth time, on June 20 dozens of Papuan students forced their way into the department of home affairs building in Jakarta. They were demanding that the minister for home affairs, M. Ma'ruf, give official approval the election of the Papuan governor and vice governor, Barnabas Suebu and Alex Hesegem.

An argument even broke out with security personnel when the students demanded to meet directly with Ma'ruf. "This is what Jakarta people are like, they

don't want to resolve Papua's problems, if it's like this it's better for Papua to separate from NKRI [Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia]", exclaimed one of the demonstrators.

In the end however, they were given permission to convey their demands from the building's press conference room. Before doing this, they even changed costumes, putting on traditional Papuan cloths as well as Cendrawasih feather hats.

"We ask the central government to be explicit and serious in paying attention to the problems in Papua. Don't allow Jakarta political interests to take advantage of the political instability in Papua", said action coordinator Laus DC Rumayom. (Detik.com, 20/6/2006)

Manado students protests neoliberal policies

Dozens of students protested at the Manado Convention Center building in South Sulawesi on June 20. The action, which took place at the location of the Indonesian Economics Scholars Association (ISEI) Congress, was protesting government policies that are inclined towards neoliberalism, which they say are designed by the ISEI congress. (Liputan 6, 20/6/2006)

Earthquake victims in Yogyakarta demonstrate over aid

Around 175 victims of the Central Java earthquake from the village of Tamanmartani in the Kelasan sub-district of Sleman held a demonstration on June 20. They were protesting because they have not been registered to receive relief aid. They also said that the aid distribution has been unfair.

One of the protesters, Suwarno, said that more than 150 families lived in their village but only 13 had received assistance in the form of rice and basic foods. "The ones who got assistance were only those who's homes collapsed," said Suwarno. Whereas all of the residents of the village were victims of the earthquake. Moreover, Vice President Jusuf Kalla said that all of the victims would receive assistance. "The reality is that the distribution has been unfair", he said. (Tempo Interactive, 20/6/2006)

Farmers clash with police in Lombok

One farmer has been reported wounded in yet another clash between farmers and police in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. The clash occurred on June 21 when local government officials arrived at the village of Tanak Awu and began taking measurements and setting out stakes on agricultural land that is the subject of a dispute between Tanak Awu farmers and airport operator PT. Angkasa Pura II.

The officials arrived escorted by around 10 trucks of Mobile Brigade officers, hundreds of police and 50 members of the vigilante squad Pamswakarsa. They also brought a panzer and water cannon and a helicopter could be seen circled overhead.

"During the incident a farmer was finally arrested, beaten and shot on the spot and fell unconscious, his right foot was bleeding", said Indonesian Farmers Federation (FSPI) secretary general Henry Saragih in a press release received by Detik.com on June 22.

The regional government and PT Angkasa Pura II have for some time been planning to build an airport on land which covers the Tanak Awu village. During the process however, there was a disagreement between the residents and the government has been trying to evict the residence since 1997.

Saragih also said that the farmers had long been experiencing acts of terror and intimidation that culminated on September 18 last year when police forcibly broke up a meeting of farmers that was organised at the Tanak Awu village. During the incident police fired on the farmers resulting in 27 people being injured by gunshot wounds. (Detik.com, 22/6/2006)

Housewives demand free birth certificates

The cost of a birth certificate is becoming an increasing burden for residents in the East Java provincial capital of Surabaya. Bringing their children with them, some 50 housewives demonstrated at the Surabaya DPRD on June 21 demanding that birth certificates be issued free.

The action, which organised by the Surabaya Spernkali Residents Association and the Surabaya Savings Group (KTS), proceeded peacefully. "The reality on the ground is that the cost of obtaining a birth certificate can be too much. For example,

when Mrs. Sodja went to get a birth certificate for her grandchild [she] had to pay 50,000 rupiah", said KTS coordinator Nur Rofiah in a speech. (Detik.com, 22/6/2006)

Students demand investigation into corruption case

Sick of corruption cases not being investigated, 30 students from the group South-East Sulawesi Students Against Corruption (MAK) demonstrated at the offices of the Attorney General on June 23. They were urging the Attorney General to order the South-East Sulawesi prosecutor's offices to investigate a suspected corruption case involving a project to expand and improve the quality of junior high school education.

The action started at 10am with speeches in front of the Attorney General's office. "There are a number of schools that have not been given typewriters and stenciling machines. It is because of this that we are demanding legal justice", shouted Martono during one of the speeches.

According to Martono, 3 billion rupiah in funds were obtained to procure office equipment for a number of schools but as it turns out the stenciling machines were of poor quality and unevenly distributed. "A BPKP [Financial and Construction Supervisory Agency] audit found indications that this project has cost the state losses of 357 million rupiah", he said. After around 30 minutes, 10 representative were able to meet with Attorney General staff members. (Detik.com, 23/6/2006)

Bandung residents demand free schooling

Dozens of residents in the West Java provincial capital of Bandung held a protest at the DPRD on June 23 demanding free education for the poor. "The government's socialisation about education for the poor is vary minimal", said Hani Purwanti, the manager of TK Al Ibadah who took part in the demonstration.

According to Purwanti, the number of poor people in Bandung is continuing to grow. The education quota for the poor however remains at just five percent and this only prioritises those residents living in the vicinity of schools. "The bureaucratic procedures to register poor students is also extremely difficult. Out of eight children that I

have registered two of them were rejected because of delays", said Purwanti.

Like other demonstrations, the protesters that included small children, brought a number of posters with messages such as "The poor and destitute must have schools", "Fee free schools for the poor". (Detik.com, 23/6/2006)

Acehnese demand corruption cases be acted on

Following recent protests by hundreds of South Aceh students in Banda Aceh demanding that the chief public prosecutor investigate corruption cases in the regency, on June 22 it was the Tapaktuan state prosecutor's turn to be the target of a demonstration by residents from a number of sub-districts in the regency.

The residents, who came from the South Aceh Social Forum (Forpemas) that was established by student groups, non-government organisations and fisherpeople, arrived at the South Sumatra governors house at around 1pm after holding a march through the main streets of Naga city.

Like the students in Banda Aceh, the protesters demanded that the state prosecutor fully investigate a number of suspected cases of corruption in South Aceh. Among others they cited the procurement of 40 tractors, markups in the purchase of stone crushers and other heavy machinery purchased by the regional government departments as well as a scandal over 2002 education funds that is currently being investigated by the Tapaktuan state prosecutor.

After meeting with the chief prosecutor, the protesters returned to the Tapaktuan bus terminal and disbursed. The action that was tightly guarded by hundreds of South Aceh police proceeded in a peaceful and orderly manner. (Aceh Kita, 22/6/2006)

Farmers occupy plantation land in North Sumatra

Hundreds of farmers from two villages in the North Sumatra regency of Simalungun have forcibly occupied plantation land owned by PT Kuala Gunung, which the protesters say was annexed by the company in 1999.

The land occupation proceeded without incident although it was watched over by plain clothed police officers from the Simalungun district police. During

the action, farmers who came from the Nagori Mariah Hombang Farmers Forum installed dozens of notice boards stating that the residents own the land. They also planted a number of banana tree seedlings.

The protesters said that the land occupation was last attempt by the farmers after demonstrating without effect on numerous occasions at the offices of the regent and the Simalungun DPRD. (Metro TV News, 24/6/2006)