

Actions, demos, protests...

## **Indonesia Roundup #32 - September 11-17, 2006**

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### **PT Sanyo Indonesia workers win victory**

Striking PT Sanyo Indonesia workers in Bekasi have finally won. Today, the company announced that it would withdraw an August 5 decision to suspend three trade union leaders at the company.

Ramadan, secretary of the trade union and one of the dismissed workers said PT Sanyo's decision was most unexpected. "The workers have been asked to forget what has happened and learn from the situation", he said. "It was put in very diplomatic language. But, what is clear now is that we have returned to work", said Ramadan.

The decision was greeted warmly by the other workers. "Today's action is over. We are happy. But, if in the future the management continues to hurt us, we will hold an even larger demo", said Ismail, an employee in the compressor division. Ismail added that the win represented a victory for the struggle by all Indonesian trade unions against employers that act in an arbitrary manner. "There can be no more coercion or intimidation", he said. (Tempo Interactive, 11/9/2006)

### **Onion farmers in Tegal burn harvest in protest over imports**

Onion farmers in the Tegal regency of Central Java set fire to their harvest recently as a form of protest against the government following a drop in onion prices, which farmers blame on imports.

The farmers complained that the price of imported onions are cheaper and called on the government to limit imports. "Farmers continue suffering losses, harvests are a failure, and the government doesn't care", said Marsudi, one of the onion farmers.

(Liputan 6, 11/9/2006)

### **Ende bus drivers demonstrate**

Around 50 bus drivers plying the route between Ende and Maumere on the Flores island of East Nusa Tenggara demonstrated at the Ende Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) on September 11. They were demanding that Travel transport vehicles stop entering the terminal and picking up passengers, which the drivers said was cutting into their income.

"If Travel also enters the terminal to look for passenger, then what is the difference with busses and other inner city transportation. Travel should serve house to house and not look for passenger at the terminal", said Tunas Bus driver Lukas Gere. Following a dialogue with assembly members, the transportation offices said that Travel would be prevented from entering the terminal. (Kompas Cyber Media, 11/9/2006)

### **Anti-imperialist action at US Embassy**

The United States is considered a symbol of imperialism by the advanced countries over developing and small countries. As a consequence, the US Embassy also becomes the target for actions opposing imperialist exploitation.

On September 11, dozens of people from the Peoples Movement Against Colonialism (GRMK) held an action in front of the US Embassy in Central Jakarta opposing the role of imperialism. This opposition was symbolised by the protesters wearing hats in the shape of rockets with the names of several advanced countries such as the US, Japan, Britain, Germany and France.

According to action coordinator Dani Setiawan, the advanced countries are pressuring the developing or small countries that have natural wealth with the intention of controlling the economies of these countries. "Like today, the US controls the natural wealth of Iraq that will then come under IMF and World Bank projects that will greatly benefit the two institutions", said Setiawan.

The protesters had also planned to set fire to the rocket hats but were prevented by some 30 police officers watching over the action. (Detik.com,

11/9/2006)

### **Hundreds of pedicab drivers demonstrate in Jakarta**

On September 11 some 500 pedicab drivers went to the Koja sub-district offices in North Jakarta to demand that the 1998 law banning pedicabs in the city be revoked. The action followed the earlier eviction of 280 pedicabs by sub-district security personnel.

Facilitated by the Urban Poor Consortium (KKK), they arrived riding pedicabs, on motorcycles, by foot and in open vans. In addition to giving speeches they also put up banners with message such as "Stop rounding up pedicabs", "The Jakarta regional government is a capitalist lackey", and "Abolish Bylaw 11/1998".

One of the protesters said that the rounding up of the pedicab drivers must end saying that it was the same as murdering the urban poor. Didid S, an activist from UPC said that the forced seizure of the pedicabs in the streets was a violation of human rights because as a means of livelihood it has a wide impact on the social, economic and cultural lives of residents. He added that the government should return the pedicabs, stop further seizures and allow them to operation on side roads.

Koja sub-district head Toni Sukanda, who met with eight representatives of pedicab drivers, said they would not stop the seizures, as they were legitimised by law. No agreement was reached at the meeting and the pedicab drivers said that regardless of the consequences they were determined to continue operations. (Kompas Cyber Media, 11/9/2006)

### **Students rock South Jakarta District Court**

Around 50 students from the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) held an action at the South Jakarta District Court on September 11 to protest the trial of UIN student Fakhrrur 'Faung' Rahman on charges of insulting the president and vice president. Faung was arrested by security personnel during a protest on June 28 demanding that former President Suharto be tried for corruption.

According to the public relations officer for the action, Borang, Faung's arrest was in relation to a speech he gave in which he said that if Suharto is not tried then President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

and Vice President Jusuf Kalla should resign.  
(Detik.com, 11/9/2006)

### **PT Dirgantara employees demand severance pay**

Hundreds of members of the PT Dirgantara Indonesia Employees Trade Union Communication Forum demonstrated again at the Husein Sastranegara North Square in the West Java provincial capital of Bandung on September 11. They were demanding the payment of severance pay which has still not been paid dispute a government promise to pay the outstanding monies based upon an agreement between the management of PT Dirgantara and the trade union several months ago. (Liputan 6, 12/9/2006)

### **Demonstration against regent elect in West Seram ends in clash**

A demonstration against the inauguration of the recently elected regent of West Seram in Maluku ended in a clash when local civilian police prevented the protesters from meeting with the governor. The protesters also set fire to books on regional autonomy as a symbol of their anger. (Liputan 6, 12/9/2006)

### **Makassar residents protest blackouts**

Residents in the South Sulawesi provincial capital of Makassar are continuing to hold demonstrations following a series of rotating blackouts carried out by the state owned electricity company PT PLN. The hundreds of protesters from various slum areas in the city are demanding that PT PLN be held liable for the financial losses they have suffered as result of the blackouts. (Liputan 6, 12/9/2006)

### **Papuan workers vandalise office, 40 arrested**

Scores of West Papuan workers vandalized the offices of timber company PT Prabu Alaska in West Jakarta during a protest on September 12. The incident occurred after the protesters, who had been waiting for some period of time, finally received news that the head of PT Prabu Alaska was not at the office. The workers then gave vent to their anger by smashing windows and damaging office furnishings.

The workers, who come from the Fakfak in West Papua where PT Prabu Alaska operates, had come to Jakarta to demand the payment of almost two years in

outstanding wages. Seeing that the situation was getting out of control, West Jakarta police moved in and detained around 40 demonstrators. (Liputan 6, 12/9/2006)

### **Bantul earthquake victims protest**

Hundreds of earthquake victims from seven sub-districts in the Bantul regency of Yogyakarta, Central Java, demonstrated again on September 12 demanding the fair and even distribution of reconstruction funds. This time round the demonstration was different from previous actions because it was held amidst the rubble of destroyed buildings in the Seloharjo area of Bantul — earlier protests had been held at the offices of the Bantul regent or Yogyakarta governor's offices. The protesters said that they intentionally held the action there because protests at government offices had produced no result. (Liputan 6, 13/9/2006)

### **Farmers occupy regency office, police headquarters**

Hundreds of members of the North Sumatra Farmers Union (SPSU) occupied the offices of the Asahan regent and the Asahan district police headquarters on September 13. The farmers were protesting because they were angered by acts of violence and mistreatment committed against them by plantation investors, which ended in the farmers being evicted from the plantation.

The farmers, who originate from the South Sumatra regency of Bayung Lincir, also demonstrated at the offices of the South Sumatra governor and local DPRD on the same day. The farmers said that they were afraid because of threats by security personnel who work for the plantation company. (Liputan 6, 13/9/2006)

### **Students in Solo oppose rice imports**

Students from the March Eleven University (UNS) in the Central Java city of Solo demonstrated against rice imports at the Solo public hall on September 13. The protest was preceded by a march from the UNS campus.

According to the students, the policy of importing rice will only hurt farmers, does not address the problems and is only a band aid solution. The students said that the importation of some 210,000

tons of rice to safeguard national rice reserves makes no sense because reserve levels are adequate at present. (Kompas Cyber Media, 13/9/2006)

### **Anti-corruption activists protest Hilton Hotel**

Around 70 people from the Indonesian Peoples Anti-Corruption Alliance (ARAKI) demonstrated in front of the Attorney Generals Office in Jakarta on September 13. They were highlighting a case of suspected corruption in the transfer of the building permit for the Hilton Hotel involving governor of South-East Sulawesi, Ali Mazi.

During the action, which was closely watched over by police, protesters urged the Attorney General to immediacy hand the Hotel Hilton corruption case over to the courts and that President Yudhoyono issue a decree suspending Mazi from his post. They also condemned the intervention and provocation by political parties in influencing the legal process. (Kompas Cyber Media, 13/9/2006)

### **Residents protest construction of telecommunications tower**

The construction of the PT Excelcomindo Tower in the village of Gempol Sewu in the Rowosari sub-district of Kendal in Yogyakarta has become the target of protests by hundreds of local residents. They oppose the construction of the telecommunication tower because they were not informed beforehand. During the action that was held at the offices of the Kendal regional government, the protesters also demanded that the Kendal regent remove the head of their village because he had rented out land for personal profit. (Liputan 6, 14/9/2006)

### **Students oppose disposal of mud into Madura Strait**

A demonstration opposing the disposal of hot mud from the PT Lapindo Brantas exploration site into the Madura Strait was held in by students originating from Madura Island who are attending university in Yogyakarta. In speeches the students said that the government's plan to dispose of the mud would cause financial losses to Maduran fishers and the people of Madura because it would damage the marine ecosystem. During the protest the students also set fire to old tyres to protest the government's slow response to Lapindo disaster. (Liputan 6, 14/9/2006)

## **Residents demand compensation from timber company**

Hundreds of residents representing villages in the Air Buaya sub-district of Baru regency, Maluku, protested at the timber company PT Gema Hutani Lestari on September 13. They were seeking an explanation from the company over its suspected involvement in illegal logging.

Although the protesters were initially only seeking a clarification from the company, when they were informed that the management was not prepared to meet them they threatened to take stern action if the company is proven to be involved in the illegal logging.

The residents became angry after their villages started to suffer from frequent floods due to deforestation and are demanding as much as 30 billion rupiah in compensation from the company. (Liputan 6, 14/9/2006)

## **Students call on government to take action over mud disaster**

Dozens of students from the Alliance of Three Branches of the Indonesian Islamic Students Movement (PMII) from the East Java cities of Surabaya, Sidoarjo and Pasuruan held an action at the Surabaya governor's office on September 14. They were calling on the government to take firm action to resolve the problem of the hot mud disaster in Sidoarjo.

Arriving at the governor's office at around 11.40am they gave speeches urging the government to resolve the problems being caused by the hot mud from PT Lapindo Brantas, take action against those responsible for the disaster and to take over the handling of the mud overflow. Earlier, they held a similar demonstration at the East Java DPRD building. (Kompas Cyber Media, 14/9/2006)

## **Residents protest extension of mud pond**

Hundreds of residents from the Besuki village in the Jebon sub-district of Sidoarjo protested on September 14 over the extension of a mud containment dam that is already encroaching on the village's road and houses.

The residents said they were concerned that their village would suffer the same fate as the Jatirejo

village, which was inundated with mud after a dam breached. "If it breaches the people will be unable to able to escape", said one of the residents. (Liputan 6, 15/9/2006)

### **Busway ticketing staff go on strike**

Hundreds of busway ticketing staff went on strike this morning demanding a wage increase from their employer PT Delta. "We were promised that we would receive a wage of 1.2 million [a month], but this has still not been realised", said one of the strikers.

A staff member who wished to remain anonymous said that they had not served any busway customers since the strike began adding that all 22 employees at their bus stop had joined the strike. The head of Trans Jakarta, Bambang Garjito, confirmed that ticketing staff were on strike adding that, "There are around 800 employees on strike". Garjito also claimed the problem had already been overcome and that they plan to reprimand PT Delta. (Tempo Interactive, 15/9/2006)

### **Residents 'run riot' over Lapindo mud**

Hundreds of residents from the village of Besuki in Besuki regency, Sidoarjo, 'ran riot' on the Gempol-Surabaya toll road on September 15 after their houses were inundated by mud from PT Brantas Lapindo. As well as vandalising vehicles and roadside facilities they also blockaded the road.

The residents, who became angry after their village was inundated with mud from a containment dam, ripped up the fence on the medium strip, smashed the windows of a passing car, forced a truck driver from their vehicle and smashed pot plants made from old tyres which they then tried to set alight. Journalists covering the action also became targets. "There is no need to cover it. It's a waste of time. Jakarta already knew our village would be inundated but did nothing", said one of the residents.

The dozen or so security personnel that were present were unable to do much in the face of the resident's anger and stood by and watched from a distance as residents stopped vehicles on the toll road. (Detik.com, 15/9/2006)

### **Porong highway blockade actions getting worse**



Actions blockading the Porong highway in Central Java by residents from the Mindi village are getting worse. Previously they had allowed two wheeled vehicles and pedicabs past through the blockade, but as of September 16 the road has been closed off to all traffic. As well as creating difficulties for road users who have been forced to find an alternative route, the blockade has caused anxiety for shop owners, many of which have chosen to close their shops. (Detik.com, 16/9/2006)

### **Students, lecturers demonstrate over police beating**

Dozens of students and lecturers from the Antasari Banjarm State Islamic University and the Kalimantan Banjarmasin Islamic University demonstrated in front of the South Kalimantan regional police offices on September 16 demanding an investigation into the beating of a student by a police officer.

The victim, Haris Prasetyo, who is also the deputy chair of the Student Executive Council (BEM), was beaten up the day before after he was stopped for not wearing a helmet while riding a motorbike.

Lecturer Muhammad Uhaib said in a speech that they are calling on police to conduct a full investigation into the case. "We will not remain silent. We want this issue to be fully investigated", he said. Police say that the officer concerned has been detained and is being questioned. (Media Indonesia, 16/9/2006)

### **Transport drivers strike, Tangerang paralyzed**

Thousand of public transport drivers plying route 73 covering Tangerang city and surrounding areas have been on strike since this morning demanding that illegal routes be closed down. As a result of the strike thousands of passengers were left stranded and the city paralyzed.

The head of the Tangerang Public Transport Drivers Union (SPAUT), Syaiful Milah, said that the action was held after earlier demands by the drivers had been ignored by the transportation office. "We will continue demonstrating until our demands are met", said Milah. (Tempo Interactive, 17/9/2006)

### **Residents vandalise poultry farm, release chickens**

A demonstration by some 300 residents from the

village of Sukatanti in the Depok sub-district of Cimanggis who were protesting on the grounds of a poultry farm owned by PT Indocentral has ended with protesters vandalising chicken coops and releasing birds.

The residents, who came from the Anti Poultry Farm Forum (FAPA), were demanding that the farm be relocated saying that the acrid smell from the farm had become intolerable and can be smelt from as far away as 100 meters. As a result, many residents, particularly children, were suffering acute respiratory infections due to an allergic reaction to the smell. "The smell is bad and acrid", said the head of FAPA Huseini who is also the administrative district head. Huseini added that PT Indocentral has still not obtained the appropriate business and environmental licenses to operate the farm.

Failing to get through the front gate that was being guarded by another group of resident who support the presence of the poultry farm, the angry protesters broke down the rear gates of the farm and vandalised cages, release chickens, smashed eggs and destroyed a water pipe. A short time later Cimanggis sectoral police arrived and took control of the situation. (Tempo Interactive, 17/9/2006)