

More Revelations in Indonesia's Graft Case
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By Our Correspondent/Jakarta Globe

SBY's Democratic Party faces more trouble

The affairs of Muhammad Nazaruddin, the former treasurer of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Democratic Party, rocked Jakarta again Monday with revelations that he had conducted at least 23 suspiciously large money transactions with active Indonesian ministers.

"If you ask me if there are [transactions] involving ministers [and Nazaruddin], I would have to say yes. Whether any of those are connected to crimes, we are still verifying," Muhammad Yusuf, chairman of the Financial Transactions Report and Analysis Center, Indonesia's anti-money laundering agency, told a hearing at the House of Representatives Commission III, which oversees legal affairs, on Monday.

The suspicion is that the ministers involved could include Youth and Sports Minister Andi Mallarangeng and Manpower and Transmigration Minister Muhaimin Iskandar, who are scheduled to appear this week on the witness stand at the Anti-Corruption Court where Nazaruddin is under trial on bribery charges. Mallarangeng is to testify in the bribery case against Nazaruddin. Muhaimin testified on Monday in an unrelated graft case linked to the disbursement of regional infrastructure development fund money.

In the past Nazaruddin has implicated party chairman Anas Urbaningrum and Mallarangeng, both of whom had previously been mentioned as possible Democratic Party presidential candidates in the next round of presidential elections in 2014. The revelations place the future of the party itself in some jeopardy, much to the glee of Golkar, the second-biggest party, headed by tycoon Aburizal Bakrie, who has made clear his plans to run for the presidency himself. Speculation is growing in Jakarta that Urbaningrum will be indicted in the case.

Nazaruddin generated enormous publicity after he fled Indonesia in May 2011 just ahead of arrest. Reports alleged that he had hurriedly left the country after party officials warned him to make a run for it to avoid implicating them in the charges. He left Indonesia almost immediately after the meeting at the president's house ahead of a request to appear before the Corruption Eradication Commission, the country's anti-graft agency, on charges that he had accepted at least Rp4.675 billion (US\$480,000) in bribes to rig a government tender for the construction of the athletes' village in Palembang in southern Sumatra for the now-concluded Southeast Asian Games, which ended Nov. 24.

The former treasurer was on the run for four months before he was finally cornered in the Colombian resort city of Cartagena and returned to Jakarta. He has continued with a vow he made while on the run to implicate top officials and destroy the party. He has denied he had anything to do with the Southeast Asian Games, instead implicating other Democrats, saying "I do not know anything about the athletes' village because I was never involved in it."

Yusuf said that of the 23 transactions chosen for analysis by the agency, 10 involved Nazaruddin's personal accounts and 13 originated from among his many companies. One of the transactions, Yusuf said, was worth Rp100 billion (US\$11.1 million).

When asked by Golkar Party lawmaker Bambang Soesatyo exactly how many ministers Yusuf was referring to, the PPATK chairman vaguely responded “not many, just one or two [ministers].” The revelation came after a former Nazaruddin employee, Mindo Rosalina Manulang, said through her lawyer that a minister had asked for an 8 percent “fee” from the Rp181 billion project to construct an athletes’ village for last year’s Southeast Asian Games.

Yusuf refused to confirm whether the transactions were related to certain projects handled by Nazaruddin’s companies.

“That is for the KPK [Corruption Eradication Commission] to investigate. The (money-laundering agency) has no such authority,” he told the hearing.

KPK spokesman Johan Budi said Manulang had not made any report to the KPK about the minister’s alleged involvement in the case. “If [Manulang] wants to report it, she can do so,” he said.

Nazaruddin earlier claimed that Rp 30 billion (\$3.3 million) and \$5 million, were channeled to the Urbaningrum’s campaign to become party chairman. He was elected in a landslide victory in a congress in 2010. Nazaruddin added that the money, which many Democrats had claimed as “transport money,” was used to bribe congress participants. Lawmaker Ruhut Sitompul of the Democratic Party said that such “transport money” was common inside a political party’s congress.

“The other [candidates] do that too. It’s even normal inside a civic organization,” Ruhut said.

According to the lawmaker, the losing candidates for the Democrat’s top post, House Speaker Marzuki Alie and Sports Minister Andi, also provided congress participants with “transport money.”

Earlier a party official from North Sulawesi, Diana Maringka, said she voted for Anas after receiving a payoff.

“Why hasn’t [Marinoka] come forward earlier,” Marzuki said. “If she had problems [with the money] she should’ve never taken it in the first place.”

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