

Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Widodo AS speaking at his office in Jakarta with the other members of the team tasked with selecting temporary replacements for three suspended KPK officials. From left to right Taufiequrrahman Ruki, Adnan Buyung Nasution, Andi Mattalata and Todung Mulya Lubis. [JG Photo]

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Varied Criteria : Antigraft groups issue list of demands

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The Corruption Eradication Commission said on Thursday that accepted the government's decision to issue a regulation in lieu of law, or perpu, to select temporary replacements for three suspended officials from the antigraft body.

Haryono Umar, one of the two remaining active leaders of the commission, known as the KPK, said he and his colleagues were simply "following the mandate of the law."

On Tuesday, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono issued the perpu to personally select three replacements, bypassing a selection process in the house of Representative that is set out in the law on the KPK.

With only two active commissioners, the KPK is one member short of the number legally required to make key decisions.

"If the president has issued the perpu, then all we can do is accept it as it is," Haryono said.

"We will accept the president's decision, but we hope the government will consult with us on the matter. We are already disappointed because the president didn't consult with us when he issued the perpu."

A day after passing the perpu, Yudhoyono appointed a five member team to recommend replacements.

The team, which must produce names for the president to select by next week, had its first session on Thursday.

Todung Mulya Lubis, one of the team members and a prominent lawyer, said that given the tight deadline, the selection team would resort to head-hunting rather than open recruitment.

"We don't have the time to make a public announcement, accept applications, screen candidates and interview them, in line with the proper [KPK commissioner] selection process," he said.

"We will come up with a shortlist of names and approach the candidates personally."

Todung added that Thursday's discussion focused on the criteria for choosing the temporary replacements, rather than specific names. "We are looking for people with integrity who are acceptable to the public, as stated in Article 29 of the KPK law," he said.

"We also have some other criteria. We are looking for people who are able to work with the current commissioners."

KPK chief Antasari Azhar has been suspended as he awaits trial for the murder of a businessman. Two of Antasari's deputies, Bibit Samad Rianto and Chandra Hamzah, were controversially accused of abusing their powers by the National Police last week. They were both suspended on Tuesday.

Adnan Buyung Nasution, a lawyer and another member of the selection team, said that if the case was halted before it reached prosecution, Bibit and Chandra would be welcome to return to active duty.

Antigraft groups and legal analyst have protested against the matter, saying that police were trying to find excuses to oust KPK leaders who were trying to investigate a senior police officer in a major bribery case.

Some of them also objected to the perpu itself, claiming that Yudhoyono was trying to undermine the KPK's independence.

"The move is not meant to save the KPK," Hendaridi, the chairman of the Setara Institute, said on Thursday.

"The passage of the perpu is linked to the police's decision to question the KPK's authority. There is no proof that the KPK could not perform well with just two members."

Separately, antigraft groups outlined their own criteria for the replacements. The groups including organization such as Indonesia Corruption Watch, the National Consortium for Legal Reform (KRHN) and the Center for Law and Policy Studies (PSHK) argued that people who have professional or personal ties to the president should not be chosen as replacement officials.

They also objected to lawyers who have represented clients in KPK cases, as well as law enforcement officials and individuals affiliated with specific political parties.