

Antigrift efforts losing steam: Watchdogs

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The first 100 days of the Yudhoyono administration have seen it flagging in the fight against endemic corruption and falling short in strengthening law enforcement, watchdogs said Tuesday.

Transparency International Indonesia (TII) and the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (YLBHI) said the government had not worked hard enough to restore public trust in law enforcement. TII chairman Todung Mulya Lubis said President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who won re-election last October on a strong antigraft platform, had doubled back on those efforts by adopting laws to the contrary.

"On the one hand, we already have several laws and regulations supporting transparency, such as the corruption eradication law and the witness protection law," Todung said.

"But on the other hand, the government keeps pushing for the deliberation of the state secrecy bill, and the lawful interception bill, which both have the potential to undermine the antigraft campaign."

The Yudhoyono administration, beset by a series of corruption linked controversies but still enjoying a high degree of popularity, will on Thursday mark its first 100 days in office.

TII secretary-general Teten Masduki said the conflicting legislation demonstrated Yudhoyono's half hearted approach toward eradicating graft.

"We fear the government is only paying lip service to the campaign, rather than truly rooting out corruption and reforming the bureaucracy," he said.

TII noted that even though under Yudhoyono's second term the country's corruption perception index had improved to 2.8 in 2009 from 2.6 in 2008, the administration had been slacking off. Teten said establishing the task force against judicial corruption last month would prove useless because the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) was already doing the same job.

In a statement made available to The Jakarta Post, The YLBHI pointed out that the taskforce had done very little to fight the graft deeply entrenched in the judicial system.

In other areas, TII lauded the administration for shortening the time needed to process business permits, from 70 days to 17 days, in a bid to cut red tape.

TII also praised the government's efforts to promote online business procedures to improve transparency and minimize corruption.

"But in reality, we still have investors complaining about having to fork out extra money to be able to do business in Indonesia," Teten said.

"Thus the real issue is the bureaucrats' will, rather than the string of regulations."

The YLBHI noted that in its first 100 days, the Yudhoyono administration had not made any breakthrough in dealing with major long standing problems such as justice for the poor, corruption eradication, resolving past human rights abuses and land disputes,

"We expected that over those first 100 days, the government would make efforts to lift people's hopes," the statement read.

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