

## IN BRIEF: POLITICAL

of talks with the organisation. After each round, Jakarta announced it would resume sending samples to the agency, but then later renege on the deal.

Since the ban was imposed, Indonesian health authorities have actually sent three more vaccines to WHO laboratories, on the condition that they are not used for commercial purposes, something that the WHO reluctantly agreed to at the time. However, speaking at a press conference after the May 25 annual meeting, Dr Heymann said the agency required “approximately 10 or 11” more strains of the virus from Indonesia, in order to meet its international commitments.

All this too-ing and fro-ing resulted in some tough talk at the conference. In remarks carried by news media around the world, the agency’s head, Dr. Margaret Chan, promised to “fail” countries, which continued to refuse sending samples to WHO’s partner laboratories.

She has given Indonesia an effective deadline of June 15 to begin resending strains as specified in the International Health Regulations (IHR). While failure to comply with the rules does not have specific sanctions attached, it could result in trade and travel bans being imposed on Indonesia by other countries.

What is clear from the dispute is that the vaccine development system puts developing countries at a distinct disadvantage over developed ones. It seems ethically reasonable, therefore, for countries which contribute to the availability of a vaccine to also reap the benefits of such medicines. However, creating new drugs is an extremely costly and risky business, which is currently handled by private enterprise, not governments.

If the current system is to be made equitable, governments of these wealthy countries must intervene. Otherwise nations like Indonesia will continue to abandon supposedly “public-interest” schemes and instead make unilateral deals with international manufacturers.

### Graft busting

In May 2005, President Yudhoyono set up the interdepartmental anti-corruption team known as *Timtas Tipikor*. Reportedly dissatisfied with the slow progress of graft cases at the Attorney General’s Office, Yudhoyono created the 48-member team by Presidential Decree, gave it 21 major corruption cases to handle and ruled that the team leader should report directly to him. Two years later the team’s term has just come to an end. Did it achieve what it set out to do?

From its very inception *Timtas Tipikor* ran straight into controversy. Just weeks after it was formed, the head of the new team was called before a House of Representatives commission for a public grilling over the team’s legal standing. Much criticism was heard coming from the PDI-P faction, which voiced particular concerns that the jurisdiction of the team would overlap with the other powerful anti-graft body, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the work of the AGO. At the time, according to a *Report* source, the

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feeling among many in the PDI-P was that the team would be used as a political weapon against the party. However, the PDI-P's calls for the team's dissolution did not gain support and were eventually dropped.

According to Emmerson Yuntho from Indonesian Corruption Watch, the PDI-P's fears about the politicisation of corruption cases did not materialise. "As far as we can see, the team was not used against SBY's political foes," he told the *Report*, "the cases the team went after were simply those involving the big fish."

So far, so good. As to whether the team fulfilled the targets laid out at its inception by the president, Emmerson undertook a study of the 24 cases handled by *Timtas Tipikor*. Although most of these are still being investigated, six have been taken to court and four are still before judges.

"Another of the main goals of the team was to improve the coordination between the police, the state audit agency and the prosecutor's office," Emmerson said. "Coordination was better than leaving things to the Attorney General's Office, but there were still some problems," he said, citing a case against PLN chief Eddie Widiono, which has bounced back and forth from the prosecutor's office to the police several times.

It is also uncertain whether *Timtas Tipikor* represented good value for taxpayer's money. Although the head of the team has claimed that its investigations recovered Rp 3.95 trillion (US\$454 million) for the state that was previously lost to corruption, others have refuted this sum.

An economist and a member of House Commission IX on Finance and Development Planning, Drajad Wibowo, told local media that if such an amount had been deposited in the state coffers, it would have appeared in reports from the Ministry of Finance. "I've already checked," he told *Republika*, "there hasn't been a deposit of that size."

Emmerson thinks that President Yudhoyono gave junior attorney Hendarman Supandji the task of heading *Timtas Tipikor* as a test. If this is the case, then at least in the eyes of the president, he seems to have passed with flying colours; Supandji was appointed Attorney General on May 7. As such, he has started his term as Attorney General with something of a bang, pursuing one of the nation's biggest graft suspects – Tommy Soeharto. It may be too soon to judge, but it is beginning to look like Indonesia has an Attorney General who is finally up to the job. □