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INDONESIA RECOVERS $3M BANK BOSSES STASHED IN AUSTRALIA
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Abdul Khalik, The Jakarta Post, Jakarta

After years of legal and diplomatic efforts, Indonesia has managed to recover US$3 million worth of stolen assets hidden in Australia, and is in the process of taking back some $18 million from Switzerland and $100 million from Britain, officials have said.

According to data from the Justice and Human Rights Ministry, Indonesia has been trying to recover millions of dollars siphoned away by the late owner of the BHS Bank, Hendra Rahardja and the former president director of Bank Surya, Adrian Kiki Aryawan, to Australia since 2003.

Justice and Human Rights Ministry director of international law Prijatni Sawadi said here Monday during a workshop on the UN Convention Against Corruption that Indonesia was now working with Australia, Switzerland and Hong Kong to bring home more stolen money.

"We continue to cooperate with the countries to bring back our money," she said.

Australian Embassy spokesman Fiona Hoggart declined to comment on the case specifically, but confirmed that both governments have been working together in recovering the assets.

Beside the $3 million that has been returned, the ministry said that, based on Indonesia’s request, Australia was helping the country to return another $3 million worth of Hendra’s assets from Hong Kong.

The country is also asking the Swiss government to freeze a total of $14.9 million worth of assets belonging to former Mandiri Bank president director ECW Neloe, currently in a Swiss bank account.

An Indonesian court has sentenced Neloe to 10 years in jail and a fine of Rp 500 million or an extra six months in jail.

Hendra, who was tried in absentia for corruption involving Rp 1.95 trillion (US$216.7 million) of the central bank’s liquidity support (BLBI) funds, died in Australia in January 2003. According to the Attorney General’s Office team, Hendra had assets worth about $9.3 billion. However, as of 2004, Indonesia had recovered just A$642,000 from Australia.

Adrian was sentenced to life in prison and fined Rp 1.5 trillion by the same court the following year.

Indonesia is also in the process of recovering $100 million worth of assets belonging to the son of former president Soeharto, Tommy Soeharto, which are in an account of the London branch of Bank Nationale de Paris Paribas, said a civil prosecutor with the Attorney General’s Office.

"The assets have been frozen. We are now trying to take them home," the prosecutor, Yoseph Suardi Sabda, said.

Indonesia and other like-minded countries will try to propose uniformity in the multilateral mechanism regarding asset recovery during the UN conference on the Convention Against Corruption in Bali next week.

Foreign Ministry director general for legal and international treaties Eddy Pratomo said the mechanism was needed because Indonesia has had difficulties in asking for legal assistance from countries it believes are home to stolen assets.

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