

KPK searches ministry for Adipura scandal

The Corruption Eradication Commissions (KPK) began a search of the Environment Ministry on Thursday to find evidence of alleged graft linked to the most celebrated environmental award of the Adipura Cleanliness Award. Bekasi Mayor Mochtar Muhammad was earlier detained for having bribed officials at the ministry to win the award last year. KPK investigators with four private cars compiled supporting data including that from the secretariat office of Adipura team.

“This is our first visit [to the Environment Ministry] to search for evidence on alleged graft regarding the Adipura award to Bekasi,” Gunawan, a KPK investigator, said on Thursday.

He declined to give details of evidence seized by the KPK team. The KPK has detained Bekasi mayor Mochtar Muhammad in Salemba Penitentiary in Central Jakarta since December on the alleged use of the Bekasi budget to pay the bribes to win the Adipura award.

The KPK said Mochtar had made promises in return for the Adipura award.

Mochtar had repeatedly defended that he did not use much of the regional budget to clean Bekasi, saying it was due to the participation of residents, companies operating in the city and government agencies.

He said that the administration had promoted a massive tree planting campaign, resettled roadside vendors, improved waste management, normalized rivers and expanded green areas. Secretary Minister Hermien Rosita confirmed the visit of the KPK team to collect evidence on alleged corruption in handing the Adipura award to Bekasi.

“I don’t know what the KPK has seized as evidence. It did not inform us about its arrival,” she said.

The KPK visit was made after an internal investigation by the Environment Ministry found no evidence that its officials received money from the Bekasi administration to upgrade the score of Bekasi. Bekasi, previously considered one of Indonesia’s filthiest cities, won an Adipura award in 2010 for the first time since the cleanliness accolade was launched in 1984.

Environment Minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta has said that it will withdraw the Adipura award from Bekasi if the KPK proved corruption aided its win.

The Adipura Cleanliness Award is presented annually to local administrations that commit to keeping the environment clean. But in the wake of regional autonomy, the award has become a symbol of achievement for officials — and a political commodity used to win the hearts of voters and support from the central government.

Environmental activists claimed that the Environment Ministry regularly bestowed the Adipura awards to dirty and heavily polluted regions such as Jakarta, which is a regular recipient of the award.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono gave the Adipura awards to more than 140 regencies and municipalities across Indonesia in 2010.

The Environment Ministry said that it would tighten the award criteria starting next year to prevent unqualified candidates from being considered for the award.