

New suspects may come from KLH probe

The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has questioned four officials and confiscated 47 pieces of evidence in a search of the Environment Ministry (KLH) office, as part of its investigation into suspected bribery in the coveted Adipura city cleanliness awards. The KPK has questioned ministry expert staffer Gusti Nurpansyah on Thursday and Melda Mardalina, a jury team member who assessed regions in the competition last year, on Friday in the case.

“The KPK questioned her in connection with her position at that time as a member of the assessment team,” KPK spokesman Johan Budi said Friday. The antigraft body also raided the office of Environment Minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta on Thursday. Last year, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono presented the Adipura award to more than 140 regencies, including Bekasi municipality. Only 126 cities were awarded in 2009.

It was the first time Bekasi, known to be one of the dirtiest cities in the country, in part due to its poor waste management, and the notorious Bantar Gebang dump, had won an Adipura award. Jakarta pays Bekasi to use its dump.

The KPK named Bekasi Mayor Mochtar Muhammad a suspect for allegedly using money from the city’s 2010 budget to bribe the award organizers to honor Bekasi. The KPK has built a case against Mochtar, and has been holding him in a detention center in Salemba, Central Jakarta, but has not revealed specifics, such as the amount of the alleged bribe, nor named the recipients of the bribe from the award body.

“There is a possibility that more suspects will be named,” Johan said after the search at the ministry.

Secretary to the environment minister Hermien Rosita said the KPK investigators had questioned four members of staff at the building on Thursday. The staffers were questioned at the office until late Thursday evening, while KPK officers seized 47 items as evidence, including hard disks, and documents containing the minutes of Adipura scoring meetings. She said the KPK had also downloaded data from Nurpansyah’s BlackBerry.

“The questioning was to cross-check data on the Adipura award, including its scoring system,” Hermien told reporters on Friday.

The Adipura award, launched in 1984 and granted to the cleanest cities in the country, are greatly sought after by city governments. The Environment Ministry issued a decree in 2002 making it mandatory for all cities to be evaluated for the award.

Adipura takes into account the cleanliness of housing areas, traditional markets and city parks. The award also assesses the cleanliness of rivers, bus terminals, and sanitation facilities. The pass grade is determined in an internal meeting led by the Environment Ministry, and is based on the scores of all of the nation’s cities.

The meeting to decide the winners was attended by only high-ranking officials at the ministry. Evaluation teams rating large cities usually include an official from the Environment Ministry, and evaluation teams for smaller cities usually include a representative from the provincial administration. Each evaluation team must be accompanied by at least three guests, usually local activists, academics or journalists, who are selected by the local province. Evaluations are carried out twice a year.