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ADB is judged guilty by NGOs 'people's tribunal'

Niken Prathivi , The Jakarta Post , Denpasar | Mon, 05/04/2009 2:06 PM | Headlines

A two-day mock trial by Asia-Pacific based NGOs against the Asian Development Bank issued its verdict Sunday: The bank is guilty of violating sovereignty of loan recipient countries and their people.

The tribunal's judge and jurors heard testimonies from 13 experts and witnesses from various countries receiving loans from the ADB and watched two documentaries on ADB projects.

"The college of jurors of this Asia Pacific people's tribunal on the Asian Development Bank hereby pronounce a guilty verdict toward the Asian Development Bank, the governments of the United States, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan," a member of the jury, Zumrotin Susilo of the International Organization for Migration of Indonesia, said.

The jurors included Abdon Nababan from Indonesia, Antonio A. Tujan Jr. from the Philippines, Congresswoman Liza Maza from the Philippines, and Azra Sayeed from Pakistan.

After hearing the jurors' verdict, acting judge Wardah Hafidz of Indonesia "declared illegal and revoked" the ADB's policies on debt, the privatization of water and public utilities and other anti-people policies.

Wardah then asked the ADB and the governments of loan recipient countries to compensate victims of the ADB projects.

"The individual heads of states and governments are hereby ordered forcibly ousted or overthrown from positions of power and perpetually and absolutely barred from holding any public office," Wardah said.

One of the jurors, Azra Sayeed, said that she was excited with the mock tribunal against the ADB, saying that the activity could boost people's awareness on debt issues.

"In Pakistan, there has been an increase in suicides caused by, among other things, debt and military repression. Therefore, we are obliged to bring such a tribunal to our own community in order to raise people's concern," she added.

Indonesia, ADB's largest debtor, will raise its contribution to the bank by Rp 2 trillion (US\$188 million) over four years, Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati said

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