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Global OK needed for missing assets

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The Jakarta Post/Nusa Dua, Bali

Solid international cooperation is needed to recover stolen Indonesian assets from overseas, the head of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) said Wednesday.

Addressing the Making International Anticorruption Standards Operation: Asset Recovery and Mutual Legal Assistance seminar, KPK head Taufiequrrahman Ruki said the country's law enforcers needed to actively broaden their networks in order to be able to cooperate with global law enforcement agencies to ease the process of recovering the stolen assets and obtain legal assistance in different jurisdictions.

"Corruption can be a financial crime with no state boundaries, considering that the criminal proceeds are often laundered and hidden overseas. Therefore, the tracing and recovering of stolen assets are important issues in the agenda of corruption handling," Taufiequrrahman said in his opening remarks.

He said the global anticorruption campaign had gained momentum with the establishment of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003, with Indonesia being one of the countries participating in drafting the document. As many as 146 countries worldwide have signed the UNCAC.

In 2006, Indonesia's House of Representatives ratified the convention.

An anti-corruption specialist at the International Center for Asset Recovery, Greta Fenner, said the complexity of asset recovery was that stolen money was often moved from one country to another, so that investigators needed to be very skillful in tracing the money and following each country's jurisdictions.

"It is not enough to merely jail those who are corrupt ... we should bring back the country's assets in case they enjoy their money again after completing their sentences," she said.

"There have been international conventions to fight cor-

ruption, but each country needs to implement the treaties in accordance with their respective laws."

"The international seminar was attended by 170 guests, most of whom were experts and, investigators directly involved in the handling of big corruption cases, including those of former Philippines president Ferdinand Marcos, the former Nigerian president Sani Abacha and Vladimiro Montesinos, a right-hand man and a security advisor of former Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori.

Mal Nuhu Ribadu, executive chairman of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) who handled the Abacha case, said that a strong political will from the Indonesian government and a good judicial system were needed to tackle corruption cases and recover stolen assets.

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— Taufiequrrahman Ruki
KPK Chairman

"The (Indonesian) government should work by themselves first and show the world their anticorruption commitment, including by bringing corrupt state officials to court. If they have managed to work internally, the international community will back them and give them assistance to get back their assets," he said.

Since the EFCC was established in 2003, it has successfully handled some 400 graft cases in Nigeria and convicted 200 perpetrators, including high-level officials, and has recovered more than US\$5 billion in stolen assets.

"We are facing difficulties in handling the cases since corruption has been considered a common thing in our governance. We also have to fight against the corruptors that are able to do anything they want to oppose us, but we keep working hard," Ribadu said.