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CORRUPTION

Setya no-show at court citing another medical reason

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Golkar Party chairman Setya Novanto failed on Monday to take the witness stand at the trial of Andi Agustinus, a businessman and defendant in the electronic identity (e-ID) graft case, due to medical treatment.

The hearing would have been Setya's first public appearance in court since he won on Sept. 29 a pretrial motion that resulted in the voiding of his suspect status in the case.

As Setya could not make his way to the court room, Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) prosecutor Abdul Basir told the Jakarta Corruption Court that Setya was not among five witnesses "who willingly attended" the hearing. Abdul immediately revised his statement, saying only five witnesses "who are able" to attend the hearing.

But, presiding judge Jhon Halasan Butar Butar criticized Abdul for his wording, saying: "I don't think it is about willingness or not."

Setya allegedly had to undergo a check-up at Premier Hospital in Jatinegara, East Jakarta, on Monday, after reportedly having heart surgery three weeks ago.

KPK spokesman Febri Diansyah confirmed Setya's absence was due to a scheduled check-up and that the prosecutors had received a notification from him.

Calling in sick has often been used by graft suspects as a reason to avoid KPK questioning or subpoenas.

In 2010, high profile businesswoman Nunun Nurbaeti, who was a witness in a graft case, cited "amnesia" and having "medical treatment" for the ailment as the reason for not appearing in court. Some promptly named her "forgetful Nunun."

The wife of former police general Adang Daradjatun fled to Singapore to seek treatment in 2011. The KPK failed to find her there, but she was eventually arrested in Bangkok, Thailand later that year.

Another graft convict, disgraced former Democratic Party treasurer Muhammad Nazaruddin, claimed to suffer from stomach problems, temporarily halting his trial.

Monday was also not the first time Setya dodged legal proceedings. The House of Representatives' speaker had failed twice to comply with KPK summons for questioning, citing health reasons and effectively hindering investigators from completing their dossier on Setya before bringing him to court.

He had previously been admitted to hospital due to an alleged heart condition on Sept. 18, the same day KPK investigators summonsed him as a suspect in the e-ID graft case that is believed to have caused Rp 2.3 trillion (US\$170 million) in state losses.

A physician assigned by the House claimed that Setya, at that time, was being treated for multiple illnesses, including heart and kidney problems as well as vertigo.

Doctors discharged him from the hospital last week.

At Monday's hearing, Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo also failed to testify because of what KPK said was "a state procession."

The governor was accompanying President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo on a working visit to Central Java's capital, Semarang.

Ganjar, who served on House Commission II overseeing home affairs, has been implicated in the case and is alleged to have received US\$1.2 million in bribes in connection with the e-ID procurement project.