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BaliBS.org Calls for World Media to Investigate Police, Judiciary Corruption in Bali

KUTA, Bali, Aug. 4, 2005 -- Is the alleged corruption of the Bali police force and court system negatively impacting that country's tourism industry and exposing Bali citizens and tourists to terrorist attacks? Bali Broadcasting Service (Bali BS, <http://www.balibs.org>) says yes - and the site is calling for international media organizations to launch investigative reports on the situation.

To back up its claim, the site points to the case of Sang Ayu Made Karnasih, a Balinese stay-at-home mother who has been imprisoned without bail in Bali since June 15, 2005 - shortly after her husband, German-born Bali resident Harry Bleckert, reported the police to Indonesia's Presidential Corruption Commission for corruption in shutting down his business. Sang Ayu's crime, according to the Bali police, was illegal operation of an ISP.

But Sang Ayu, contends Bleckert, did no such thing. The couple's business, Candi Internet (<http://www.candiinternet.com>), was Sang Ayu's in name only, since Bleckert is German-born. And Candi Internet, said Bali BS founder Eric Hartley, had completed a franchise agreement with a licensed Bali ISP but had not yet begun offering Internet service when the police raided the company in October 2004.

People familiar with the case, said Hartley, suspect the real reason the police targeted Candi Internet, out of scores of businesses actually providing Internet service in Bali without a license, is good old-fashioned bribery. Hartley believes a competitor of Candi Internet paid the police to shut down the business. Sang Ayu's imprisonment occurred, said Hartley, in retaliation for Bleckert involving the Presidential Corruption Commission.

"If this happened to Candi Internet, it can happen to any business in Bali," stated Hartley. "One court representative actually told Mr. Bleckert the case would be forgotten if he paid the equivalent of \$5,500. The police and many of the courts are out to get as much money as they can, and they will abuse their power as much as they need to in order to get it. Every Balinese business owner should be aware that the police can be paid to ruin a business for any reason."

But how does terrorism fit into the picture? Bali BS alleges that police corruption is so widespread, any motorist can pay the police a few dollars to wave him or her through anti-terrorism checkpoints.

"We urge the media to send journalists to Bali to secretly film what goes on. Film the traffic police stopping tourists on rental bikes for offenses they did not commit, then giving them the choice between paying up or going to court," said Hartley. "Catch a coach from Java to Bali, one where the driver agrees to have the police wave them through for a few bucks. And please let there be a journalist dedicated and brave enough to talk to Harry Bleckert or film Sang Ayu's trial to show the world what Indonesian justice is really like."

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