Yudhoyono moved as he watches orangutan film

Bagus BT Saragih
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

After being frustrated with internal rifts within his Democratic Party, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono sought solace by watching a movie on Monday night.

Coming to the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII) IMAX Theater, Yudhoyono was accompanied by First Lady Ani Yudhoyono. The President watched *Born to be Wild*, an award-winning movie about the bond between humans and animals.

"[The movie] was very good. I hope those who watch it are inspired and motivated to help save animals from extinction," Yudhoyono told the press upon exiting the theater, as quoted by Antara.

The movie tells the story of one woman's efforts to rescue orphaned orangutans and elephants and bring them home to Indonesia's rainforests, which have themselves been facing deforestation.

Reports say the population of wild orangutans, dubbed the most intelligent primate, was at less than 100,000. Most of them live in the wild jungles of Sumatra and Kalimantan.

In a brief statement, the President mentioned several names who joined him watching the movie. Among those in the front rows were Sinar Mas Group CEO Franky Oesman Widjaja and managing director, who is also the chairman of the Eka Tjipta Foundation, G. Sulistiyanto.

The movie was financed by the conglomerate and the foundation.

Sinar Mas companies, particularly those involved in palm oil plantations, have been labeled by environmental activists as "earth destructors" for tearing down forests that are homes to orangutans and other endangered species.

Due to the allegation of destroying natural forests in Sumatra and Kalimantan, several giant consumer product companies, including Burger King, Unilever and Nestlé, have boycotted Sinar Mas' crude palm oil (CPO) since 2009.

Daud Dharsono, the president director of Sinar Mas subsidiary PT Sinar Mas Agro Resources and Technology (SMART), has previously claimed his company always implemented responsible sourcing guidelines (RSG) created by The Forest Trust for palm oil companies to support sustainable business concepts.

A week before he fulfilled Sinar Mas' invitation to watch the movie, President Yudhoyono spoke before hundreds of international envoys to call for an end of such boycott. "The CPO boycott is unfair," the President said.

"Sinar Mas is one of the biggest forest destroyers in Indonesia. By producing the movie, the companies wanted to mask their wrongdoings to Indonesia's environment, including orangutans," Hadi Jatmiko of the Indonesia Environmental Forum (Walhi) told *The Jakarta Post* on Tuesday.

Yudhoyono's "ties" with orangutans had begun since lawmaker and former Miss Indonesia Angelina Sondakh joined his Democratic Party.

Angelina was appointed by a US NGO in 2006 to serve as an orangutan ambassador.

While the President said he was touched by the movie about orangutans, he was not happy with Angelina, who was now a suspect in a high-profile corruption case that implicated many Democratic Party members and was considered to be significantly tarnishing the party's image.