

Factors Causing Practices of Money Politics in Regional Head Elections in Indonesia

Irwan Waris

*Department of Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Tadulako University
E-mail : irwanwaris@yahoo.co.id*

Abstract

There were many factors causing the practice of money politics in the Regional Head Elections in Indonesia in 2020, especially in Sigi District, Central Sulawesi Province. This study found at least 7 (seven) factors causing practices of money politics. These seven factors reinforce each other and foster other factors so that the practice of money politics continue in every regional head election, even in general election. In the context of community's understanding, this study revealed that the practice of money politics became a normal political activity in which the community waited for it each regional head election or Pilkada.

Keywords: *Regional head election, regional head, voters, political parties, democracy.*

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I. Introduction

The 2020 Regional Head Election process in Indonesia was carried out until February 2021. A total of 270 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) took place simultaneously and the voting day was on December 9, 2020. Almost all of the elected Regional Heads covering Regents/Deputy Regents and Mayors/Deputy Mayors on behalf of the Minister of Home Affairs were inaugurated by the Governor in February 2021. Meanwhile, the elected Governor/Deputy Governor was inaugurated by President Jokowi at the State Palace in February 2021. The Regional Head Elections needed long processes from June 2020 to February 2021. The regional head election process drains the energy, thought, and time of the organizers, central government, local governments, and people who devote their attention and energy to this process. Likewise, the process required extraordinarily large funds (Sihidi et al., 2019). Many parties stated that the regional head election is expensive, not only in the context of its implementation but also in the election candidate. This is suspected to encourage the Regional Heads to practice corruption during their reign (Irham, 2016; Labolo, 2017).

The regional head election process becomes expensive, especially for the election candidate due to various factors, both legal and non-legal factors. Legal factors usually involve political costs during the regional head election stage of activities, while non-legal factors involve the costs of renting a "political vehicle" which will be used as a vehicle for the contestation and "buying" the votes to win the contestation.

Regional head elections are a form of embodiment of democracy that places the people as the owner of sovereignty. People choose their leaders in a participatory without coercion and pressure from any party. Choosing a leader is the honor (Marwah) of the people which should be a dream and be respected in a democratic country like Indonesia. The denial of people's sovereignty such as the manipulation of the vote through money politics means that people's sovereignty is no longer the strength of democracy. People's sovereignty is bought by those who have economic and political power causing democracy to gradually die out or only as a symbol or jargon without actual implementation. The power possessed by the leader is easily misused, distorted, and even sold for the benefit of the ruling group. If this happens, democracy as a means of achieving goals loses its dignity and ability to direct the people towards the common good, especially to achieve the goal of the state, namely the realization of a just and prosperous society both physically and mentally.

Money politics seems like a ghost in every general election and regional head election process. Money politics activity seems to be lively in new democracies in Asia and Africa. These countries are developing countries that are generally former European colonies. The implementation of democracy in these countries has not been going on for a long time. Democracy has just grown so the political system is still looking for a balanced form. For example, Nigeria, as a developing country on the African continent, which adopted democracy, has held elections many times. The implementation of general elections in this country is said to be full of money politics (Onapajo Hakeem, 2015; Onuoha Freedom C. & Ojo Jide, 2018). Thus, the results of the election are viewed as not reflecting the actual reality. People's votes are bought by politicians who have

adequate finances. As a result, it is easy to predict that the general election in that country has not yet succeeded in choosing a leader who can bring progress and benefits for both the people and the country.

The same case happened in India. Besides money politics, the use of violence can be found in each general election (Vaishnav, 2017). The election in this country is always tough and scary because it often takes people's lives and involves a lot of money in mobilizing people's choices. Many African, Latin American, and Asian countries (Ghana, Dominica, Argentina, and in Asia such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Taiwan) also face the same issues. Burhanuddin Muhtadi reports that money politics is also used as one of the main means for politicians to mobilize people's choices in the general election in these countries (Muhtadi, n.d.)

In Indonesia, the practice of money politics is not a secret anymore. This despicable political practice seems like something legal to happen. It is discussed in all places, from coffee shops to various public spaces where people have discussions. Almost everyone talks about it, without shame. Party administrators, successful teams, and impromptu political observers usually dominate the conversation in coffee shops. They decorate and brighten up the atmosphere of the general head election. The practice of money politics has become a part of politics to mobilize the vote. According to the Minister of Politics, Law and Human Rights, Mhafud MD, money politics is always present in all regional head elections and is very difficult to avoid (Indonesia, n.d.). He added that money politics is when elections are held in the DPRD, money politics in that institution is like wholesale. Now, the regional head election directly involves the people as voters, then money politics is for the people as voters so that the money politics is like retail. The Election Supervisory Agency, including the Regional Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in the regions also always reminds us that money politics poisons democracy ((*Pilkada Serentak 2020*, Bawaslu, 2020). The Election Supervisory Agency could not keep the regional head election away from the practice of money politics. During the 2020 regional head election, the Election Supervisory Agency, especially Sentra Gakkumdu, handled 136 election crimes in various regions ((*Praktik Politik Uang Subur Di Masa Pandemi – Rumah Pemilu*, n.d.). The data from the Election Supervisory Agency is like the tip of the iceberg where there are still many cases of money politics in the 2020 regional head election that do not appear on the surface, so they are not revealed.

The widespread practice of money politics in every general election and the regional head election is not surprising. If we trace the history of the election, it is suspected that the practice of money politics has occurred since the first general election in 1955 (Nail, 2019). In fact, this money politics coincided with the practice of dynastic politics (Susanti, 2017). Thus, it worsens efforts to improve the quality of democracy built through the regional head election for the realization of a consolidated democracy.

In Sigi District, the location of the study, the practice of money politics in this region according to information from various groups, is openly carried out like in other regions. The practice of money politics becomes a daily conversation among the people. Many people negotiate with the members of the successful team (Timses) of the candidate or the successful team approaches the people to buy their vote to help the candidate win the election. The open practice of money politics shows how the people and the parties involved in the regional head election process are truly permissive in responding to political ethics. They no longer view money politics as a despicable political practice that breaks the dignity of democracy, resulting in people's sovereignty being purchased. As a consequence, regional head elections are expensive and the most dangerous is that regional heads who are willing to work and fight for the progress of the people, region, and nation are not elected.

The question that arises concerning the series of arguments above is why the practice of money politics is still ongoing in the implementation of the Regional Head Election. This study tries to address that question.

II. Method

The focus of this study is the practice of money politics in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in the Sigi District. This district is an autonomous region in Central Sulawesi Province which organizes the same as the regional head election in other 7 (seven) districts/cities in Central Sulawesi Province or 270 districts/cities in 13 provinces in Indonesia.

The study used a qualitative design with direct background and individuals holistically (whole) in order to minimize the distance between the researcher and the subject (Creswell, 2002). Meanwhile, the study used a phenomenological approach reflecting direct human experience, as far as the experience is intensively related to an object (Kuswarno, 2009). This approach tries to understand how a person experiences and gives meaning to an experience. Ethical and emic approaches (Moleong, 1988) were also used to strengthen the phenomenological approach.

The study used both primary and secondary data related to the practice of money politics in the process of organizing the regional head election. Secondary data were obtained by conducting searches on various agencies/institutions and libraries. Meanwhile, primary data were obtained by conducting in-depth interviews with a number of informants.

Besides, questionnaires were distributed to 150 respondents in three sub-districts including Dolo, Palolo, and Lindu sub-districts. The results of the questionnaire were to support the data obtained from informants through in-depth interviews. Data were processed for getting the frequency distribution to determine the tendency of respondents' understanding of the practice of money politics. The informants and FGD participants were selected from various parties with the following criteria, namely involved as organizers, authorized officials, experts, target parties, and other parties who had an interest in the regional head election process.

The data collection techniques covered observation, in-depth interviews, document studies to obtain supporting secondary data, and literature studies. The instrument of the study consisted of researchers, in-depth interview guidelines, questionnaires, FGD guidelines, and guidelines for obtaining secondary data. Data were analyzed inductively during the study. Data analysis was based on the Miles and Huberman which covered data collection, data presentation, data reduction, conclusion and verification of conclusion in a circular manner until obtaining truly in-depth conclusions (Sugiono, 2012).

III. Results and Discussion

1. Factors Causing Money Politics

1.1. Political Culture

Many people view that the practice of money politics can be traced back to the royal era in the past. It is suspected at that time, kings and nobles liked to give something to the community, even providing facilities for economic life and security protection. According to an informant, kings, and nobles at that time, expected a response in the form of political loyalty and obedience from the people. Thus, in Central Sulawesi, there was a political exchange between Kings/Nobles either directly or indirectly. It then becomes the political culture of the current society. Now, such political behavior is called transactional politics (Ahmad, 2018; Solihah, 2016), patron-client politics (Pamungkas et al., 2018; Rofieq & Nuryono, 2016), and paternalistic politics (Yulianti & Frihatin, 2018). Researchers have showed the presence of these traces in various regions in Indonesia. Furthermore, such political behavior still continues to present but the actor is different. At this time the actors are the elite of political parties and the political elite outside who want to become the regional head. They mostly rely on funds so they usually have good economic capabilities or political elites with low economic capability collaborate with capital owners to handle the fund issue. They mobilize the people to vote for themselves or certain parties using money. Before mobilizing the people, they first mobilize political parties using money and then use political parties as vehicles for their nomination as candidates for regional head elections.

Transactional or patron-client political practices in the past have different actors so the political impact is also different. Such political actors in the past were usually honest, trustworthy, and worked and fought for the interests of the people under their reign. As a result, the people could enjoy the results of the work of the elites in the form of welfare or economic guarantees such as land distribution and security guarantees. At present, the actors are not the kings or nobles as in the past. The actors are people who come from ordinary circles but are wealthy or have influence because of their "muscle strength" or courage so that they can intimidate the people. Economic capacity in the form of cash is obtained through illegal channels, for example, unfair trade, mining activities whose concessions may be obtained through violating the applicable regulations, and various political practices of KKN (collusion, corruption, and nepotism) as a result of the euphoria of democracy that has been going on since 1998 or the end of the regime of President Soeharto.

After being wealthy, people become a strong and influential elite in the region. Then, they want to enjoy the power and become the ruler in their region as the king did in the past. This is where the problem lies. With the money they have, they can buy people's votes (money politics) which then brings them to power as a regional head. According to the informant, it can be assumed that when people are holding power, they do not fight for the interests of the people but to enrich themselves, their families, and their groups. That is one of the reasons why most regional heads have problems with the law (Harits et al., 2019; Sommaliagustina, 2019; Subarjo, 2018). This is not what people expect. Besides the delay in achieving prosperity, the process of implementing regional development also becomes the victim. The regional head election should produce leaders who can accelerate all development. Thus, it can be stated that a successful regional head election does not only concern the implementation, but also electing leaders who are truly desired by the people. This means that the leader can fight for the welfare of the people and accelerate regional development in order to achieve progress like other regions.

The winner of the Regional Head Election in 2020 in Sigi District was Mohammad Irwan-Samuel Yanse Pongi who defeat Husen Habibu-Paulina. The winner received 77,376 votes (54.06%) while the opponent received 61,786 votes (44.04%). The number of valid votes was 139,162, while the invalid votes were 3,401. The number of voters who used their right to vote was 142,563 people. The Sigi Regent/Deputy Regent

Candidate was determined as the winner of the Regional Head Election as stated in the Sigi General Election Commission (KPU) decision letter No. 450/PL.02.6-Kpt/7210/KPU-Kab/XII/2020, after passing the recapitulation stages from KPPS, PPK to KPU on Thursday (17/12/2020) night (*Pasangan Irwan-Samuel Resmi Ditetapkan Sebagai Pemenang Pilkada Sigi | KabarSelebes.id*, 2020).

1.2. Poverty

Based on the results of the study, it was found that poverty is one of the factors causing the widespread practice of money politics in the implementation of regional head elections. A total of 75% of the 150 respondents mentioned this factor. In this case, poverty does not only mean that the economic life or economic capacity of the community is low, but in a political context such as the regional head election, middle-income people often position themselves as poor so that they also try to get the money from the practice of money politics. Based on this condition, even middle-income people have also accepted money politics and unconsciously position themselves as poor.

In the context of a poor community, a sociologist of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of Tadulako University, Abdul Kadir Patta said that the practice of money politics carried out by political elites, both as political party elites and as candidate pairs, is by influencing voters instantly and easily using money politics. The other ways which glorify democracy are futile efforts and will not be possible to win the candidate in that contestation.

The people, especially the poor, feel that their primary needs, especially food can be met if they receive basic food distribution from the candidate. That's why people receive necessities or other types of daily necessities given by the candidate or certain political elites as reported by an informant. Voters feel that money or necessities help fulfill their primary needs. Indeed, the amount of money and necessities (the most common form of gift) provided by the candidate is not much. "But, that's why people seem to be influenced by the presence of money politics. Their needs seem like have been met by receiving such a small gift," as added by the informant.

People who vote or are obliged to vote to seem to have concluded that regional head election without money politics is not "fun". Candidates are seen as having the potential to leave the people if they are elected later. "That's why we better ask first. After all, when they hold the power, they will forget about us," said a community leader in Dolo Sub-district. Thus, money politics has been seen as something common, and no need to question it (Arsyad et al., 2016; Erviantono, 2017).

1.3. People's Low Political Education Levels

People's understanding of democracy which covers political contestation regularly to elect regional heads is not sufficient (Sukiran, 2017). One of the reasons is the lack of political education regarding democracy carried out by various parties such as political parties, mass organizations, political organizations, and other social and political forces, including educational institutions. These institutions should also be responsible for conducting political education regarding the essence of regional head elections.

Most respondents in this study (74%) stated that political education for voters regarding democracy especially the regional head elections was not carried out by the relevant parties. Political parties that should have provided the education did less (Syahrani, 2019). In general, political parties through their administrators provides education on political practices that are contrary to democracy, for example, the practice of money politics.

A sociologist of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of Tadulako University, Abdul Kadir Patta stated that many parties other than political parties should also be responsible for the implementation of political education for the people, for example, educational institutions, social organizations, community organizations, NGOs, and others. However, nowadays these institutions are starting to have few roles in shaping the people's political understanding. These institutions are formed and developed in the community. They know the key problems faced by the people, so they should be responsible for providing political education. These parties who are often called civil society should be encouraged to play a significant role in providing knowledge, understanding, and political experience to the people (Martiningsih, 2017). This is called political education.

1.4. Permissive Voters Against the Practice of Money Politics

Generally, voters view the practice of money politics in the implementation of regional head elections as a common thing (Chandra & Ghafur, 2020). An informant said that a regional head candidate who does not practice money politics is considered strange. The informant added that such leaders are viewed as stingy leaders and if they lead the region, they will tend to forget their people. "So the people's first assessment of the candidate for regional head election is whether the candidate is willing to give something (money or goods, for example, necessities) or not." Apart from other factors, this condition causes the regional head election to be expensive. Most of the respondents involved in this study (80%) said that voters expected gifts in the form of money, groceries, and others. Thus, it is not surprising that the voters are permissive toward the practice of

money politics which can certainly mobilize people's choices. Thus, the democratic aspect of the contestation is lost. The people's choice is largely determined by the ability of the candidate of the regional head to mobilize funds in order to smooth out the practice of money politics.

One of the causes stated earlier is the lack of understanding of the voters toward democratic principles, namely fairness in voting activities. People view the regional head election as an ordinary matter and not too important. Thus, the offer of money and gifts from the candidates is legitimately accepted. They don't realize that any offer intended to elect a candidate for the regional head will not only damage democracy but also plunge the candidate into legal issues when they rule later. When they are elected and then rule, the first thing they do is to get funds to return the funds that had been used for the competition. They are suspected to perform bad practices, for example, abuse of authority in the form of project tenders, selling echelon positions, and other forms of abuse of authority. This is a summary of the results of interviews with the informants. That is why, many regional heads deal with the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) as soon as they are elected as the regional head (Mediatama, 2020). In Sigi District, the regional head has not dealt with the law and no one has been arrested by the KPK. However, if the regional election in this area is filled with the practice of money politics, then it is reasonable to suspect that the regional head has abused his authority but managed to escape the legal case.

1.5. Weak Supervision on the Practice of Money Politics

The organizers of the regional head election according to Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 1 of 2015 concerning Stipulation of Government Regulations in Lieu of Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors to become Laws, consisting of 1) General Election Commission (KPU) at the central level, KPUD Province at the provincial level, KPUD District/City at the District/City level, Sub-District Election Committee (PPK) at the sub-district level, the Voting Committee (PPS) at the Kelurahan/Village level, and the Local Poll Administrator (KPPS) at the polling station level (TPS). 2) Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu RI) at the central level, Elections Supervisory Agency at the Provincial level, Elections Supervisory Agency at the District/City level, Sub-district Supervisory Committee at the Sub-district level, Field Election Supervisors (PPL) which oversee elections at the village/kelurahan level. 3) The Honorary Board of Election Organizers (DKPP) which is equipped with a Regional Examination Team (PD-DKPP Team) based in the provincial capital, will judge the violations of the ethics of the regional head election organizers.

In terms of regulations for the implementation of the Regional Head Elections, Law No. 10 of 2016 along with the KPU and Bawaslu Regulations, is quite adequate to regulate this regional head election. The problem is the ignorance of the available regulation. The majority of the 150 respondents stated that the regional head election organizers, especially the Bawaslu and their staff in the field were weak in carrying out supervision, especially regarding money politics. The practice of money politics in society is mostly ignored. An informant said that it is impossible that Bawaslu, especially by officials in the field (PPL at the kelurahan/village level and at the sub-district levels) does not know the thriving practice of money politics that occurred from the beginning of the regional head election until the voting day. Moreover, the informant explained that field officers seemed reluctant to say that they are not afraid to report violations in the form of money politics that they see or reported by the community. The informant added that the supervisor may have been given money by the candidate team. It's easy to predict what money politics is, the practice of money politics escapes scrutiny.

Another method, the practice of money politics was carried out by the candidate team in the field before the Campaign Stage. They vested villages to provide assistance in the form of basic needs and even money to voters according to the number of the head of household. "So, the target is the head of the household who have many voters. This household was given basic necessities and money in order to choose a certain candidate on the D day of the regional head election," said an informant.

Moreover, if the practice of money politics is reported to the PPL at the village and sub-district level, even to Bawaslu at the district/city level, the report will not be responded to because it is considered a non-violation as the campaign stage has not yet taken place. The use of money politics, in Bawaslu's view as a supervisor, is not permitted during the Campaign Stage. This means that the money politics is allowed outside that stage. Indeed, this view is incorrect and even violates the rules. After the initial stages of the regional head election begin, there should be no political tricks, including the practice of money politics. Therefore, there are almost no reports from the public regarding the practices of money politics with a follow-up and considered as violations. Even if there is a follow-up, it usually stops because the duration of handling is too long so that finally the case is considered expired.

Most of the practice of money politics occurs before the D day of the regional head election. Money politics often occurs a few hours before the voting hour. This practice is often called as *Serangan Fajar*. According to an informant, young people often stays up late at patrol posts at the night of the voting day waiting for the successful team to distribute money and basic necessities. "That is called Sranagan Fajar," said the informant.

Waiting for a gift from the candidate of the Regional Head Election is a common thing for voters. They are waiting for that moment. The most generous candidate will usually be chosen by the community. In general, the people view that the generosity act is a sign that the leader remembers the people and will not forget the people during their reign. This is the beginning where of the elected regional head to have the potential to get into trouble with the law due to abuse of authority as they try to look for more money to return the capital used during the election. This indicates the weak supervision and enforcement carried out by Bawaslu as the responsible party for monitoring the election violation.

1.6. Political ‘Dowry’ as a Form of Money Politics

Indeed, many political party leaders in Jakarta often state that there is no political dowry to be paid by a prospective candidate for the regional head. However, the statement is a mere lie because every candidate for the regional head is required to pay a certain amount of money to the political party. "It would be a lie if there was no political dowry," said an informant who claimed to be close to the leader of a certain political party in Sigi District. The informant added that during such nominations, political parties, from the district/city level to the center enjoy the ‘harvest’ to fill more funds for political parties or to enrich individual leaders.

Candidates for a regional head who want to serve as Regional Heads through the Regional Head Election have no other choice but to fulfill the unwritten provisions of political party administrators. The obligation to prepare a certain amount of money does not only apply to the candidate from outside the political party but also applies to cadres of the political party concerned who intend to take part in the contestation. "They also have to pay to the leadership, especially to the central leadership. If you don't want to pay, don't expect to be nominated," said an informant who often facilitates the Regional Head candidate meeting with party leaders in Jakarta. Even this informant knows the number of funds that must be paid. He said, "Usually the leaders of political parties in Jakarta ask for 20-30 billion rupiah," He added that for the nomination of a candidate for governor, one needs to prepare a political dowry of around 100 billion. If this is true, it is not surprising that it will result in abuse of authority in the form of corruption. Today many regional heads face legal issues. It is embarrassing and heartbreaking as many regional leaders have been caught in Arrest Hand Operation (OTT) carried out by the KPK (Ananingsih, 2016; "Mahar Politik untuk partai di Indonesia, antara ada dan tiada," n.d.).

Accepting money for various reasons as expressed by political party administrators concerning the nomination of a person in the regional head election is a form of money politics that cannot be tolerated. This practice of money politics is contrary to the principles and values of democracy because only those who have money are likely to get a chance to be nominated by a political party. Even those who have money alone are not enough, they still need other connections to fulfill their wish to be nominated. On the other hand, political party cadres who may have good leadership for the region and are waited on by the community may or may not get a chance. As a result, political parties do not have cadres who will ideologically fight together within the party. Thus, the political party is like a vehicle rent that people who only have money without integrity and good leadership can rent this political vehicle.

1.7. Lack of Exemplary among Elites (Community Leaders), especially Political Elites

The role of the elite (community leaders) in setting a good example in the form of exemplary political life is limited. Most of the respondents think that the elite (community leaders), especially the political elite, have not yet set an example that can be followed in the context of democracy, especially in terms of political attitudes and behavior in the implementation of the regional head election. Most of the respondents (85.5%) said that the elite (community leaders) did not provide good examples or role models which directly or indirectly show the value of good political education. As a result, the people lack values that can be used as a guide in political life. Voters lack or even do not have good examples or role models. The elite, especially in politics, is very permissive to the practice of money politics (Cahyadi, 2017; Indonesia, n.d.). Even in organizing the regional head election, they were involved on some occasions agreeing on the implementation of this political practice. In such a situation, people increasingly believe that money politics is something common in the implementation of regional head elections so there is no need to question it (Erviantono, 2017; *Politik Uang Dan New Normal Dalam Pemilu Paska-Orde Baru / Integritas: Jurnal Antikorupsi*, n.d.).

Considering the elite's permissiveness towards money politics, this behavior spreads easily to the common people, especially voters. "Giving money, necessities, and helping places of worship are common things done by elites who participate in the regional head election. Even if the political elite who participate does not give something to the community, he is considered stingy and does not deserve to be elected as said by one informant. Therefore, the political elite that participated in the election tried to fulfil the public's request. Through the successful team, money politics operations took place during the campaign period until a few hours before the voting day. This bad political practice is seen as a form of transactional politics and it will stick in the memory of the people. It will consciously become a part of political behavior, so that in the long term it may become a political culture. If this happens, quality and consolidated democracy cannot be expected. Perhaps, the

democratic culture that will emerge is a consolidation that is far from the adoption and implementation of appropriate and dignified democratic values.

IV. Conclusion

Some factors cause the continuous practice of money politics in the Regional Head Election (Pilkada), especially in Sigi District the area of this study. These factors include political culture, poverty, low levels of people's political education, permissive attitudes toward money politics, weak supervision, political dowry, and lack of exemplary among the elite, especially the political elite. These factors reinforce each other so that the practice of money politics in the implementation of the regional head election is difficult to avoid and eliminate. As a result, the practice of money politics has been considered common or normal by the community. It seems that the voters even feel that the regional head election will not be as lively without the practice of money politics.

Regional head elections which are built on the political values of money, apart from violating the concept of democracy, will produce leaders who are not fighting for the people and regional development. Such a leader will abuse the power as a tool to enrich himself, his family, and his group. Abuse of power while ruling will be a daily habit. It is proven by the number of the arrested regional head by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) reaching more than half of the total regional heads in Indonesia. One of the causes of corruption is the practice of money politics during the regional head election.

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