

Masela block development remains uncertain

Stefanno Reinard Sulaiman

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

In a recent House of Representatives hearing, a legislator from the opposition Gerindra Party criticized the government over its snail's-pace progress on a plan of development (PoD) for the gas-rich Masela block.

Gerindra Party lawmaker Kardaya Warnika denounced the government's lack of firmness in making a decision on whether it would approve the development plan proposed by Masela's operator, Japan's Inpex Corp., which holds a 65 percent stake in the block.

"The [oil and gas] law is clear. Any [contractor or operator] that fails to develop the block within five years after the approval of the first PoD will automatically face contract termination," Kardaya said of the block, the development plan of which has been under preparations for a decade.

"It [Masela block development] has been [almost] 10 years, but the government still gives them [the right to operate], despite there being no construction at all. [...] We need the government's firmness in enforcing the law," he said. Kardaya was referring to Article 17 of Law No. 22/2001 on oil and gas.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Ignasius Jonan, who represented the government in the hearing, countered Kardaya's statement, saying he would stick to Government Regulation No. 35/2004 on upstream oil and gas, which is a derivative regulation of the prevailing law.

"I'm convinced that I did not violate the law [by not terminating the contract]. I think you believe that I've disobeyed the law. Well you could just report me [to the authorities] then," the former transportation minister replied.

Upstream Oil and Gas Regulatory Special Task Force (SKK-Migas) chairman Dwi Soetjipto backed Jonan's statement, saying there was no gas sales agreement for Masela block's future output. "We have checked and until now there are zero contracts on gas sales from Masela," he said shortly.

Even though Kardaya's statement could be countered by the government using prevailing regulation, such criticism underlined the importance for the government to immediately complete it.

The criticism was also driven by the government's own analysis that the country might experience a gas supply shortage by 2025, a problem that could be solved with the operation of gas field giants, including Masela block.

Expectations for the gas block are high, with its development being among the 37 National Strategic Projects (PSN), which are regulated under Presidential Regulation No. 58/2017. How did the crucial Masela block end up with such uncertainty and delays?

Govt still indecisive over future of Masela block development

Masela project one of 37 national strategic projects (PSN)

The operator of the Masela block, Inpex, received a 30-year production sharing contract (PSC) to operate the block from the government in 1998 and then conducted exploration activities until 2000, when it found the Abadi gas field, which was estimated to have 6.97 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas in reserve.

Upon the discovery, Inpex then submitted in 2008 the first PoD to the then-upstream oil and gas regulator BP Migas, which has since been replaced by SKKMigas.

In December 2010, the government approved the first PoD, which envisioned the adoption of an offshore liquefied natural gas plant with annual processing capacity of 2.5 million tons.

However, five years after the discovery of additional gas reserves in the block, Inpex requested to revise its PoD's annual output capacity from 2.5 million tons to 7.5 million tons.

According to *kompas.com*, SKKMigas was set to approve the revision of the PoD, but then the task force was instructed by President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo to alter the offshore plan to that of an onshore, as the latter option would have a higher economy impact on the people of Maluku, especially on the Aru Islands.

Masela block is located in the Arafura Sea, south of Papua and not far from the country's border with northern Australia. Inpex is not the sole shareholder in the block, as 35 percent stake is held by oil giant Royal Dutch Shell.

The downside of the onshore decision is that it has an impact on the cost of investment. Based on an SKKMigas study on the economic aspects, onshore facilities will be more costly than offshore, which Reuters previously reported to be at US\$15 billion.

A series of changes in past years have directly affected the onstream date of the Abadi field project, delaying the project from around 2018 to 2027, one year before Masela block's PSC ended.

The task force now estimates that the onshore project will cost \$16 billion and will be processed under the old PSC of cost recovery scheme, however the project's official cost has yet to be announced by the government.

Deputy Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Arcandra Tahar declined to comment when he was recently asked by the press about the progress of the Masela project.

"[Please ask about the issue] after Kartini Day [on April 21]," he said, implying he would only give an explanation after the presidential election on April 17.

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World's largest solar power plant faces delays

Stefanno Reinard Sulaiman

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

It is back to square one for a development plan to build the world's largest floating solar photovoltaic (PV) power plant in West Java, as the government has decided to drop out of a deal that was made with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Plans were in place for solar PV panels to be jointly installed on 43,000 hectares of the Cirata Dam in Purwakarta by state electricity company PLN and renewable energy company Masdar of the UAE.

PLN and Masdar, representing their respective countries, inked in 2017 two agreements on the project, the construction of which was initially scheduled to begin in the second half of this year.

However, the Indonesian government said recently the deal must be dropped and the project must go through a tender process — not a direct appointment — to find a partner for PLN.

Deputy Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Arcandra Tahar confirmed the plan, saying PLN was to conduct a tender for the project soon, and expressed hope that the process could be completed "in a matter of months".

"PLN has just finished the procedures to go through with a tender, such as reviewing the terms and conditions and also the price [of electricity]. Only after [a tender] can Masdar use its right to match [the bidders' proposals]," he said.

The corporate secretary of electricity supplier Java Bali (PT PJB), Muhammad Bardan, could not be reached for comment regarding the exact timeframe for the tender and the companies that have expressed interest in it.

The decision to drop the plans comes years after the issuance in August 2017 of Energy and Mineral Resources Ministerial Regulation (Permen ESDM) No. 50/2017 on renewable energy that does not allow for direct appointment.

The reevaluation of Masdar's appointment in the project was also carried out based on a corruption case that hit PLN last year, when energy firm Blackgold Natural Resources was appointed for the construction of a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant (PLTU Riau 1) in Riau.

"It [reevaluation] is related to the regulation issue [...] PLN is currently being much more careful [about selecting a developer]," Arcandra said.

Previously, PJB and Masdar planned to establish a joint venture for the US\$300 million project, with PJB to control 51 percent.

"Besides producing clean power, the facility will provide shading against the sun, reducing evaporation from the reservoir and limiting the growth of algae," according to an official statement from Masdar's website about the project.

It was also reported that the government wanted the price of electricity generated from the plant to be below the electricity supply cost for West Java at 6.5 US cents per kilowatt hour (KWh), which complies with the prevailing regulation.

When asked whether Masdar had fully agreed with the scheme, Arcandra said the UAE company approved of the decision.

"Masdar has agreed [with the tender scheme] [...] This is the best way to finish the project," he said.

The Jakarta Post tried to contact Masdar for its view about the matter but to no avail.

Fabby Tumiwa, the executive director of local energy think tank Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR), expressed pessimism over the project being completed, saying he believed the price ceiling at 6.5 US cents per kWh was not economically viable.

"Our calculation is probably around 8 to 9 US cents per kWh to make the project profitable, considering the floating [solar panel] facility and the low yield of electricity from the plant due to high evaporation at the site, which is at the top of a hill," he said.

He estimated the cost of construction for the floating solar panels to be 25 to 30 percent higher than its land-based counterpart. Furthermore, the estimated cost of the site's high-voltage transmission system is \$2.5 million to 3 million higher than in other regions.

"What I want to say is that the government should have a realistic point of view about this project. This is the first project of its kind in Indonesia, so it is normal to have a higher cost," he told *The Jakarta Post* on Friday.

To make it viable, Fabby suggested that the government hold a reverse auction and set the electricity price ceiling at a maximum 85 percent of the electricity supply cost.

"A reverse auction will make the government provide the sellers a detailed proposal of the project, thus eliminating unpredictable factors. Unlike regular auctions in which the bidders will provide an estimation of the cost, this scheme is more detailed, which also means that the cost could be lowered," he said.

Meanwhile, Nanang Hamdani Basnawi, a member of the Indonesian Renewable Energy Society (METI), said the slow progress of the project was due to the belief from the government that Masdar could provide cheap electricity, just like it had done with its previous projects.

"It [the project] is different from the project that it built in the UAE, in which Masdar could set the electricity price at 3 US cents per KWh. Because in the UAE, Masdar got all the facilities from its government, which also helped with the land procurement," he said, referring to the Mohamed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai, which is said to have delivered electricity at a bid price of 2.99 US cents per kWh. The project was won by Masdar in April 2016.

Analysis from Craig Morris, the lead author of the Germany Energy Transition website, which is co-funded by the European Union, backed Nanang's statement with its argument that the price at 2.99 US cents was "probably artificial".

The low price managed to attract the attention of Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Ignasius Jonan in January 2017 when he visited the UAE. The visit ended with an intention from Masdar to invest in Indonesia's renewable energy, including its solar-based power.

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SOEs book Rp 200 trillion in profits

JAKARTA: State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Minister Rini Soemarno has expressed her appreciation for the significant increase in SOEs' profit, which had grown by Rp 57 trillion (US\$4.04 billion) in the last five years.

"When I was appointed minister, SOEs booked Rp 143 trillion in [combined] profit. With the hard work of all SOEs, profits increased to Rp 200 trillion in 2018. So, I express my gratitude," she said during the LinkAja Festival in Sidoarjo, East Java, on Sunday as quoted by Antara.

LinkAja is a newly launched electronic financial service established by a number of SOEs, mostly state-owned lenders.

She said cooperation among SOEs had improved efficiency. Therefore, she believed SOEs' profit could increase to Rp 500 trillion through closer cooperation.

"It is the responsibility of the millennial generation [to boost the profits of SOEs]," she said.

Rini said LinkAja was an example of collaboration among SOEs in response to the increasing demand of electronic financial services. She said LinkAja should be able to compete with similar services operated by private companies.

LinkAja initially focused on serving employees of SOEs, however, LinkAja's app has been downloaded 25 million times. — JP

RI calls for cut in soybean oil imports

The Jakarta Post

JAKARTA

Indonesia has called on other palm oil producing countries to reduce their imports of rapeseed and other products from Europe, citing the same environmental concerns raised by the European Union (EU) in its campaign to curb palm oil use.

The call was made before the States General of the Netherlands by Mahendra Siregar, who was speaking as executive director of the Council of Palm Oil Producing Countries (CPOPC) at a meeting on palm oil in The Hague, the Netherlands, last week.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of European multinational consumer goods company Unilever and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), as well as researchers from Wageningen University.

"Indonesia, along with other palm oil producing countries, should consider imposing limitations on the imports of rapeseed and other products from Europe that contribute to high levels of CO₂ emissions, which include dairy, meat products and wine," said Mahendra, who is also the Indonesian Ambassador to the United States.

He suggested further that an interministerial working group be established to "reorient investment and trade away from the EU toward more friendly, genuine partners" and encouraged the private sector to find alternative markets in response to the EU's palm oil ban.

Mahendra argued that the EU's environmental grounds in campaigning against palm oil were only made to ensure the competitive position of the latter's home-produced rapeseed, and were hence unjustified and discriminatory.

The EU Commission has decided to adopt a directive on renewable energy that will phase out and ban the use of palm oil in the EU biofuel sector by 2030, arguing that the production of crude palm oil has led to deforestation, reduced biodiversity and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Indonesia and Malaysia, as

Oil producers urged to reduce imports of rapeseed, soybean oil from EU

Rapeseed, soybean oil contribute to high levels of CO₂ emissions: CPOPC

the largest and second-largest palm oil producers in the world, respectively, have threatened to boycott EU products and take legal action through the World Trade Organization (WTO) if the EU goes ahead with its plan. The EU's palm oil policy will affect millions of farmers in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Mahendra added that the EU's approach had failed to address the growing global demand for vegetable oil, which is expected to increase to 310 million tons by 2040 from 165 million tons in 2013.

Palm oil currently contributes 35 percent of the total global vegetable oil demand. Some 75 percent of palm oil is used for food while the remainder is used for cosmetics, cleaning products and biofuels. The EU is the second-biggest customer of Indonesia's palm oil, which is also the country's largest export commodity in terms of volume.

There is no recent data available on Indonesia's imports of vegetable oil. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS), Indonesia's supply of vegetable oil (other than palm oil) totaled 36,472 tons worth US\$40.4 million in the January-September period of 2018.

His statement was supported by a recent study conducted by the palm oil task force of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in response to the EU's negative campaign against palm oil.

Mahendra said Indonesia had made efforts to achieve sustainability, such as by establishing a moratorium on forest clearance with a 70 percent reduction acknowledged by the World Resources Institute in 2017 and issuing the Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) certification. However, the EU has largely ignored these efforts, he said. (ars)

Indonesia blocks EU spirits, link seen to palm oil spat: Report

Reuters
BRUSSELS

European spirits makers say they are facing difficulties exporting drinks to Indonesia amid tension after Jakarta said it was unhappy with a European Union decision that palm oil should not be considered a green fuel.

SpiritsEurope, which represents major European spirits makers and national associations, said on Thursday it had learnt from members with business in Indonesia that they were suffering delays in securing approval to import EU products into the country.

Indonesia regulates imports of alcohol through an annual import and distribution plan. Spirits makers were finding that non-EU products, such as tequila, were securing approval, but EU-origin products were not, an industry source said.

Diageo, the world's largest spirits company, declined to comment. An Indonesian trade ministry spokeswoman said she was not aware of any issues.

The European Commission, which oversees trade policy for the 28 EU countries, decided in March that palm oil cultivation in general results in excessive deforestation, setting the bloc on a collision course with major producers Malaysia and Indonesia.

The EU plans to increase its use of renewable energy sources by 2030 and to take into account deforestation when it determines what can be labelled renewable.

Indonesia, which has said it would file a World Trade Organization complaint against the EU over the palm oil issue, has threatened to quit the Paris climate agreement and has said it

Businesses faced difficulties to import EU spirits

Indonesia regulates imports of alcohol through an annual import plan

was examining relations with EU members.

Malaysia and Indonesia have threatened to bring a World Trade Organization (WTO) challenge if the EU goes ahead with recommendations to phase out palm oil from transport fuel used in the bloc.

In a list of criteria published recently, the European Commission concluded that palm oil cultivation results in excessive deforestation and its use in transport fuel should be phased out.

Meanwhile, the Asia-Pacific head for United Nations Environment said on Friday said Indonesia should stay in the Paris climate deal and lead efforts to curb global warming under the accord, urging greater dialogue in the country's spat with the EU over palm oil.

Last week, Indonesia — the world's biggest producer of the cheap vegetable oil — said it might consider exiting the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change if the EU went ahead with a decision to phase out palm oil in renewable transportation fuel.

The Southeast Asian nation, home to the world's third-largest tropical forests, lashed out at the EU after the bloc classified palm oil as a risky crop that caused deforestation and ruled its use in biofuel should stop by 2030.

"We need countries like In-

donesia in the Paris Agreement, taking forward their commitments quite seriously," said Dechen Tsering, Asia-Pacific director for the UN environment agency in Bangkok.

"It is our hope that there will be better dialogue and communication, so both sides recognise the constraints and the issues," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview.

Environmentalists and many consumers blame much of Indonesia's loss of forests and its smog-causing fires on land clearance for growing palm, whose oil is used in everything from margarine to biscuits, soap to soups, and biodiesel.

Last week, Luhut Pandjaitan, Indonesia's coordinating minister overseeing maritime and natural resources, told a conference that if the United States and Brazil could consider leaving the Paris deal, why should Indonesia not too.

"It would undermine the Paris Agreement," Tsering said by phone. "Even though the United States [is] working towards withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, you've had states and the private sector taking on very strong commitments."

In Indonesia, by contrast, "it is the central government that is taking on the ambition and leadership, so [it is] quite a different scenario", she added.

Under the Paris accord, Indonesia has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 29 percent by 2030, a target that could rise to 41 percent with international support.

Tsering said Indonesia had sought external expertise on tackling forest fires in the last few years, and set up a global institute to protect peatlands.

to develop solar energy and that commercial and industrial solar PV rooftop applications have great development potential.

Rooftop solar panels have also become more affordable for homeowners and communities, he said.

Samresh Kumar, managing director of Principal Investment at VinaCapital, said solar rooftop power presents an effective solution which provides a commercially viable option, especially for the commercial and industrial segments.

Solar power leverages existing infrastructure and monetises idle assets without requiring additional land, and it is also efficient because power is produced only where it is needed and thus frees up the grid, he noted.

John Rockhold, head of the Power and Energy Sub-working Group under the Vietnam Business Forum, said rooftop solar panels must be encouraged to reduce pressure on the national grid, while modest annual price increases and a road map for efficiency energy are badly needed.

Vietnam has a great opportunity to reach its energy security goals by attracting local and foreign investment, according to Rockhold.

New technologies are creating opportunity for the renewable energy sector, he said, adding that such technologies could help lower the cost of equipment for solar and wind energy.

Vietnam will require around US\$10 billion annually between now and 2030 to meet the growing demand of the energy sector, experts said. With such high capital requirements, the government has allowed 100 percent foreign ownership of Vietnamese companies in the energy sector.

Foreign investors can choose among permitted investment forms such as 100 percent foreign-invested company, joint ventures or public-private partnership (PPP).

FDI and domestic investment from the private sector could include investment in batteries and other storage methods, which would help stabilize supply and extend the availability of solar and wind power sources.

By storing renewable energy and keeping supply high, prices for solar and wind power could

RI, S. Korea to discuss peace process, Indo-Pacific

Dian Septiari

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi is scheduled to meet her South Korean counterpart Kang Kyung-wha in Jakarta on Monday, with the inter-Korean peace process and the development of an inclusive Indo-Pacific strategy at the top of a list of anticipated issues to discuss.

The two high-ranking women will have a whole day's worth of activities together, including the third Joint Commission Ministerial meeting and a public lecture aimed at millennials, said Desra Percaya, the Foreign Ministry's director general for Asia-Pacific and Africa.

Various issues under the special strategic partnership framework, such as economic cooperation and trade and investment, are also on the agenda.

"The meeting follows up on the results of various [initiatives] between the two countries in the past few years, especially the visit of President [Joko "Jokowi" Widodo] to Seoul to meet with President Moon Jae-in in September last year," he told reporter at a press briefing on Friday.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Arrmanatha Nasir said the Indo-Pacific concept was also on the table, a particularly poignant topic for Indonesia following Jakarta's hosting of the High-Level Dialogue on the Indo-Pacific last month.

The Indo-Pacific is a catch-all term used by world leaders to express their interest in a regional order straddling the Indian and Pacific oceans. The term is widely believed to be aimed at containing the rise of China, although different countries offer different interpretations of the concept.

The concern that these strategies might elude ASEAN altogether led Jakarta to take on the initiative of devising an ASEAN-led Indo-Pacific concept, experts say.

Separately, South Korean foreign ministry spokesman Kim In-chul said Kang's trip was expected to bolster strategic communica-

Indonesian, South Korean foreign ministers to meet on Monday

Kang's visit expected to bolster strategic communications

tions between the two sides.

"The ministers plan to discuss ways to strengthen substantive cooperation between the two nations and exchange opinions on the Korean Peninsula and regional security conditions and South Korea-ASEAN cooperation," he said, as quoted by Yonhap news agency.

The meeting comes just months after the failed second summit between United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Vietnam, in which ASEAN played no active role.

In an op-ed published by *The Straits Times* last week, former foreign minister Marty Natalegawa said ASEAN had a strategic "window of opportunity" to act in a way that cements its centrality in regional affairs.

He said ASEAN must collectively seek to make a difference in regional affairs, especially amid developments in Northeast Asia and South Asia.

"Perhaps the most effective means to secure ASEAN's relevance in the ongoing discussion on the Indo-Pacific would [be] for ASEAN to step up to take concrete steps in diplomacy," he said.

Indonesia's permanent representative to ASEAN, Ade Padmo Sarwono, said the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) might be able to foster dialogue concerning crucial issues in the region, such as inter-Korean peace.

"It is true what Pak Marty says [...] but at this stage it will still take time to build confidence," he said, noting Jokowi's suggestion to invite Kim to the ASEAN-South Korea commemorative summit in Busan later this year.

Moon was quoted as saying that he would "actively consider" the proposal. (tjs)

Fears grow over voting day chaos

Karina M. Tehusijarana, Apriadi Gunawan and Markus Makur

THE JAKARTA POST/
JAKARTA/MEDAN/
EAST MANGGARAI



Less than 10 days to go before the 2019 simultaneous presidential and legislative elections, observers and local election officials have expressed worry over potential chaos on election day.

Dubbed the most complicated single-day election in the world, millions of voters will go to over 800,000 polling stations across the country on April 17 to cast their votes for president, House of Representatives, Regional Representatives Council (DPD) and provincial and municipal-level Regional Legislative Councils (DPRD).

But the simultaneous nature of this year's elections — a first for Indonesia — coupled with last minute complications from a recent Constitutional Court ruling has raised concerns over whether logistics, officials and voters will be ready on D-Day.

In Medan, North Sumatra, for example, members of the election committee in Tegal Sari subdistrict were still confused on how the vote recapitulation would work, given the five different bal-

Polling station staff still confused about what to do on April 17

Funding for polling stations yet to be disbursed

She added, however, that PPS members were still being trained through simulations and technical guidance sessions. But the focus on training local election officials may raise a different problem: a lack of prepared polling stations.

Medan General Elections Commission (KPU) member Rinaldi Khair said funds for polling stations had yet to be disbursed because their focus was on conducting vote-casting and counting simulations to ensure that both polling stations

officials and voters understood what to do on election day.

"We still find that voters who are on the DPTb [additional voters list] think that they have to wait until one hour before the polling stations close, even though they can actually cast their vote in the morning," he said.

Registered voters who want to cast their vote at polling stations outside their place of domicile have to report to the local KPU office and request an A5 form, after which they will be added to the DPTb.

A recent ruling from the Constitutional Court extended the deadline for DPTb registration from March 17 to April 10.

Citizens aged 17 and above who are not registered on the DPT can still vote as long as they can produce their e-ID cards or, as stated in the same court ruling, an e-ID recommendation letter at the polling station. These voters will be added to a special voters list (DPK) and will be allowed to vote between 12 and 1 p.m. on voting day, provided that the polling station has enough ballots left.

KPU commissioner Ilham Saputra was not available for comment on Sunday.

August Mellaz, executive director of the Election and Democracy Syndicate (SPD), said voter understanding of the technical details surrounding the elections left much to be desired.

According to a survey conducted by the SPD between January and March, the majority of voters still did not know important details such as how many political parties were participating, the number of ballots they would be casting and what constituted a valid vote.

Another possible problem was the availability and distribution of election materials, particularly ballots. In East Manggarai regency in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), the local KPU branch discovered

161,346 damaged ballots, which have yet to be replaced.

"The damaged ballots have been reported to the NTT KPU and the central KPU. [The ballots need] to be distributed as soon as possible to the East Manggarai KPU," East Manggarai KPU chairman Ardi Mbalur told the *Post* on Sunday.

The aforementioned Constitutional Court ruling also threw a wrench into logistics distribution — with the number of people on the DPT, DPTb and DPK all expected to increase.

The ruling also extended the vote-counting deadline for another 12 hours, from midnight on election day to noon on April 18. The decision raises another question on how vote counting will work and how the ballot boxes will be secured overnight.

Independent Election Monitoring Committee secretary-general Kaka Suminta urged the KPU to focus on technical details ahead of voting day. "The KPU should ensure that all logistics are ready and well-distributed and set a procedure for vote counting," he said.

August echoed Kaka's comments, saying that the KPU should pay attention to the details in preparing for election day. "Otherwise I'm afraid that the 2019 elections may become the worse-held elections since the beginning of the Reform Era," he said.

What's new in April 17 elections

lot boxes that will be used.

Unlike in previous elections, the polling station voting tallies, known as C1 forms, will only be put in the presidential election ballot box, meaning that polling station committees (PPS) will only need to open one ballot box from each polling station, instead of all five.

"I have been a PPS officer for several general and regional elections, but I am still confused because the presidential and legislative elections are being held together," Nafisah, from nearby Sukaramai subdistrict, told *The Jakarta Post* on Saturday.

	2014	2019
Timing	Presidential election held three months after legislative elections	Presidential and legislative elections held simultaneously
Registered voters	190.3 million	192.8 million
Maximum number of voters per polling station	500	300
Polling stations	546,278	810,283
Accepted voter identification	ID card, e-ID card, passport	e-ID card, e-ID recommendation letter
Counting and reporting	All polls closed by 1 p.m.; ballots directly counted and sent on the same day	All polls closed by 1 p.m.; counting process allowed until 12 noon the next day, in line with a recent Constitutional Court ruling.
Recapitulation process	At subdistrict, district and regency/city levels	At district and regency/city levels. Only presidential ballot boxes will be opened because recapitulation documents, also known as C1 forms, will be placed inside.

Election threat: Technicalities

his year's simultaneous presidential and legislative elections are challenging for this nation in many ways. Campaigning has been largely marked by hatred, fake news and backbiting, which may leave nagging wounds long after the dust has settled. With the April 17 balloting approaching, a new threat looms, not necessarily the risk of vote-rigging but technical faults in administering what observers consider the world's most complex elections.

The danger is real, clear and present. Unlike in previous elections, this time, more than 5.6 million poll workers face extremely arduous bureaucratic procedures in manning about 809,500 polling stations across the country and overseas. One mistake in any step of the poll administration may render the entire process invalid, thus requiring a revote, according to rules.

In the worst case scenario, a revote, even if only necessary in dozens or hundreds of polling stations, would give candidates, particularly the losing side, ammunition to question the credibility of the elections, if not to reject the poll results. Nevertheless, one small mistake is enough to spoil the elections, hence the legitimacy of the elected government.

Poll workers, who are the vanguards of the General Elections Commission (KPU), therefore, play a pivotal role in ensuring the simultaneous elections run in a free, fair and credible manner. They were selected among locals, many of whom are neighborhood unit heads for practical reasons. Like KPU commissioners, poll workers must prove their impartiality.

Working on the field, the poll workers will face the risk of technical faults as soon as voting begins at 7 a.m. on April 17. They have to make sure that only eligible voters cast ballots through careful registration and verification. When balloting ends at 1 p.m., or later if the polling station must accommodate additional permitted voters from other polling stations, poll workers will not only have to avoid mistakes in closely monitored vote counting; they must then fill out by hand all the documents and forms to be submitted to the KPU. Those documents must be written into 49 copies while carbon copies are not allowed.

The Constitutional Court has anticipated the difficulties by extending the deadline for vote counting by 12 hours, from midnight to noon on April 18. However, the court decision delivered on March 28 does not remove the poll workers' burden.

Despite persisting risks, thousands of poll workers, including those in the capital, have yet to undergo technical training. If they have, the much-needed drill only lasted a few hours. In some areas, poll workers have dug into their own pockets to organize the training.

Budget constraints have been blamed for the lack of preparations. Such excuses have been raised since October 2017, when the KPU opened registration for political parties intending to take part in the elections.

With fewer than 10 days remaining, the KPU must do what it takes to ensure no poll worker is left untrained, simply to minimize technical errors that can endanger the historic elections, hence the country's democracy.

What you need to know

about Indonesia's elections this year

Karina M. Tehusijarana

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

With the concurrent presidential and legislative elections only days away, here is all you need to know to exercise your right to vote for the country's leaders and representatives for the next five years.

When is it?

Election day for domestic voters is on April 17, and the polls will open at 7 a.m. and close at 1 p.m.

Voters who arrive at the polling station before 1 p.m. are guaranteed the opportunity to vote, including after the polls close.

Election day falls just before Easter weekend, with Good Friday falling on April 19 this year.

General Elections Commission (KPU) branches in Christian-majority regions have expressed concern that the timing of election day will make it harder for the commission to reach its target voter turnout of 77.5 percent.

"We urge all residents of NTT [East Nusa Tenggara] to vote first on April 17 before starting the Easter holiday," NTT KPU head Ulbadus Gogi said recently as quoted by Antara.

Overseas voters, meanwhile, will cast their votes between April 8 and 14, depending on the country. Their votes will remain uncounted until the polls close on April 17.

Where can you vote?

The KPU officially finalized the final voter list (DPT) for the elections in December with 192,838,520 people on the voter rolls.

The 192.8 million consists of 190.8 million domestic voters and 2 million overseas voters, an increase of about 2 million from the final vot-

er list of the 2014 general election.

There will be 809,500 polling stations across 34 provinces with an additional 783 overseas polling stations located in 130 Indonesian embassies and consulates around the world.

Voters can check which polling station they are registered with by accessing the KPU's website infopemilu.kpu.go.id and entering their full name and identity card number.

Voters are also able to cast their vote at polling stations other than the ones they are registered with by reporting to the local KPU office and requesting an A5 form. This must be done at least 30 days before election day.

Citizens aged 17 and above who

are not registered on the DPT can still vote as long as they can produce their e-ID card at a polling station. These voters will be added to the special voter list and will be allowed to vote between 12 and 1 p.m. on voting day, provided that the polling station has enough ballots left.

Overseas voters have three different voting methods available: visiting a polling station, voting by mail or casting their votes at roving ballot or drop boxes. Such boxes will be distributed at locations where many Indonesian citizens gather, such as factories.

Who will you be able to vote for?

The simultaneous elections mean that voters will have five separate ballots to complete in

the voting booth: one for the presidential and vice-presidential election, one for the House of Representatives, one for the Regional Representatives Council (DPD), one for the provincial-level Regional Legislative Council (DPRD) and one for the regency or municipal-level DPRD. Jakarta residents will only vote for the provincial-level council because the capital city does not have a regency or municipal-level council.

These changes, however, depend on which polling station the voter casts their vote at. Voters will receive all five ballots if they are voting at the polling station where they are registered. According to the final regulation issued by the KPU, voters who vote

outside their registered electoral district will only be able to vote in the presidential election.

Overseas voters, meanwhile, will only receive two ballots, regardless of where they are voting: one for the presidential elections and one for the House.

All 2 million overseas voters are counted as members of the Jakarta II electoral district that also includes Central Jakarta and South Jakarta. There are seven House seats up for grabs in the district, with several high-profile names contesting the area, including former People's Consultative Assembly speaker Hidayat Nur Wahid, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) executive Eriko Sotarduga and Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) notable Tsamara Amany.

How will the votes be counted?

The votes will be counted in the

following order: presidential ballots, House ballots, DPD ballots, provincial-level DPRD ballots and finally regency or municipal-level DPRD ballots.

Vote-counting will commence after polls close and all voters at polling stations have cast their ballots. According to the 2017 General Elections Law, votes must be counted on the same day that they are cast.



Vote-counting simulations organized by the KPU in Bogor, West Java and Tangerang, Banten last year were completed by 11:45 p.m.



After the votes are counted at each polling station, they will be recapitulated at the district, regency, provincial and national level. The KPU targets to complete the official nationwide vote count five days after the election at the latest.

Religion, human rights shape race in eastern Indonesia



Nusa Tenggara, Maluku and Papua

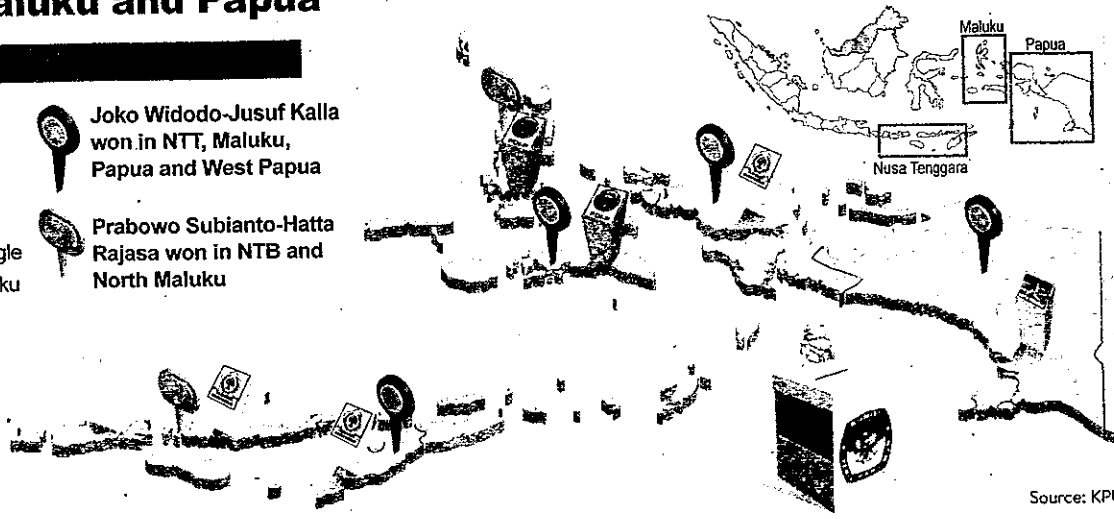
2014

-  Voters : 12.7 million
-  Polling stations : 41,328
- Turnout : 84 percent
- Winners:
 - ◆ Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) won in Maluku and North Maluku
 - ◆ Golkar Party won in NTB, NTT and West Papua
 - ◆ Democratic Party won in Papua

-  **Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla** won in NTT, Maluku, Papua and West Papua
-  **Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa** won in NTB and North Maluku

2019

-  Voters : 13.4 million,
-  Polling stations : 59,429



Source: KPU

Karina M. Tehusjarana and Panca Nugraha
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA/MATARAM

With the presidential candidates mostly concentrating on the much more populous islands of Java and Sumatra, not much change is expected in the more remote eastern parts of Indonesia.

The eastern provinces of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), North Maluku, Maluku, West Papua, and Papua are home to 13.4 million registered voters, making up about 7 percent of the electorate.

Majority Muslim NTB and North Maluku were among the 10 provinces that Gerindra Party chairman Prabowo Subianto won in the 2014 election, while Maluku was a close-run race in which President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo garnered 50.5 percent of the votes compared to Prabowo's 49.5.

In predominantly Christian NTT, West Papua and Papua, Jokowi won landslide victories, garnering well over 60 percent of the vote in the provinces.

In NTB, with the support of popular former governor Zainul Majdi, also known as Tuan Guru Bajang (TGB), Jokowi is expected to improve on the paltry 27.5 percent of the vote he got in 2014.

TGB, a respected Muslim scholar and head of NTB's largest Islamic group Nahdlatul Wathan, supported Prabowo's 2014 presidential bid, but has since switched sides, publicly backing Jokowi in July 2018.

Mataram Islamic State University (UIN) political observer Agus said that the NTB electoral map had shifted significantly between 2014 and 2019.

"In 2014 Prabowo and [then-

Different societal landscapes across provinces in Nusa Tenggara, Maluku

PDI-P dominates Maluku

Golkar formidable in Nusa Tenggara

running mate] Hatta Rajasa won because NTB government elites, including the governor and eight out of 10 regional heads, supported them," he said. "But now the position has changed."

He said that most regional heads in the province now supported Jokowi over Prabowo and that TGB was still very influential in the conservative Muslim region.

"Even if Prabowo wins, he won't be as successful as in the 2014 elections," Agus said.

The Maluku islands, which were split into two provinces shortly after the fall of Soeharto, were the site of bloody sectarian conflict between Muslims and Christians between 1999 and 2002.

Political scholar Marcus Mietzner, who recently visited Maluku, said "arguably, in no other province in Indonesia do voters so consistently support presidential candidates based on their religious identity".

In the predominantly Muslim Batu Merah area outside of Ambon, for example, Mietzner said that voters thought that the Jokowi government had failed to bring them prosperity and believed claims that Jokowi would abolish Islamic education and ban the call to prayer.

In Christian Batu Meja, on the other hand, Mietzner said that

"Christian residents expressed their fear that a Prabowo victory would be the equivalent to a victory for Hizbut Thahrir Indonesia", an Islamic mass organization that was disbanded in 2017 for promoting the establishment of a caliphate in Indonesia.

Despite the apparent division along religious lines, Jokowi regional campaign team head and Maluku Governor Murad Ismail said that he was confident that the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin ticket would garner 70 to 75 percent of the vote in the province.

"What's certain is that all the supporting parties are working hard to ensure a Jokowi-Ma'ruf victory in the election," he said as quoted by Antara.

Meanwhile, in Papua and West Papua most polls show Jokowi with a formidable lead, despite ongoing violence between separatists and military forces.

Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) researcher Cahyo Pamungkas, who is part of LIPI's Papua Studies team, said that Papuans had seen Jokowi as a "new hope" in 2014.

"His track record as mayor [of Surakarta, Central Java] and governor [of Jakarta] showed that he was a civilian who was willing to engage in dialogue, in contrast to Prabowo who has a military background," Cahyo told *The Jakarta Post*.

He said that while Jokowi had made good on some of the promises he made to the Papuan people in 2014, particularly with regard to infrastructure, his administration's lack of progress on human rights issues had disappointed Papuans.

"There is appreciation but there is also criticism," he said.

He added that what Papuans

wanted most was a sense of security and freedom of movement, which was hampered by the large presence of security forces in the region.

"For Papuans, the more soldiers and police officers they see, the less safe they feel," he said. "There is disappointment that Jokowi has not been able to reduce the military presence in the area."

Cahyo said that his recent conversations with community and religious leaders had indicated an increase in support for Prabowo compared to 2014, as some felt that he may have an easier time "controlling" military forces.

"From what I see there is not much difference between Jokowi and Prabowo with regard to political and human rights issues," he said, comparing them unfavorably to former president Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, who had allowed Papuans to raise the Morning Star flag, considered by many as a separatist symbol.

"Gus Dur represents the ideal president for Papuans, but it may take decades for a leader with a similar perspective to emerge," he said.

Despite the disappointment with Jokowi, Cahyo still predicted that the president would prevail in the region, especially since he had secured the support of elites such as Papua Governor Lukas Enembe.

"In the 2018 gubernatorial election, Lukas, who was considered a champion of native Papuans, won in the mountainous regions and lost in the coastal regions, which have a larger population of migrants from other islands," he said. "I think that the same thing will happen in the presidential election."

Religious fervor

marks Prabowo's largest open rally

Nurul Fitri Ramadhani

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA



Mass prayers, religious chanting and ubiquitous Islamic attire gave a religious tint to the campaign rally held by the Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno candidate pair at the Gelora

Bung Karno Stadium on Sunday. It was the largest rally they have held before election day on April 17.

Tens of thousands of people in white shouted *Allahu Akbar* (God is the greatest) repeatedly during the event that also presented a number of Muslim figures, including a video call from Islam Defenders Front (FPI) leader Rizieq Shihab from Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

The political event started very early at 3 a.m., followed by a mass dawn prayer, *zikir* (chanting), *munajat* (whispered prayer) and Quranic *tilawah* (recital).

A number of political bigwigs attended the rally, including National Mandate Party (PAN) patron Amien Rais and chairman Zulkilfi Hasan, Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) chairman Sohibul Iman and Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan.

In his speech, Prabowo reiterated his commitment to Pancasila

as the state ideology and dismissed rumors that he was planning to establish an Islamic caliphate. "Some say that our coalition will change our Pancasila ideology. This is very cruel defamation. But Indonesian people will not be affected by that issue, because our clerics have always taught us that Indonesia's Islam is *rahmatan lil alamin* [a blessing for the universe]," Prabowo said.

In his message, Rizieq urged rally attendees to vote for Prabowo and Sandiaga, saying the pair was not a supporter of the now-defunct Indonesian Communist Party

(PKI) and liberalism. "Prabowo-Sandiaga won't back the PKI. They will not support liberalism and extramarital sex and they will not criminalize clerics," Rizieq said.

Muslim preacher and opposition activist Neno Warisman was also given a stage to pray for the downfall of the current government during the event, referring to the administration of President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo as a "*dzolim* [cruel] regime that should fall".

Democratic Party patron and former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has questioned the event's program, calling it "too exclusive". In a written statement from Singapore made available to the press on Sunday, he warned that from what he had seen of the planned agenda, the campaign event looked too exclusive, while Yudhoyono had expected Prabowo to embrace all groups and that the campaign should stand for "unity in diversity" and "all for all".

The statement, addressed to his party's three top officials, including secretary-general Hinca Panjaitan, asked them to give suggestions to Prabowo, including to prevent a

"show of force" of certain identities

"In my view, what [the campaign team] will do during the campaign rally is unusual and doesn't reflect an inclusive national campaign," Yudhoyono said, whose party is also part of Prabowo's coalition.

Prabowo campaign official Andre Rosiade conceded that the event was dominated by religious activities, such as a dawn prayer, Quran recital and mass prayer. However, he also mentioned that a number of non-Muslim figures also attended the campaign, such as Natalius Pigai, a former official with the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), Prabowo's Christian brother Hashim Djojohadikusumo and several representatives from Roman Catholicism and Buddhism.

"Representatives from all religions attended the rally. This is not exclusive but inclusive. The event was open and addressed to all people regardless of their religion, race and ethnicity," Andre said after the rally.

Gerindra's official Twitter account posted pictures of several non-Muslim representatives that had voices on the stage. "Whatever the race, ethnicity and religion, as citizens, all people have the same right and must respect each other," said the party.

Millions at risk of losing suffrage

Marguerite Afra Sapiie
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

With just two weeks to go before the general election, millions of eligible voters are on the brink of losing their voting rights, as they have yet to register for e-IDs.

At present, at least 3 million people across the country have yet to register to obtain e-IDs, according to data from the Home Ministry, which has been speeding up efforts to resolve the issue before the country holds simultaneous legislative and presidential elections on April 17.

In the 2009 and 2014 elections, voters were able to use IDs, family cards or passports to cast their ballots on voting day, following a Constitutional Court ruling in 2009 to allow citizens to use these documents to exercise their voting rights.

Even if voters were not listed on the final voter list (DPT), they could bring their identity documents to the polling stations to cast their votes until one hour before the polls closed.

However, after the most recent amendment of the Election Law in 2017, possession of an e-ID has become a legal requirement to vote, a source of controversy during the regional elections that were held afterward.

The root of the controversy was that the e-ID program has been marred by corruption surrounding procurement and distribution since 2011, resulting in citizens, even if they had registered, having to wait for months, and sometimes more than a year, to receive their e-IDs.

In response, the Constitutional Court ruled on March 28 that voters without e-IDs could bring *suket* (recommendation letters) as an alternative form of identification to the polling stations.

However, many continue to doubt whether the government will be able to reach all unregistered citizens in time for the election.

The National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) has found that millions of citizens, including those who are serving prison sentences or live in remote indigenous communities, were at risk of losing their right to vote.

For instance, a Komnas HAM study found that at least 367,500 voters, or 21 percent of the 1.75 million citizens above the voting age of 17, in Central Kalimantan, and 637 voters in Banten, had yet to register for e-IDs.

"People's voting rights are still at stake because the Home Ministry has been slow," Komnas HAM commissioner Amiruddin Al Ra-

At least 3 million eligible voters yet to register for e-IDs

Many unregistered voters live in remote areas, social shelters, prisons

hab said.

The study, which was carried out in five provinces from March 18 to 29, also found that members of the Kajang tribe in South Sulawesi have yet to register because, according to their beliefs, they cannot remove their traditional headbands, which is required to take photos for an e-ID.

Meanwhile, about 31,184 prisoners and detainees in West Kalimantan, West Java, Banten, Central Kalimantan, East Java and South Sulawesi have yet to be included on the General Elections Commission's (KPU) DPT of 192.83 million eligible voters.

Home Minister Tjahjo Kumolo called on Friday for all divisions under the ministry as well as Public Order Agency (Satpol PP) officials to work to increase public participation in the upcoming election.

"We ask all officials [...] to get involved in encouraging and organizing members of the public who have yet to record their data for e-IDs to immediately register," Tjahjo said.

The ministry's Population and Civil Registration (Dukcapil) Directorate General has issued a circular for mayors and regents in all provinces, ordering local Dukcapil agencies to open their services on weekends and national holidays as well as on voting day on April 17.

Since the court issued the ruling, at least 1.2 million citizens had registered for e-IDs, Dukcapil Director General Zudan Arif Fakrulloh said. "A lot of progress has been made in March and April," he said.

Election watchdog Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem) director Titi Anggraini said that in the remaining two weeks, cooperation between the government and NGOs was key to ensuring that voting rights were protected.

For instance, Titi said that she was recently informed that hundreds of people living in social shelters in Bekasi, West Java, had not registered for e-IDs. Thus, she relayed the information to a local Dukcapil official, who responded by visiting the shelters.

"At least they will be issued *suket* so they can exercise their voting rights," Titi said.

PSI, Perindo: Small parties with big dreams

Made Anthony Iswara

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

A number of relatively new political parties, including the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) and the United Indonesia Party (Perindo), are standing in the April 17 legislative elections. Various polls suggest that the newcomers might not meet the parliamentary threshold of 4 percent, but the two parties remain optimistic about their chances.

According to its official website, the PSI has around 700,000 members in Indonesia, mostly from 20 to 30 years of age. The party also requires committee members to be under 45 years old, providing a stage for young people to get involved in politics.

As a coalition party that endorses President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's reelection bid, the PSI uses social media campaigns and online recruitment to woo millennials, including their #Merdeka100Persen (100 percent independent) initiative during Independence Day 2015.

Political analysts regard the PSI's vision of pluralism and anti-corruption as effective in attracting young voters, especially those who have little faith in longstand-

ing political parties. It even described the House of Representatives' spending of lump-sum grants as "legal robbery" in its initiative called "Bersih-Bersih DPR" (Cleaning Up the House of Representatives) held last year.

The party began from a discussion among five figures in 2014 in a café in Jakarta. Included was the former chairman of Muhammadiyah's Student Association (IPM), Raja Juliani Antoni, and two ex-TV presenters, Grace Natalie and Isyana Bagoes Oka.

In the deliberation, they agreed that almost all institutions, including the police and the Indonesian Military (TNI), had continued reinventing themselves but political parties had been using the same method of putting up politically well-known candidates as their campaign faces since the New Order regime.

"We believe that our new vision of Indonesia could happen where regular citizens could exercise democracy by becoming mayors, governors or even the president," said Raja, who is now the party's secretary-general, as quoted by the official website.

The party has set an ambitious target of securing 20 percent of House seats in the 2019 legisla-

the 2014 presidential election, but the party decided to jump ship and has endorsed the incumbent this time around.

The party even filed a judicial review last year to make way for outgoing Vice President Jusuf Kalla to seek a third reelection bid by challenging prevailing legislation. Kalla served his first term as vice president from 2004 to 2009 along with then-president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The court eventually rejected the request.

Hary had also previously been involved in two other parties; the Nasdem Party and the People's Conscience Party (Hanura) Party.

He joined Nasdem in 2011 but was quick to leave two years later after he fell out with fellow media baron Surya Paloh, who wanted to advance as the party's chairman at the time.

As he shifted his affiliation to Hanura, Hary was nominated as vice-presidential candidate along with Wiranto, a former military commander and the current coordinating minister for political, legal and security affairs. However, the party failed to garner enough votes in the 2014 legislative election for the pair to advance. Hary quit Hanura in 2014.

In this year's general election,



Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI)

Established Nov. 16, 2014

Central board:

Chairwoman: Grace Natalie
Secretary-general: Raja Juli Antoni
Treasurer: Suci Mayang Sari



United Indonesia Party (Perindo)

Established Feb. 17, 2015

Central board:

Chairman: Hary Tanoesoedibjo
Secretary-general: Ahmad Rofiq
Treasurer: Henry Suparman

tive election.

However, with little experience in politics, analysts have criticized the party for adopting conflicting stances with other parties in the coalition, which could backfire in the future.

Last year, when Raja suggested the New Order regime's corruption cases as one of the topics in the 2019 presidential debate, politicians from Golkar — former president Soeharto's political vehicle during the New Order — called the action a "blunder" as the party brought "negative energy" into Jokowi's coalition.

In the same year, PSI chairman Grace Natalie also went the extra mile against religion-based regional bylaws by banning party members from practicing polygamy, which many conserva-

tive Muslims and Islamic parties deem as permissible in Islam.

Amid the string of bold moves, the opposition has also confronted the party with its low electability in numerous polls, which ranges from 0.2 to 0.5 percent.

Political analyst Siti Zuhro previously suggested the PSI focus on consolidating its party structure.

"Just trying to appear different will not help much without the necessary grassroots presence."

Another new party contender in the 2019 legislative election is Perindo, which was founded in 2015 by media mogul Hary Tanoesoedibjo, after introducing it as a mass organization two years earlier.

Perindo's political alliances have waived from the beginning. The then mass organization supported Prabowo Subianto in

Hary has said that the party will focus on creating jobs to reduce economic inequality while taking advantage of Indonesia's demographic dividend, which refers to the high number of working people compared to those of nonproductive age.

"If there are more employers than workers in Indonesia, then salaries will also increase," Hary said, as quoted by *kompas.com*.

Polls suggest that the party has gained traction among voters. A 2017 Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) survey revealed that 81 percent of millennials recognized the party, while 70 percent of older age groups claimed to know about it.

Surveys conducted by the CSIS, Lingkaran Survei Indonesia and Kompas between January and March have put Perindo's electability at 1.1 to 4.7 percent, giving it hope of getting seats in the House if it passes the 4 percent threshold in its first-ever legislative election.

Hary's party will also have to compete head-to-head against his former party Nasdem, which met with success in the 2014 presidential election after joining forces with Golkar, Surya's previous political vehicle.

APP. 6/10 2017 J. Post

Lies, statistics: Why poll results vary

Karina M. Tehusijarana
 THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

The final stretch of the election campaign season has been marked by a plethora of polls measuring the electability of the two presidential tickets, and the differences between them have raised questions about the reliability of surveys and the objectivity of polling organizations.

Both camps have used the different results to spin a narrative around their candidates. While all major polls put President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo with a double-digit lead over Gerindra Party chairman Prabowo Subianto, they have differed in the exact size of the incumbent's advantage.

A survey released by *Kompas* on March 18 created a stir by putting Jokowi's electability rate at 49.2 percent, the lowest among previous major polls that had put him between 52 and 58 percent.

A survey conducted by Jakarta-based pollster Saiful Mujani Research & Consulting (SMRC) in the same period placed Jokowi at 57.6 percent, while polls that were subsequently released by Charta Politika and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) put him at 53.6 and 51.4 percent, respectively.

All four of the surveys had similar sample sizes, polling 1,960 to 2,479 respondents, used the same

Four pollsters produce different results on latest presidential race

Actual vote at times different from forecasts

sampling method (multistage random sampling) and were also conducted around the same period.

The *Kompas* poll, which also showed the lowest margin between Jokowi and Prabowo with 11.8 percentage points, drew the most vocal reactions from supporters of both camps.

Prabowo and Sandiaga Uno's campaign team members reveled in the poll results and were quick to take to social media to boast about them.

And while official Jokowi campaign team members sought to highlight the fact that the *Kompas* poll still put the president in the lead, several Jokowi supporters cast doubt over the accuracy of the survey results.

Messages circulated on social media and online messaging groups accusing *Kompas* of being biased toward the Prabowo camp.

The differences in the survey results once again brought up the question of the reliability of Indonesia's relatively new polling industry.

In 2014, two polling organizations — the Development and Policy Research Center (Pus-

kaptis) and the Indonesian Votes Network (JSI) — were dismissed from the Indonesian Association for Public Opinion (Persepi) for refusing to reveal the research methods behind their quick counts for the 2014 presidential election.

Puskaptis and the JSI were the only two pollsters to call the election for Prabowo, who was later declared to have lost by 6.3 percentage points.

Survey results from last year's regional elections have also raised eyebrows.

In the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election, polls consistently put Gerindra-backed ticket Sudrajat and Ahmad Syaikhul at less than 10 percent. On election day, the pair garnered 28.74 percent of the vote, only 4 points off eventual winners Ridwan Kamil and Uu Ruzhanul Ulum.

Similarly, in Central Java, challenger Sudirman Said, who is now a member of Prabowo's campaign team, polled at 15 to 20 percent compared to incumbent Governor Ganjar Pranowo's 70 percent but managed to get 41.22 percent of the actual vote.

Arya Fernandes of the CSIS, which chairs Persepi, declined to comment on the possibility that certain polling organizations might be biased but said there were several legitimate reasons for why poll results might differ from each other or from the actu-

al vote tally on election day.

"For example, the period may make a big difference. Someone's perception today may be different from their perception yesterday or three days from now," he said.

Kompas researcher Toto Suryaningtyas said that as a journalistic organization, *Kompas*' poll was based on objective data rather than any interest to "serve a particular client".

He added that taking into account the margin of error, there was not much difference between the *Kompas* poll results and Charta Politika's, for example.

"If we take the 2.2 percent margin of error, Jokowi's electability might be exactly the same in our poll as in Charta Politika's," he told *The Jakarta Post* recently.

He said that while their research methods were similar, even small differences between pollsters could result in different findings.

"Even if we all poll 2,000 respondents, for example, the geographical spread might be different. Our policy is to have at most four respondents from one village, which means that our respondents are spread across 500 villages," he said. "If another organization only surveys respondents from 200 villages, then [the results] will already be different."

Sarini Abdullah, who heads the University of Indonesia's (UI) statistics program, echoed Toto's

comments, saying that "multistage random sampling" could refer to a variety of different methods.

"For example, a pollster looking for respondents from Jakarta might decide that residents of all parts of Jakarta have the same characteristics and will take the whole sample from South Jakarta only," she told the *Post*. "Another pollster might decide that Jakartans have different characteristics and spread the sample around North, South, East, West and Central Jakarta.

"The accuracy depends on

how well the pollsters understand the respondents' different characteristics."

She added that while there were ways to "massage" results using statistical methods such as changing confidence intervals, differing results between pollsters did not necessarily indicate foul play.

"It doesn't automatically mean that there is manipulation," she said. "Two pollsters might get exactly the same sample up to the RT [neighborhood unit] level and still get different results because they polled different households."