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MAY DAY

Labor Day reveals disparity among unions

Kharishar Kahfi, Suherdjoko and Aman Rochman

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA/
SEMARANG/MALANG

Divisions in the country's labor movements were out in the open as unions danced to different tunes on International Workers' Day, also known as May Day, with some demanding better pay and benefits for workers, and others taking on political issues ranging from endorsing a presidential candidate to warning against a possible influx of foreign workers.

While thousands of workers took to the street on Tuesday, members of the Confederation of Indonesian Workers Unions (KSPI) staged their own rally at the Senayan Sports Complex in Central Jakarta, announcing the group's support for Gerindra Party presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto.

In the event, the KSPI issued a 10-point demand Prabowo must meet, should he be elected president. Prabowo later signed the document and pledged to fulfill his campaign promises of improving the lives of workers.

"Workers toil in poverty and

only Prabowo Subianto is willing to sign this contract," said KSPI chairman Said Iqbal.

While the KSPI decided to go political, other unions stuck to fighting for more protection.

Responding to President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's decision to issue Presidential Regulation No. 20/2018 on foreign workers, which was aimed at simplifying the process of granting foreign workers a permit to live and work in Indonesia, unions lashed out on Tuesday, saying it served as legal grounds for an influx of foreign workers.

Protesters in Malang, East Java, who were grouped under the Indonesian Labor Struggle Front (FPBI), called on the government to revoke the regulation.

"We are not rejecting foreign investment, but regulations must be tightened. [The regulation] is not fair to local workers, many of whom are still unemployed. Local workers must be given priority," said the FPBI's Malang chapter chairman, Lutfie Hafid.

In Sukoharjo, Central Java, workers called on the government to provide them with health insurance under the Health Care

and Social Security Agency (BPJS Kesehatan) and the Workers Social Security Agency (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan).

The workers, grouped under the Sukoharjo chapter of the Indonesian Workers' Union (SPRI), also demanded that the local administration cease granting permits to companies that continue to employ contract workers.

In Semarang, Central Java, journalists and employees of media companies also took to the street, calling for their employers to guarantee a basic standard of living for them.

"Media companies should provide decent pay that is consistent with proper living standards and the region's minimum wage," Abdul Mughis, chairman of the Media Employee Workers' Union (SPLM), said during the rally.

Some unions rallying on Tuesday did not shy away from calling for a revolution. An umbrella organization called the Labor's Movement for the People (GEBRAK), for example, called for the formation of an alternative political order with the aim of creating equality for all.

At least 36 organizations, rang-

ing from workers' unions, university students and non-government organizations, joined GEBRAK.

"Our demand is based on the fact that there's almost no hope for change coming from both sides of the political spectrum: the ruling government of Jokowi and the opposition camp of Prabowo [Subianto]," GEBRAK said in a statement issued on Tuesday.

Social analyst Irvan Tengku of the Welfare Initiative for Better Societies said the broad range of issues brought up by May Day protesters was the result of the sheer number of labor unions in the country, which made it difficult for workers to unify their voices.

"There's also political influence ahead of the election. Since we don't have any labor-based political parties, labor unions tend to work with [existing] political parties with various interests to support their cause," Irvan said.

Despite the lack of unity, Irvan said the broad range of issues could educate the public on issues related to workers' welfare.

"I believe, these unions can still unite, like in 2012," Irvan said, referring to the signing of the Indonesian Workers' Manifesto.

Chinese investors trending in RI

Top five foreign direct investors in Indonesia

| Q1-2018 | | | Q1-2017 | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
| Rank | Countries/Territories | Investment value (in billions of US\$) Percentage of total FDI | Rank | Countries/Territories | Investment value (in billions of US\$) Percentage of total FDI |
| 1 st | Singapore | 2.6 32.6 | 1 st | Singapore | 2.1 28.2 |
| 2 nd | Japan | 1.4 16.7 | 2 nd | Japan | 1.4 19.2 |
| 3 rd | South Korea | 0.9 11.6 | 3 rd | China | 0.6 8.2 |
| 4 th | China | 0.7 8.3 | 4 th | United States | 0.6 8.2 |
| 5 th | Hong Kong | 0.5 6.3 | 5 th | South Korea | 0.4 5.8 |

Source: Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM)

Rachmadea Aisyah
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

In the past few years, Indonesia has seen more and more investments from Asian powerhouse China.

In 2017, China was ranked as the country with the third-largest foreign investment in Indonesia at Rp 3.36 trillion (US\$240 million), a significant increase from Rp 2.66 trillion in 2016.

It seems that the trend is here to stay.

According to data from the Indonesian Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM), investment from China in the January-March period of this year was Rp 676.2 billion, an 8.3 percent increase from the same quarter the previous year.

BKPM head Thomas "Tom" Lembong said such a phenomenon was a "mathematical trend", as China is one of the largest economies and the most populous country in the world.

"China is the number one trading partner for more than 120 countries and the main source of foreign tourists for Indonesia and for many other countries," Tom told a press briefing in Jakarta on Monday.

Tom said ongoing smelter projects, particularly the ones in Sulawesi, which are managed by Chinese investors, were among the most reliable investments for the government as they could absorb a large amount of capital.

Since China introduced its Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, its outbound investments, including to Indonesia, increased significantly. The initiative is an ambitious road, rail and construction project spanning dozens of countries across Asia, Africa and Europe.

Last month, Indonesia and China signed five contracts worth \$23.3 billion as part of the initiative. The contract consists of several infrastructure projects such as a hydropower plant development and a facility to convert coal into dimethyl ether, among other projects.

Indonesia is also seeking Chinese investment in some of its economic corridors.

The government this year has set an investment target of Rp 765 trillion. In the January-March period, the BKPM recorded Rp 185.3 trillion in investments, or 24 percent of the target.

The figure is an 11 percent increase from the same period last year.

Foreign investments still dominate investments at Rp 108.9 trillion, while domestic investments make up the remainder at Rp 76.4 trillion. Meanwhile, the

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Chinese investments in 2017 reach Rp 3.36 trillion

China ranked fourth-largest foreign investor in Indonesia in Q1

top five countries or territories of origin for investments are all in Asia: Singapore, Japan, South Korea, China and Hong Kong.

Tom said the results were a reflection of the reforms implemented by President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's administration. More incremental reforms, he said, were prepared to ensure the investment target would be achieved this year.

"To sustain this kind of result is very tough for us," Tom said. "It would take a much more radical solution than what the government has done."

He added that some of the reforms had been met with controversy this year, such as Presidential Regulation No. 20/2018 on the utilization of foreign workers, which drew strong and somewhat political reactions as it is considered to privilege foreigners for job access in Indonesia.

However, businesspeople have applauded most of the other reforms, such as the Finance Ministry's plan to extend its tax holiday program as well as the ambitious online single submissions (OSS) system.

"It will take these reforms a while for their actual impact to be seen, so as much as they are a good start, we still need to push their implementation," said Tom.

Responding to the results, Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin) deputy chairman Shinta W. Kamdani agreed that the government still needed to step up its reforms in order to reach the desired gains.

She noted that the OSS system would especially help investors as they were often confused by overlapping and mismatched regulations from the central and regional governments.

"The government should further harmonize the relationship between the regional and central [government]," Shinta told *The Jakarta Post* over the phone. "Furthermore, they should also remember that what is more important than new incentives is consistency for all its policies because investors are always here for the long term."

Meanwhile, Eric Sugandi, a project consultant for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Institute, said the government should make sure not to undermine domestic investors with its reforms.

Private funds key amid priority shift

Marchio Irfan Gorbiano
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

The government is planning to increase the contribution of infrastructure financing from private investors in 2019 as it seeks to disburse more state funds for human capital development.

As it will end its term next year, President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's administration has announced it will shift its development focus from infrastructure to human development in an effort to reduce poverty and inequality.

The shift was reflected in the estimated budget for infrastructure projects for next year at around Rp 300 trillion (US\$21.6 billion), said National Development Planning Board (Bappenas) chief Bambang Brodjonegoro on Monday. The amount is lower than the Rp 410 billion allocated in the 2018 state budget.

The plan will mark the first time Jokowi's administration cut its infrastructure spending as it has recently downgraded 10 national strategic projects following their delayed progress.

As there will be lower allocation of funds for infrastructure in the 2019 state budget, the government will bank on other means of financing, including private sources. It plans to raise Rp 55.9 trillion for various infrastructure projects through non-state budget infrastructure funding (PINAs) and the public-private partnership (PPP) program.

"There are several projects offered by regional administrations to be financed through the [PPP] program, including water purification system and road maintenance [projects] on the east coast of Sumatra and north coast of Java,"

State spending in infrastructure to decrease as focus shifts to human development

Govt seeks more private investments in infrastructure

Bambang said on the sidelines of a national meeting recently.

Bambang said the government was also seeking financing for the second phase of construction of Kertajati Airport in Majalengka, West Java, developments of 10 new tourism destinations and several toll road projects through the PINA program.

Aside from improving basic services and boosting job creation across the archipelago, Bambang said the government would adjust its social assistance distribution according to its recipients' economic condition, compared to the current fixed allocation mechanism.

With the emphasis on human development, Bambang said the government aimed to decrease the poverty rate to between 8.5 and 9.5 percent, down from the 10.12 percent recorded in September 2017, Central Statistics Agency (BPS) data shows.

The government also targeted for the 2019 Human Development Index (HDI) to reach 72 points, up from the 70.81 points recorded in 2017. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate is aimed at 4.8 to 5.2 percent, down from the 5.5 percent seen last year.

Taking into account those components, Bambang said the government projected the economy would expand between 5.4 and 5.8 percent in 2019.

Speaking during the recent

national meeting, Jokowi called again for regional administrations to create more focused developmental planning and higher efficiency in execution.

"There should be a scale of priority in each ministry, government institution and every level of regional administration; and there is no need for us to create too many priority [programs]," he said.

He stressed that investment in human resources was the "second major stage" of developments after investing in infrastructure, adding that the government would continue disbursing its funds in both areas to further advance the economy.

Commenting on the government's move, Bank Central Asia (BCA) chief economist David Sumual acknowledged that a shift in investment toward human resources was needed to develop Indonesia's competitiveness in the labor market. However, he suggested that the government maintain consistency in implementing its priorities as flip-flopping policies would trigger negative reactions from businesses.

"The consistency in policies is important. Infrastructure [spending] should also proceed accordingly as much of it is for multi-year [projects]," he said, calling on the government not to drastically change too many of its policies too soon.

Asian Development Bank Institute economic observer Eric Sugandi agreed that the government's focus on poverty alleviation and inequality reduction would boost household spending faster, particularly from middle- and lower-income consumers, driving consumption and overall economic growth in 2019.

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SUPERVISION

Financial sector resilient amid rising global pressure, OJK says

Anton Hermansyah
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

A latest series of stress tests on Indonesia's financial sector shows that the country's banks and financial services firms are among the most resilient in the region despite growing risks coming from the global side, regulators have said.

The statement came on Monday from Financial Services Authority (OJK) chairman Wimboh Santoso during a press conference held by the Financial System Stability Committee (KSSK), members of which are the OJK, Bank Indonesia (BI), the Finance Ministry and Indonesia's Deposit Insurance Corporation (LPS).

Wimboh said all banks had passed the stress tests, which were conducted with multiple methods and assumptions, such as soaring interest rates and heavy depreciation of the rupiah.

The reason for the banking industry's resilience was its capital adequacy ratio (CAR), which currently stood at 22.67 percent, a level considered strong enough to protect the system from crisis.

"The [banking industry's] liquidity is even enough to support 20 percent loan growth," he said. "Maybe if we can improve other aspects, loan growth can even reach at least 15 percent."

Nationwide bank loans grew by 8.54 percent year-on-year (yoy) as of March, higher than 8.2 percent yoy recorded a month earlier, OJK's data showed.

Wimboh said ongoing loan restructuring programs in the banking industry helped reduce the non-performing loan (NPL) ratio to 2.75 percent in March from 2.88 percent a month earlier.

He said third-party funds continued to grow despite capital outflows with 7.66 percent yoy in March compared to 8.44 percent yoy in February.

"Third-party fund growth was slower than usual in March as it was affected by investors' portfolio rebalancing," he said.

The rupiah is under pressure following signs of recovery in the United States' economy, which triggered speculation worldwide that the Federal Reserve might take an aggressive rate hike of more than three times this year. A more competitive US rate will trigger massive capital outflows from emerging economies.

Moreover, US President Donald Trump has declared a trade war with China as well as led its alliance in air strikes in Syria recently. The condition was exacerbated as Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed he could show that Iran was running a secret nuclear program.

Those risks have forced the rupiah to depreciate to a level almost reaching its psychological level of Rp 14,000 per US dollar.

Outgoing BI Governor Agus Martowardojo said the central bank was considering the possibilities of a rate hike, which would be important to prevent capital outflows. However, he

said the final decision would be made by his successor Perry Warjiyo, who is scheduled for inauguration at the Supreme Court on May 23.

Another way BI would ensure sufficient liquidity in the banking industry was by conducting currency swap auctions more often compared to the current weekly auctions, Agus said. The central bank would also open repurchase agreement (repo) auctions to give banks more chances to obtain liquidity.

"By holding auctions, we want to give assurance to the market that liquidity is still available," he said.

Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said cash assistance transfer for the poor would be made more intensive to ease their burden from a rising oil price, which is feared to suppress purchasing power.

The oil price continues to rise with Brent Crude hitting US\$75.41 per barrel on Tuesday, increasing by 13 percent compared to \$66.73 per barrel by the end of 2017.

On the other hand, Sri Mulyani said the rising oil price would help the government obtain additional revenue from oil export and taxes, which would be redistributed to the poor.

She said the government had increased the beneficiaries of the Family Hope Program (PKH) subsidy to 10 million families compared to 6 million in 2017. The number will be increased to 15 million in 2019.

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INVESTMENT BANK

Govt allows JPMorgan to reenter bond dealership

Rieka Rahadiana
and Tassia Sipahutar

BLOOMBERG/JAKARTA

Indonesia reappointed JPMorgan Chase & Co. as a primary dealer of sovereign bonds, more than a year after banning the United States bank from doing business with government entities.

The bank was included in a list of 20 banks and securities firms enlisted by the government as primary dealers of bonds, the Finance Ministry said in a statement on Monday. JPMorgan's reinstatement is effective from Wednesday, the ministry said.

JPMorgan's reappointment comes amid an exodus by foreign investors from the nation's stocks and bonds, as a tumbling currency increases the odds of an interest rate hike.

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's government snapped ties with JPMorgan in January last year after it downgraded the nation's equities by two notches. While the bank subsequently upgraded Indonesia's stocks, the government maintained the ban.

"The reappointment of JPMorgan could be a strategy by the government to better attract international investors and to create higher appetite for Indonesian assets during volatile times like this," said I Made Budhi Purnama Artha, head of treasury at PT Maybank Indonesia. "Before the ban, JPMorgan was one of the players, along with Deutsche Bank, with significant market making in the US."

The return of JPMorgan as a dealer of bonds may also open doors for it to be appointed as an underwriter of sovereign bonds overseas and securities issued by the state-owned enterprises.

While the US bank missed out on being part of the government's fund-raising program for 16 months, it continued to serve its private clients in Indonesia, where it provides investment and commercial banking services.

JPMorgan's reappointment followed an application made by the bank in February after the one-year ban ended, said Luky Alfirman, director-general for budget financing and risk management at the Finance Ministry. "JPMorgan is now committed to follow all rules," he said.

The bank believes "a primary dealer license will strengthen our ability to service our clients who invest in Indonesia more effectively", Li Anne Wong, a spokeswoman for JPMorgan in Singapore, said.

In the days following the crackdown against JPMorgan, Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati's ministry ordered primary bond dealers to uphold the nation's interests and maintain relations with the government that are "based on professionalism, integrity and avoiding conflicts of interest."

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High bar for independents leads to 'blank boxes'

Karina M. Tehusijarana and Andi Hajramurni
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Tough requirements for independent candidates, coupled with political parties' lack of appetite for competition, have resulted in a surfeit of sole candidates in the upcoming regional elections.

Of the 127 independent candidates that registered for the 2018 regional elections, 47 have been declared ineligible by the General Elections Commission (KPU). In contrast, only five out of the 441 party-backed candidates have been disqualified.

The latest independent candidate to be forced out of a race is incumbent Makassar Mayor Ramadhan "Danny" Pomanto, who was officially disqualified by the KPU Makassar last Friday.

Danny's removal means that his opponent, Munafri Arifuddin, will be competing against a blank box on the ballots in the upcoming Makassar mayoral race, bringing the number of sole candidates in the 2018 elections to 16, up from nine in 2017 and five in 2015.

Danny and his running mate, Indira Mulyasari Paramastuti, registered for the election independently after gathering the requisite 65,500 ID cards in support of their candidacy, and were initially certified by the KPU Makassar.

Munafri, the owner of local soccer club PSM Makassar and nephew of Vice President Jusuf Kalla, subsequently filed a petition against the KPU's decision, alleging that Danny had abused his power as mayor to pressure voters into submitting their ID cards.

The petition was granted by the Supreme Court, forcing the KPU to disqualify Danny, making Munafri-Andi Rachmatika Dewi the sole candidate pair contesting the Makassar election.

In contrast to Danny, Munafri is backed by 10 out of the 11 political parties that have seats in Makassar's local legislature, a hodgepodge that includes President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and opposition Gerindra Party.

The disqualification of independent candidates earlier this year has also led to sole candidates in the Deli Serdang, North

47 independent candidates declared ineligible

16 sole candidates to contest in regional elections

Sumatra, and Bone, South Sulawesi, regency elections. In both cases, the sole candidates are backed by all 11 parties with seats in the local legislature, despite the fact that the parties are often at odds with each other on the national stage.

Titi Anggraini of the Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem) said the difficult requirements for independent candidates, including to gather ID cards amounting to 6.5 to 10 percent of the region's final voters list, were factors for the rising number of sole candidates.

She added that political parties seemed increasingly reluctant to risk backing a losing candidate, leading to large and unlikely coalitions like the one supporting Munafri.

Oligarchy and dynastic politics are other factors that also hinder competent hopefuls who have no political clique from entering politics amid poor party recruitment mechanisms.

"Political pragmatism and a crisis of regeneration within the parties are resulting in a lack of competition," Titi said.

"Instead of fighting for their ideals and values, parties are just trying to back the candidate that seems most likely to win," said political researcher Fadel Basrianto. Financial factors, Fadel added, are likely a large reason for parties to play it safe.

Sole candidates have only been allowed since 2015, after the Constitutional Court struck down a clause in the Regional Elections Law requiring the KPU to confirm at least two candidate pairs in every provincial, regency or municipal election.

The KPU has extended registration deadlines to avoid single tickets but remains constrained by court decisions.

"The KPU works based on existing laws and regulations, and sole candidates are allowed in regional elections," KPU commissioner Viryan said on Tuesday.

No appeal from Setya,

KPK in e-ID corruption case

Kharishar Kahfi

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Notorious for dodging prosecution, former House of Representatives speaker and graft convict Setya Novanto appears to have accepted his sentence in the e-ID graft case.

The former Golkar Party chairman has decided not to file an appeal against the Jakarta Corruption Court's ruling made last week, which sentenced him to 15 years in jail for playing a key role in the embezzlement of funds meant for purchasing e-ID cards, causing Rp 2.3 trillion (US\$165 million) in state losses.

"Setya chose to accept the sen-

tence because he is exhausted by the case, the investigation of which started in 2013," Setya's lawyer Maqdir Ismail said on Tuesday.

"He, along with his family, want to [...] get a clearer perspective on the case."

But speculation was rife that if Setya challenged his sentence at an appellate court, he may instead receive a heavier punishment — the same fate met by other suspects convicted in the e-ID case.

For example, businessman Andi Agustinus, also known as Andi Narogong, recently received a harsher sentence of 11 years in prison and a fine of Rp 1 billion following an appellate trial at the Jakarta High Court.

Andi was found guilty and initially sentenced to eight years' imprisonment by the Jakarta Corruption Court.

Two other convicted corruptors in the case, former Home Ministry officials Irman and Sugiharto, were each sentenced to a heavier sentence of 15 years in prison, despite their status as so-called justice collaborators granted by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK).

The ruling was made by the Supreme Court in mid-April, or less than a week before Setya faced his final hearing at the Jakarta Corruption Court.

Maqdir, however, dismissed speculations that Setya feared re-

ceiving a harsher sentence, saying that an appeal was unnecessary because the KPK had chosen not to challenge the court's decision.

Setya dominated headlines last year for his repeated attempts at dodging KPK investigators.

He used a slew of reasons to evade questioning, for example, including a heart condition, followed by heart surgery, a car accident and the KPK's failure to obtain written permission from President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo to question him.

He even won a pretrial motion in August 2017, resulting in the annulment of his suspect status.

KPK deputy chairman Laode Muhammad Syarif confirmed

that the antigraft body had decided not to file an appeal against Setya's sentence, which was only a year shorter than the 16 years sought by KPK prosecutors.

"[Because] almost everything we built in our indictment and sentence demand was included and considered by the bench," Laode said, referring to a list of individuals who had allegedly accepted financial incentives from Setya.

The list contains the names of high-profile figures and lawmakers, including former home minister Gamawan Fauzi, who initiated the e-ID project in 2009 and was said to have received benefits amounting to Rp 50 million, as well as a shophouse and plot of

land in Jakarta.

Also included on the list were Hanura Party lawmaker Miryam S. Haryani, who has been convicted for perjury in relation to the e-ID case, and Golkar Party lawmaker Markus Nari, who has been named a suspect.

As no appeal was filed, the Jakarta Corruption Court's sentence is now considered final and binding, thus also allowing the KPK to focus on widening their investigation.

"We have been looking for other suspects in the case. We still need additional evidence [to build a case on other implicated individuals]," said KPK spokesman Febri Diansyah.

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Islands' residents face plastic menace

Vela Andapita

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Thousand Islands regency is drowning in waste.

By not having the luxury of a landfill, residents have to either burn or pile their waste on the seashore.

This chronic problem has triggered a group of divers to take action. Since 2015, they have cleaned up marine plastic in the regency and assisted residents to better manage their waste.

Darmawan Ahmad Mukharror from Masyarakat Selam Indonesia (the Indonesia Diving Community) said people in the regency produced up to 73 tons of waste per week — most of it organic.

“Around 21 percent of the total waste is plastic. Some are brought by boat to Jakarta’s shores, while others are burned or dumped on uninhabited islands.

“While propelling the local economy, tourists in the Thousand Islands play two other roles: a threat to the natural habitat and as polluters,” he added.

The data was gleaned from recent research conducted by Divers Clean Action (DCA), which is an NGO concerned about marine waste.

According to Thousand Islands Central Statistics Agency (BPS) data in 2015, 23,321 residents inhabit 11 islands, like Harapan, Panggang and Pari, out of 342 in the regency. Some only serve as tourist destinations like Bidadari, Matahari and Sepa islands.

DCA founder Swietenia Puspa Lestari said Harapan Island alone received on average about 500 to 1,500 visitors every weekend.

The city administration recently deployed 32 garbage boats to transfer waste from the Thousand Islands to Jakarta, but only three are still operating.

“Waste on small islands is complicated. People have no choice but to burn it,” Swietenia said. “Say that there’s one waste bank on each island. There’s still no

Residents, tourists produce overwhelming amount of plastic waste

Panggang Island residents reclaim land to build houses by piling up waste

guarantee that people can earn a decent price for recycling waste. The waste bank operators should consider transferring the cost to Jakarta.”

She added that residents of the most populated island, Panggang, even used garbage to reclaim land. “They purposely throw their waste on the shore, combine it with sand, solidify its surface and build houses on it. Who is to blame? Despite the fact that it’s dangerous, the population there keeps growing and the residents need more space.”

Swietenia said some islanders have shown an interest in better waste management. “We call them ‘the local champions.’”

They come from diverse backgrounds, from residents who took the initiative to decompose their organic domestic waste to the orange troops — Public Facility Maintenance Agency (PPSU) workers — who take plastic waste from the islands and store them in waste banks on Jakarta’s shores.

“We’ve also taught residents [on Harapan and Pramuka islands] to make ecobricks to sell for Rp 3,000 [2 US cents] each,” Swietenia said.

According to *ecobricks.org*, an ecobrick is a plastic bottle packed tight with used, clean and dry plastic to create a building block that can be used over and over again.

“We’re still in the phase where people show they care by reposting or commenting on social media. We need action from all parties and we need it immediately,” said the World Wildlife Fund’s national coordinator for responsible marine tourism, Indarwati Aminuddin.

Some groups weaken Islam's unity: Imam

Dian Septiari

THE JAKARTA POST/BOGOR

Muslim clerics from around the world began gathering in Bogor, West Java, on Tuesday to discuss promoting the concept of a moderate Islam amid widespread challenges from extreme right- and left-wing ideologies that threaten the unity of the Islamic community.

During the opening of the conference, the grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar University, Ahmed Ath-Thayyeb, said in his keynote speech that the promotion of moderate Islam had become a "precarious" issue.

"Recently there has been new interpretations by several Islamic groups," he said through an interpreter.

"I'm not exaggerating if I said that differences and conflicts between Islamic groups about such basic concepts have weakened the Muslim community in a bloody conflict."

The conference was attended by about 100 Muslim clerics and scholars from various countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and Pakistan.

The conference, which was organized by the office of the presidential special envoy for inter-religious dialogue and partnership and the Foreign Ministry, was also attended by Muslim clerics from France, Canada, China, Japan, South Korea and the United States.

Ath-Thayyeb said Wasatiyat Islam was a concept of Islam as a religion that stayed on the "middle path". "Allah told Muslims to be *wasat* [middle] people in the Quran," he explained.

About 100 Muslim clerics from around world in Bogor to discuss 'middle way' for Islam

Egyptian grand imam warns against radical interpretations leading to 'bloody conflict'

He said many ulema had compared Islam to a concept of Aristotle who believed that excessiveness and extremeness was sinful and forbidden.

However, generally, he said Wasatiyah teaching did not believe in absolutism: "For example, in charity we don't have to stay in the middle; to give more than moderately is advisable."

The grand imam said the conference had to surpass being a mere discussion of ideas, but devise a real implementation because the Muslim community was in grave need of a rethinking of moderate Islam. He said currently Islam was used by two extreme sides that would either bring it toward radicalism and terrorism, or liberalize the religion.

Both views, he said, were rejected by Wasatiyat teaching. "Those who perform their religion excessively are not acceptable," he said.

He said Islam aimed to be convenient because Allah did not want humans to be too burdened in performing worship. "The way of Islam is the easy way; those who are performing it excessively would instead bring harm," he said.

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo told participants during his opening speech there had to

be a global movement promoting Wasatiyat Islam. "I'm sure everyone here agrees that Islam is the religion that brought blessings to the world," he said. "Muslims should be the leaders in bringing peace and unity."

He also raised the growing concern about the rapid development of technology. "Fast-growing technology, including in social media, has brought significant implications of easier interaction, but also [easier] spread of hate speech and even radicalism," he said. "This means it is going to be harder to spread Wasatiyat teaching."

The three-day conference is to be filled with panel discussions focusing on the concepts of Wasatiyat teaching, its context in the global civilization and the Indonesian experience of moderate Islam.

Din Syamsuddin, Jokowi's special envoy for religious harmony, said that although the conference was not the first one on moderate Islam, Indonesia wanted to revitalize the world view of the middle path.

"We have to recognize in Muslim countries that some of us some of the Muslim group maintain another understanding of Islam, which has indeed deviated from this very central idea of Wasatiyat Islam," he said.