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A Fold in Time: Southeast Asian women artists explore identity, history

Unease grows over TNI, police involvement in civil governance

Radhiyya Indra

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta
The growing presence of active police and military officers in executive and legislative posts under President Prabowo Subianto has sparked concerns among analysts, who warn that the trend signals a shift away from Indonesia's post-Reform commitment to civilian supremacy in governance.

Since President Prabowo took office in October, the government has increasingly tapped the security forces to fill senior bureaucratic roles, reviving concerns about the erosion of reforms that once sought to dismantle their involvement in civilian affairs.

The most recent flashpoint came with the appointment of Insp. Gen. Mohammad Iqbal, an active-duty police officer, as secretary of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) on Monday. He served as the Riau police chief since 2021, before being reassigned to a strategic post at the National Police's Security Maintenance Agency (Bahasam) in March of this year.

DPD chairman Sultan Bakhtiar Najamuddin noted that Iqbal's appointment was part of normal "organizational refreshment" and that Iqbal's reputation as a police officer speaks to his credibility.

However, critics say the appointment violates prevailing laws on the police and legislative institutions (MD3).

Lucius Karus, a researcher at the legislative watchdog the Indonesian Parliament Watch (Formappi), noted that the MD3 Law stipulates that secretaries-general of parliamentary bodies

must be filled by civil servants.

"If you look at the Police Law, it distinguishes police officers and civil servants. So, members of the police force are not civil servants in the administrative sense required by the (MD3) law," he told *The Jakarta Post* on Thursday.

Iqbal's appointment is part of a growing trend of active police officers being assigned to civilian roles beyond the scope permitted by the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) Law.

Since March, dozens of high-ranking officers have been placed in key positions across various ministries, including the Health Ministry and the Environment Ministry, following a large-scale reshuffling carried out by National Police chief Gen. Listyo Sigit Prabowo, *Tempo* reported.

While Article 19, Paragraph 4 of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) Law allows active police officers to serve in civilian posts, it restricts such appointments to 11 specific ministries and institutions involved in areas like national security, intelligence and counterterrorism.

In response to criticism over Iqbal's recent appointment, National Police spokesperson Brig. Gen. Tunyo Wismu Andiko claimed the move was lawful under provisions of the ASN Law and the Police Law, though he did not elaborate further.

He added that the appointment was "requested by the DPD chairman as Iqbal has proven to have excellent performance and competence to fill the DPD secretary-general position."

Continued on page 11
Editorial page 6

House of contraband



Officials inspect noncompliant or illegally imported products at a warehouse in Cikupa, Tangerang regency, Banten, on Thursday. The Trade Ministry has seized 1.6 million imported products from China that violated regulations, which include missing Indonesian-language labels, product registration numbers, compliance with Indonesian National Standards (SNI) and health, safety, security and environmental (KSL) certifications, with a total estimated value of Rp 18.8 billion (US\$1.15 million).

Pertamina denies claims of Russian oil transshipment

Indonesia open to importing Russian crude

Divya Karyza

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

Kilang Pertamina Internasional (KPI), the refinery and petrochemical arm of state-owned oil and gas company Pertamina, has denied reports that Russian oil products are being transhipped at Indonesia's Karimun terminal in the Riau Islands.

KPI president director Taufik Adityawarman said Russian crude oil could be purchased only through open auctions.

"Not yet," Taufik said on the sidelines of the International Petroleum Association Convention & Exhibition (IPA Convex) in Tangerang, Banten, on Wednesday, when asked about Russian oil entering Karimun. "All of our crude oil purchases go through an auction process. We publicly announce the tenders, and only companies registered with our refineries

are eligible to participate."

Pertamina does not have a refinery, oil storage tank or transshipment facility in Karimun but has been open to importing Russian crude since May last year, Taufik said.

Any purchase of crude must comply with the United States Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) regulations, he added with reference to sanctions imposed on Russia by the US, United Kingdom and the European Union following the invasion of Ukraine.

"If any [company] has Russian crude that suits our specifications and is registered with our refineries, (they are) welcome to participate in the tender," he said, noting that Russian crude obtained through tenders is delivered directly to refineries, not storage tanks or terminals.

His statement came in re-

sponse to recent reports suggesting that Karimun has become a hub for exporting Russian crude to other countries.

Since October, the terminal, located in a free-trade zone on an island about 37 kilometers southwest of Singapore, had received Russian oil products every month, according to ship-tracking data from Kpler, Reuters reported, with exports to Malaysia, Singapore and China.

Before that, the data show, arrivals of Russian oil products at Karimun were only sporadic. Reuters reported with reference to the same Kpler data that more than 5.2 million barrels of fuel oil loaded from Russia's Ust-Luga oil terminal had arrived at Karimun so far this year, nearly five times the volume in the corresponding 2024 period.

Continued on page 11

RI to uphold ASEAN unity, centrality at summit

Yvette Tanamal

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

Indonesia will continue to support the unity of ASEAN and its role as the region's most central institution, the Foreign Ministry asserted several days before a flurry of the bloc's meetings begin in Malaysia to discuss the region's most pressing issues.

President Prabowo Subianto is expected to attend the 46th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, according to the ministry, alongside a delegation composed of diplomats, legislative members, businesspeople and youth representatives.

Once the region's leaders convene in the Malaysian capital on Monday, further high-level discussions will take place to discuss several issues, including United States trade tariff policy, which has been described by the Foreign Ministry's ASEAN Cooperation Director General Sidharto Suryodipuro as "a manifestation of the United States' protectionism" and a "significantly pressing matter" for the region.

During a press briefing in Jakarta on Wednesday, Sidharto asserted that Indonesia will remain faithful to its "traditional" ASEAN-focused foreign policy under Prabowo's presidency, which kicked off last October. He added that Jakarta's delegation would continue to play its role in upholding ASEAN centrality and unity, while taking on an active role in negotiating key issues.

As defense minister between 2019 and 2024, President Prabowo has a very clear understanding of ASEAN and its mechanism. [...] he also advanced the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) from a defense perspective," Sidharto said.

Since campaigning for presidency in the 2024 election, analysts and members of the foreign policy community have expressed concerns that the former Army general would pay less focus to ASEAN and its mechanisms given his past criticism of the group.

But Sidharto dismissed the concerns and questions about Prabowo's commitment to the bloc.



New leader: Regional Representatives Council (DPD) Speaker Sultan Bakhtiar Najamuddin (second right) shakes hands with newly appointed DPD secretary-general Insp. Gen. Mohammad Iqbal (second left) during the inauguration ceremony at the House of Representatives complex in Senayan, Central Jakarta, on Monday. Iqbal, a two-star police general, replaces Rahman Hadi.

Note from the Publisher

Today's edition of *The Jakarta Post* includes a 32-page supplement of news and commentary published by *China Daily*. While this supplement is included as part of a partnership, the *Post* maintains editorial independence and is not responsible for the content therein. Any views or opinions expressed in the supplement are solely those of *China Daily* and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the *Post*.

— THE PUBLISHER

Former Sritex boss arrested for corruption

The Jakarta Post

Jakarta

Investigators from the Attorney General's Office (AGO) have arrested Iwan Setiawan Lukminto, former president director of textile giant PT Sri Rejeki Isman (Sritex), for allegedly misappropriating funds received from several banks that caused nearly Rp 700 billion (US\$42.9 million) in state losses.

The AGO named Iwan, who led the company between 2005 and 2022, along with former Bank DKI president director Zainuddin Mappa and Bank BJB commercial and corporation division head Dicky Syahbandinata as suspects in the case.

Graft busters with the AGO had been investigating the case since October 2024 and questioned 55 witnesses and an expert witness

in the investigation, according to Abdul Qohar, investigations director at the office of the assistant attorney general for extraordinary crimes.

"The investigators have obtained enough evidence for the alleged corruption pertaining to the loan disbursement from several state-owned lenders to [Sritex] with the outstanding loans totaling Rp 3.58 trillion as per October 2024," Abdul said during a press briefing on Wednesday evening.

Around Rp 1 trillion of the loans came from several banks, namely Bank BJB, Bank Jateng and Bank DKI, which are owned by the regional administrations of West Java, Central Java and Jakarta, respectively.

The textile company also received a Rp 2.5 trillion loan from a syndication of several state-

owned banks and financing institutions, such as Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI), Bank Negara Indonesia (BNI) and the Indonesian Export Financing Agency (LPEI). Sritex also received other loans from 20 privately owned banks.

Investigators accused Zainuddin and Dicky of giving bank loans to the textile company without the law, the banks' standard operating procedures, as well as the five principles of creditworthiness.

"Sritex only had a credit rating of BB-, or having a higher risk of default, lower than the standard default, lower than the 1998 of A as stipulated in the 1998 Banking Law," Abdul said.

"The suspects allegedly violated the law, the banks' standard operating procedures, as well as the five principles of creditworthiness."

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Under investigation: Former president director of textile giant PT Sri Rejeki Isman (Sritex) Iwan Setiawan Lukminto (center) is escorted by officers to a detention vehicle after questioning at the Attorney General's Office (AGO) building in Jakarta on Wednesday.

Continued on page 11

EDITORIAL

From muscle to might

The Attorney General's Office (AGO) may believe it needs the added protection of the Indonesian Military (TNI) to go after high-profile criminal cases. That is a legitimate concern.

But what is far more troubling, and ultimately more corrosive to the fabric of democracy, is what this arrangement signals for the future of civilian supremacy in the country.

Last month, reports surfaced of a formal arrangement under which TNI personnel would be stationed at the AGO and regional prosecutor's offices. According to officials, this was done in the spirit of strengthening security in the face of potential threats to prosecutors' safety as they handle sensitive graft and corruption cases.

The arrangement was further strengthened by a presidential regulation on the protection of prosecutors, not inherently a bad idea when considering the situation in Indonesia.

But such logic cannot override the principle that the armed forces must remain outside the realm of civilian law enforcement and prosecutorial work.

Why does the AGO feel it needs military protection at this time?

One possible answer is that prosecutors may be uncovering criminal cases so sensitive and politically explosive that they fear retaliation from state actors or elites.

If that is the case, it is all the more urgent that civilian law enforcement and oversight institutions be strengthened, not outsourced to the armed forces.

Criticism has been mounting from civil society groups and legal scholars, who see the AGO-TNI arrangement as a dangerous erosion of the democratic principle of civilian supremacy.

This is the exact type of mission creep that activists and legal scholars had feared would become a hallmark of President Prabowo Subianto's tenure. To allow the military to meddle in judicial functions, even peripherally, risks normalizing a culture of military omnipresence that Indonesia had worked hard to dismantle after the fall of the New Order.

There is also the elephant in the room: political continuity and power dynamics that remain unresolved in the post-loko "Jokowi" Widodo era.

Despite no longer being president, Jokowi continues to wield influence over various sections of the state apparatus, including the police, the military and certain cabinet posts.

Is this security arrangement another manifestation of the "twin suns" dilemma, two centers of power operating within the same state? If so, then institutional independence is at even greater risk.

The line between security and interference is perilously thin. And when that line is blurred by historical baggage, personal loyalties or perceived threats, the result is a weakening of the very institutions that uphold justice and transparency.

Indonesia's Reform era separation between the military and civilian domains was not a symbolic act. It was a hard-fought, necessary correction to decades of authoritarian entanglement. Eroding those lines, even gradually, sets a dangerous precedent. If civilian prosecutors need better protection, then that task must fall to the police, backed by institutional reforms and public accountability, not to soldiers with rifles.

This is not about questioning the professionalism of the TNI or casting doubt on its national commitment. It is about maintaining structural clarity and legal integrity. The military must not be allowed to become an all-purpose tool for governance, justice or politics.

If we begin to accept exceptional military involvement in civil institutions as routine, we will find ourselves backtracking on decades of democratic progress.

We call on the executive and judicial branches of government to rethink this arrangement. Let civilian institutions protect civilian work.

And let us ensure that no future government finds itself tempted to solve institutional weakness by military strength.

This is how democracies falter, not with a bang, but with a quiet chipping away at steadily weaker foundations.

Inclusion without understanding: Potential risk in financial future

Indonesia is making significant progress toward achieving broader financial inclusion.

The latest 2025 National Survey of Financial Literacy and Inclusion (SNLIK), conducted by the Financial Services Authority (OJK) and Statistics Indonesia (BPS), shows a promising increase in financial access across the archipelago. The financial inclusion index has risen to 80.51 percent, while the financial literacy index has climbed to 66.46 percent, marking a modest improvement from the previous year.

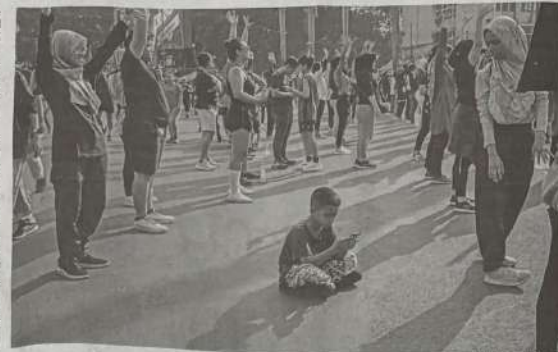
However, the growing gap between financial inclusion and financial literacy, now at a record 14.05 percentage points, presents a considerable structural challenge. More Indonesians are using financial products and services, yet a significant portion lack a full understanding of how to manage and evaluate these services responsibly.

This disconnect threatens to undermine the fundamental goal of financial inclusion: improving financial well-being and reducing vulnerability to economic shocks. In an era of rapid digitalization, where fintech services and online lending platforms are just a few taps away on a smartphone, the risk of financially uninformed behavior is greater than ever.

The paradox of inclusion without literacy has serious implications. Access alone does not guarantee protection. Increased use of financial services without adequate understanding may expose individuals to greater risks, especially among youth and first-time users.

For example, there has been a sharp rise in cases related to illegal online lending and financial fraud. Since 2017, over Rp 130 trillion (US\$7.87 billion) in losses have been reported due to illegal investments, with many victims being young adults lured by get-rich-quick schemes or misled by social media influencers. According to the SNLIK 2025, financial literacy among teenagers aged 15-17 remains low at 51.68 percent, despite their relatively high access to digital finance.

This issue extends beyond the youth demographic. Women, rural populations and those with lower education levels consistently show lower financial literacy scores. The 2025 survey reveals that men (67.32 percent) are slightly more financially literate than women (65.58 percent), and urban dwellers (70.89 percent) score significantly higher than rural residents (59.60 percent). Literacy is also strongly correlated with educa-



Easy access: A boy uses a smartphone as people attend a free morning dance session on the street during the weekly Car Free Day on May 5, 2024, in Jakarta.

By Wawan Sugiyarto

An analyst at the Finance Ministry's Budget Financing and Risk Management Directorate General. The views expressed are personal.

tion: Individuals with tertiary education score above 90 percent, compared to just 54.5 percent for those who completed only elementary school.

One of the most concerning gaps revealed by the SNLIK data is the low level of understanding and use of sharia-compliant financial services. While Indonesia has positioned itself as a global leader in Islamic finance, the sharia financial literacy index lags at just 45.42 percent, and inclusion remains at 13.41 percent. This represents a missed opportunity, especially in a country where over 85 percent of the population is Muslim.

The lack of understanding of Islamic financial instruments such as sukuk, mudharabah, and sharia-compliant insurance underscores the need for targeted financial education. Integrating sharia finance literacy into religious institutions, Islamic schools and community centers could play a vital role in bridging this trust and knowledge gap.

In many ways, financial literacy is as critical to national development as physical infrastructure. Just as roads and ports connect people to markets, financial literacy connects people to opportunities, protection and prosperity.

A financially literate population is more likely to save, invest

wisely, use insurance and avoid over-indebtedness. These behaviors contribute to household resilience, reduce poverty and support deeper capital markets. A 2023 report by S&P Global found that countries with higher financial literacy levels experience better macroeconomic outcomes, including more stable financial systems and stronger growth trajectories.

To unlock these benefits, Indonesia must treat financial literacy not merely as a public awareness campaign but as a long-term investment in human capital.

First, financial literacy should be a core subject in the national curriculum, starting from junior secondary level. The OJK, the Elementary and Secondary Education Ministry and financial institutions can collaborate to develop engaging modules that utilize simulations, storytelling and gamification to enhance learning outcomes.

Second, as more new users access financial services through digital channels, educational efforts must embrace digital formats as well. Tools such as WhatsApp-based financial chatbots, YouTube explainers in regional languages and partnerships with influencers can help amplify impact, especially among Generation Z.

Third, tailored outreach

through community savings groups, village cooperatives (BUMDES) and women's forums can effectively address gender and rural financial gaps. Training local champions to deliver financial education in culturally relevant ways can enhance this effort.

Fourth, collaborating with Islamic scholars, mosques and pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) can help strengthen public confidence in sharia-compliant financial instruments. Educational campaigns should not only explain the halal nature of these instruments but also highlight their practical benefits.

Finally, merely providing information is insufficient; people need encouragement to take action. Utilizing behavioral insights, such as default options for saving or reminders for timely bill payments, can bridge the gap between knowledge and action.

Indonesia's progress in financial inclusion is commendable, however, inclusion without understanding can be detrimental. To secure a sustainable and equitable financial future, the country must elevate financial literacy as a national development priority. The 2025 SNLIK serves as both a wake-up call and a roadmap.

By taking immediate action through education, regulation and community engagement, Indonesia can empower its citizens not just to access financial services but to thrive with them.

Financial literacy is not only about acquiring knowledge; it is about empowerment and protection.

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Leo XIV: A listening papacy in a world of noise

"Peace be with you all." Pope Leo XIV began his pontificate greeting. This salutation has more than just ceremonial meaning when spoken softly but firmly from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica.

This remark came at a time when the world is filled with noise due to polarized narratives, wars and conflicts between nations, populist politics and the negative impact of constant digital technology use on mental health.

Leo XIV officially started his papacy on May 18, with an inaugural mass in St. Peter's Square attended by more than 200,000 faithful and leaders from many countries. The pope encouraged the Church to be a "leaven of unity" in the midst of a divided and polarized society, emphasizing world unity and peace in his sermon. He made a clear call to break the cycle of violence and war, encouraging Christians and all those who have good intentions to act as agents of reconciliation.

In his papal motto, "In Illo Uno Unum" (In one Christ, we are one), he described peace as both a geopolitical goal and a spiritual obligation. This affirmation provides clear direction for his leadership, which is determined not only by ideology or church reform but also by a deep commitment to compassion, solidarity and promoting human dignity.

He refrained from making grandiose visionary statements or detailing church reforms. Instead, he is present and attentive. Formerly known as Cardinal Robert Prevost of the Order of

By Bernardus Agus Rukiyanto

An associate professor at Sanata Dharma University, and Yogyakarta chapter head of Association of Indonesian Catholic Lecturers



Meet the masses: Pope Leo XIV waves to the crowd during the weekly general audience at St. Peter's Square on Wednesday in the Vatican.

Saint Augustine, he was famed not by the Roman bureaucracy but by a life rooted in community and missionary work. Before taking on the leadership role at the Vatican, he spent more than two decades in Peru, living among the poor as a priest and mentor. His Augustinian background has shaped a leadership style that values friendship

over control and listening rather than rule, a leadership style rarely found in today's religious or political spheres. In a society where power is often equated with visibility and volume, Pope Leo's calm demeanor offers an unusual alternative. His approach embodies what the scholar Otto Schärmer describes as "presencing," a

leadership skill that involves really listening to connect with the possibilities of the future. This is also in line with Hannah Arendt's observation that "thoughtlessness," the unwillingness to reflect, is a core enabler of injustice.

By listening rather than making statements, Pope Leo is not inactive. Instead, he has shown a different form of leadership, which began with recognition.

As theologian David Augsburger put it, "To be heard is so close to being loved that to the average person, the two are almost indistinguishable."

Faith in traditional institutions is eroding globally. The 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer found sustained declines in public trust in government, media and NGOs, and even democracy. In this environment, moral authority cannot be imposed; it must be rebuilt from the ground up.

Pope Leo XIV may not be trending on social media, but his approach is deeply subversive to the culture of performative leadership. His prior work, especially among the marginalized in Latin America and his pastoral visit to Papua, demonstrates a leadership model shaped not by visibility but by closeness to pain, diversity and complexity.

Indonesia, a nation of more than 17,000 islands and 300 ethnic groups, thrives not by uniformity but through negotiated harmony. In such a pluralistic society, Pope Leo's ethos of listening carries important resonance. Dialogue is not an accessory to coexistence; it is its condition.

In places like Papua, which Pope Leo once visited as a religious superior, communities

often feel unseen by the state and the world. His presence there, as a listener rather than a dignitary, speaks volumes. It suggests that moral leadership does not start from the top, but from the margins.

Listening is not merely a virtue for religious leaders; it is a critical civic skill. In her research on democratic deliberation, political scientist Jane Mansbridge emphasizes that "genuine listening across difference" is one of the most lacking but most vital practices in sustaining democracy.

The same is true in multireligious societies. Without shared attentiveness, there can be no shared future.

Pope Leo XIV's papacy, if it remains faithful to this posture, may offer more than a national continuity. It may restore a sense of trust, not through grand speeches or viral moments, but by modeling a slower, steadier kind of leadership grounded in presence and humility.

Global crises, from ecological breakdown to forced displacement, are less crises of information than crises of listening. The data is available, the warnings are being issued, but decision-makers often fail to hear. In this context, a papacy that begins not by speaking, but by receiving, is prophetic.

"Peace be with you all," Pope Leo said. Not as a rhetorical flourish, but as a moral compass. In a world drowning in noise, we need fewer declarations and more discernment. We need leaders who do not fear silence. Leaders who believe that true authority begins by listening to those who have long gone unheard.

And let us ensure that nature governs our development, not military strength. This is how democracies falter, not with a bang, but with a quiet chipping away at steadily weaker foundations.

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This remark came at a time when the world is filled with noise due to polarized narratives, wars and conflicts between nations, populist politics and the negative impact of constant digital technology use on mental health.

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AFP/Filippo Monteleone

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Pope Leo XIV’s papacy, if it remains faithful to this posture, may offer more than doctrinal continuity. It may restore a sense of trust, not through grand speeches or viral moments, but by modeling a slower, steadier kind of leadership grounded in presence and humility.

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