

give Gibran the benefit of the doubt, but only if he convinces President Prabowo to pursue a humane and dignified path toward peace and welfare in Papua.

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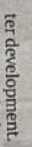
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Sekolah Rakyat and our collective commitment

By Bernardus Agus Rukiyanto
Yogyakarta

An associate professor at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta



Indonesia has launched a new initiative that could redefine the nation's approach to educational equity: Sekolah Rakyat (community school). Designed as a free, full-boarding school system for children from the country's lowest income brackets, the program offers more than just classrooms, it offers dignity, structure and a chance to dream.

With 200 schools planned across the archipelago, Sekolah Rakyat is not merely a policy, it is a moral statement. For the 2025/2026 academic year, the government has opened Sekolah Rakyat in 63 locations, with 35 more following by the end of July 2025, and 100 others being prepared.

It says that no child should be denied opportunity because of where they were born or how much their parents earn. It says that education is not a privilege, but a right.

Indonesia's existing public school system has long struggled with uneven access, underfunded infrastructure and teacher shortages, especially in rural and remote areas. According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Ministry, over 4 million children aged 6 to 18 remain out of school, many due to poverty, geographic isolation or social exclusion.

Sekolah Rakyat seeks to address these gaps head-on. Students are selected based on verified socioeconomic data from the national socioeconomic database (PUSKES), ensuring that the program reaches those most in need. Once admitted, students receive not only academic instruction but also housing, meals, health care, digital learning tools and character development.

The curriculum is designed to be holistic, combining national standards with life skills, leadership training and vocational exposure. From elementary to senior high school, students are immersed in a structured environment that fosters discipline, empathy and resilience.

While some critics have dismissed Sekolah Rakyat as a form of social welfare, the program is better understood as a strategic investment in human capital. In Indonesia's demographic dividend, its large, young population, can only be realized if every child has access to quality education.

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The economic rationale is clear. Children who complete secondary education are significantly more likely to secure stable employment, contribute to local economies and break the cycle of poverty. According to the World Bank, each additional year of schooling increases individual earnings by 10 percent on average.

Sekolah Rakyat amplifies this effect by removing the financial and logistical barriers that often prevent poor families from sending their children to school. It also provides a safe and nurturing environment, which is especially critical for children from unstable or unsafe home situations.

Of course, no program of this scale is without challenges. The rapid rollout, 63 schools opened within weeks of the announce-

ment, has raised concerns about readiness, staffing and infrastructure. In some cases, existing government buildings were repurposed hastily, leading to logistical hiccups and community tensions. Teacher recruitment is another pressing issue. Many Sekolah Rakyat campuses rely on educators transferred from other public schools, potentially exacerbating shortages elsewhere.

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Why market

Three months after United States President Donald Trump announced plans to impose sweeping new tariffs on most countries, the US economy appears surprisingly resilient.

The stock market has rebounded from its initial slump, inflation remains under control and fears of a recession have receded, or at least they had before Trump announced a new 30 percent tariff on imports from Mexico and the European Union, two of America's biggest trading partners.

In the months since Trump's initial announcement, several countries have entered negotiations with the US, offering concessions they had long resisted. Many observers view this as evidence that Trump's aggressive trade tactics are working and that economists may have overestimated the potential costs.

Yet this interpretation overlooks a critical detail: Many of the tariffs that Trump announced over the past few months have not been fully implemented. In fact, the administration has repeatedly backed down from its initial threats, a pattern that has fueled skepticism about the long-term impact of his trade policy.

As the US economy continues to show resilience, it is clear that the impact of Trump's trade policy is far more complex than it first appeared. While some sectors have benefited from the tariffs, others have faced challenges, and the overall economic picture remains uncertain.

The future of the US economy under Trump's leadership remains a topic of intense debate. As the administration's trade policy continues to unfold, it will be crucial to monitor its impact on the economy and the well-being of the American people.

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Further calls mount for Prabowo to end deputy ministers' dual roles

Dio Suhendra

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

Pressure is mounting on President Prabowo Subianto's administration to remove more than two dozen deputy ministers from their roles as commissioners of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) after the Constitutional Court maintained its position that cabinet members can not hold dual appointments.

Out of the 56 deputy ministers in Prabowo's cabinet, the largest since the Reform Era, at least 30 are currently serving in concurrent roles as SOE commissioners.

The latest appointment came earlier this month when Second Deputy Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister Stella Christie was named commissioner at Pertamina Hulu Energi, the upstream subsidiary of state-owned oil and gas giant Pertamina.

Amid mounting concerns that the practice could threaten good governance and undermine anti-corruption efforts, Luhaili Ruzaidy, executive director of Indonesia Law and Democracy Studies (ILIDS), filed a legal challenge with the Constitutional Court.

He petitioned the Court to explicitly interpret Article 23 of the 2008 State Ministry Law,

which prohibits ministers from serving as SOE commissioners, as also applying to deputy ministers. Luhaili argued that the court had already addressed this issue in its 2020 ruling on a 2019 judicial review, where it stated in the judicial opinion that deputy ministers should likewise be subject to the ban on dual office-holding.

The court ultimately dismissed Luhaili's petition as inadmissible, citing the loss of his legal standing following his death on June 22. However, it reaffirmed that its 2020 ruling had "explicitly prohibited deputy ministers from holding dual positions," a prohibition the government has yet to enforce.

Constitutional law expert Feri Asnari of Andalas University said the latest ruling reinforces the court's earlier position that deputy ministers are held to the same standard of accountability as ministers and are therefore barred from holding overlapping roles.

"Although the court deemed the latest petition inadmissible due to the petitioner's passing, the substance remains identical to the [2020] ruling. Therefore, it carries the same legal weight," Feri said on Monday.

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Eternal rivalry



Indonesia U-23 national soccer team player Kadek Arel Priyatna (second left) vies for the ball with Malaysia U-23 player Muhammad Haqimi Azim Bin Rosli (second right) on Monday during the Group A match of the 2025 AFF U-23 Championship at Gelora Bung Karno Main Stadium in Serayan, Central Jakarta. The match ended in a 0-0 draw.

RI rolls out state co-ops to boost local economies

Public lacks understanding of program

Ruth Dea Juwita

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

President Prabowo Subianto on Monday officially launched 80,081 cooperatives under the Red-and-White Cooperatives (KMP) program during a ceremony in Bentengan village, Klaten, Central Java.

In his speech, Prabowo described the cooperatives as "a tool of struggle" for the poor and a way for "economically weaker groups" to build collective strength.

He framed the initiative as a "strategic movement" aimed at challenging the longstanding economic dominance of big players.

"Initiatives like these aren't welcomed by major capitalists or large investors. In many of their minds, cooperatives may be seen as competitors. And there are certain countries that wouldn't be happy to see a big

nation rise," he stated.

The state-backed cooperatives will be equipped with warehouses, cold storage facilities, delivery vehicles and retail outlets, such as basic goods stores and pharmacies, in an effort to streamline supply chains and reduce logistical bottlenecks.

They will also have access to "super micro financing," Prabowo said, noting that the loan amounts will be smaller than those in typical microfinance schemes, with funds disbursed through state-owned banks.

He added that the government had allocated up to Rp 2.5 billion (US\$150,000) per village for the program's first year, sourced from existing village funds, though actual costs could be lower in areas with other public assets.

Coordinating Food Minister Zulkifli Hasan, who also leads the task force behind the initia-

tive, said that out of the 80,081 cooperatives established, only around 108 are ready to operate at the moment.

"We're preparing 1 million cooperative managers to support villagers and build a strong, prosperous Indonesia from the grassroots," Zulkifli said during the launch.

Suroto, CEO of the cooperative organization INKUR, criticized the government's push to establish 80,000 village cooperatives as a form of "structural coercion," saying the pressure was evident in the withholding of village fund disbursements for the sake of KMP's establishment.

Support letters and deeds for establishing cooperatives became requirements for villages seeking access to the second tranche of 2025 village funds, Antara reported in May.

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Moving on: Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba attends a press conference at the headquarters of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Tokyo on Monday, the day after the prime minister's coalition lost its upper house majority.

Japan PM hangs on after election debacle

Natsuko Fukue

Agence France-Presse/Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba clung on Monday even after an election debacle left his coalition without a majority in the upper house, as painful new United States tariffs loom.

In Sunday's election, Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has governed almost continuously since 1955, and its partner Komeito fell a projected three seats short of retaining a majority in the upper house.

Voters angry at inflation turned to other parties, notably the "Japan First" Sanmei, which made strong gains with its "anti-globalist" drive echoing the agenda of populist parties elsewhere.

"I even think [the LDP] should have lost more," 25-year-old Kazuo Nakanawa, who voted for a small ultracorporate party, told AFP, adding that Ishiba should quit.

The debacle comes only months after Ishiba's coalition was forced into a minority government in the more powerful lower house, in the LDP's worst result in 15 years.

But asked late on Sunday if he intended to remain in office, Ishiba told local media: "That's right."

"Although I'm acutely aware of our grave responsibility for the election results, in order to not let politics become stag-

nant, I believe I must fulfill my responsibility as the party with the most votes and to the people of the country, while listening carefully and sincerely to the voices of the local people," Ishiba told a news conference on Monday.

He called the election result "extremely regrettable."

It was unclear in any case who might step up to replace Ishiba given the LDP's frequent changes of leadership in recent years.

LDP supporter Takeshi Nemoto, 80, told AFP that a new leadership contest "would be a losing battle" for the party, further complicating talks with US President Donald Trump's administration.

"Diplomacy is under pressure at the moment," agreed Shuhei Aono, 67.

"Who is going to take care of it? I think [Ishiba] cannot easily withdraw."

'Japanese first'
The election saw 125 seats in the 248-seat upper house contested.

The coalition needed 50 of those but local media reported they only won 47, with the LDP winning 39 and Komeito eight, giving them 122 deputies.

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Indonesian imprisoned in Myanmar returns home

Radihiyya Indra

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

An Indonesian social media influencer sentenced to seven years in prison in Yangon for terrorism-related charges has been granted amnesty by Myanmar and allowed to return home over the weekend, following months of diplomatic efforts by the Foreign Ministry.

In a statement on Sunday, the ministry said the Indonesian Embassy in Yangon received a diplomatic note from Myanmar's Foreign Ministry on July 16 stating that the Indonesian national, identified only with the initials AP, has been granted amnesty by Myanmar's military government.

The 33-year-old was deported from Myanmar on Saturday, being flown to Bangkok before continuing his journey to Indonesia.

The amnesty marked a conclusion to months-long efforts by the Foreign Ministry in Jakarta and the embassy in Yangon to advocate for AP's return from Myanmar since his arrest in December of last year.

The ministry also thanked Myanmar for fulfilling its request for amnesty following AP's conviction in the country ravaged by civil war.

The foreign minister and the entire ministry express appreciation to Myanmar for granting amnesty to AP and also to various parties who have assisted in handling this case from the beginning," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hollansyah "Boy" Sumirat said in the statement.

33-year-old AP was arrested by Myanmar authorities on Dec. 20 on allegations of entering the country illegally and holding meetings with armed groups classified as unlawful under Myanmar law.

He was charged under the anti-terrorism law, the 1947 immigration act and the unlawful associations act, and was later sentenced to seven years imprisonment at Insein Prison in Yangon, one of Myanmar's most notorious detention facilities.

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Open for business: A store attendant serves a customer at a pharmacy on Monday during the launch of the Red-and-White Cooperatives (KMP) Initiative in Ranjeng village in Serang regency, Banten.

