THE INDONESIAN INSTITUTE
CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

The Indonesian Update

Monthly Review on Economic, Legal, Security, Political, and Social Affairs

Main Report

Examining Child Protection in Indonesia from the Threats of Cigarettes

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- The Analysis of the 2026 State Budget and its Deficit from a Rule of Law Perspective
- The Analysis of Indonesia's Economic Conditions in 2026: Macroeconomics, Fiscal Policy, and Potential Risks

Laws

- National Heros and the Image of the Nation
- The Freedom of the Press in the Prabowo Era

Politics

- The Analysis of Political MKD's Decision on Five DPR Members: Perspective Ethics , Parties , and the Public
- The Importance of a Democratic Policy Formulation Process in the Revision of the Election Law

Volume XIX, No.11 – November 2025 | ISSN 1979-1976

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Contributors : Felia Primaresti (Koordinator), Christina Clarissa Intania, Made Natasya Restu Dewi Pratiwi, Putu Rusta Adijaya, Arfianto Purbolaksono
Editor : Adinda Tenriangke Muchtar.

FOREWORD

The November-December 2025 edition of the Indonesian Update presents critical analyses of economic, legal, political, and social developments that have influenced Indonesian public policy at the beginning of this year.

The main report "Examining Child Protection in Indonesia from the Threats of Cigarettes," highlights the health risks children face due to cigarette consumption and exposure. It emphasizes the need for effective legal protection, strong regulations, and public awareness as a comprehensive effort to protect the younger generation.

In the economic field, two main articles review Indonesia's macroeconomic conditions and fiscal policy in 2026. "The Analysis of Indonesia's Economic Conditions in 2026: Macroeconomics, Fiscal Policy, and Potential Risks" discusses growth trends, inflation challenges, and systemic risks that could impact national economic stability. Meanwhile, "the Analysis of the 2026 State Budget and its Deficit from a Rule of Law Perspective" highlights the importance of legal compliance and accountability in state budget management.

In the legal realm, this edition features two important studies. "National Heroes and the Image of the Nation" examines the meaning of legal recognition of national figures and its impact on society's collective identity, while "Press Freedom in the Prabowo Era" highlights the dynamics of media freedom and the challenges of regulatory oversight of journalistic practice in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, in the political sphere, readers can find critical analyses of the behavior of legislative institutions and democratic mechanisms. The article "Political Analysis of the Constitutional Court's Decision against Five DPR Members: Ethical, Party, and Public Perspectives" examines the alleged ethical violations by DPR members and their implications for parliamentary credibility. Meanwhile, "The Importance of a Democratic Policy Formulation Process in the Revision of the Election Law" emphasizes the urgency of public involvement and transparency in legislative policymaking.

With this edition, the Indonesian Update once again provides a space for critical reflection for readers seeking to understand the interconnectedness of public policy, law, and public welfare. We hope that the articles in this 2026 edition could serve as a guide for assessing the direction of economic development, democracy, and social protection in Indonesia.

Happy reading.

Main Report

Examining Child Protection in Indonesia from the Threats of Cigarettes

-Made Natasya Restu Dewi Pratiwi-



Cigarettes remain serious threats to child protection in Indonesia. Millions of children's health is at risk due to exposure to and consumption of cigarettes from an early age. According to the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey, the number of child smokers aged 10–18 increased from 4.1 million in 2018 to 5.9 million in 2023. Even more concerning, 2.6% of children started smoking between the ages of 4–9, and 44.7% started smoking between the ages of 10–14. In fact, 72.6% of children aged 15–19 smoke daily, with an average consumption of 8–9 cigarettes per day. These figures signal a serious crisis in efforts to protect young people from the threats of nicotine addiction and future non-communicable diseases.

One of the main causes of the rise in child smoking is the ease with which children and adolescents access cigarettes, as they are sold cheaply in stick form, even without specific purchase requirements. As evidence, 71.3% of adolescents admitted to purchasing cigarettes by the stick, and 60.6% of them were never prevented from purchasing them (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). This finding indicates weak oversight of the implementations of Article 434 of Government Regulation Number 28/2024, the implementing regulation of Law Number 17/2023 concerning Health, which actually prohibits the sale of cigarettes by the stick, sales to children under 21, sales within a 200-meter radius of schools, and online sales without age verification.

However, the implementations of this policy remains ineffective. Supervision and outreach at the community level remain weak. Child protection efforts have not been fully integrated across government agencies, schools, and families. Therefore, mapping the direction of tobacco control policies in Indonesia that better protect children from health risks is a crucial agenda that needs to be prioritized in development, particularly to achieve the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. Against this backdrop, this study shall highlight the factors contributing to the increasing number of child smokers in Indonesia and identify strategies for improving policy direction that are needed to protect Indonesian children from the threat of cigarette addiction from an early age.

Factors Behind the Rise of Child Smoking

The rise in child smoking in Indonesia is not an isolated phenomenon but rather the result of a complex interaction between weak regulations, contradictory fiscal policies, and the strong influence of the tobacco industry in the public policy cycle. Below, we identify several key factors contributing to the increasing prevalence of child smoking in Indonesia.

Weak Regulation and Oversight

Although Indonesia has various tobacco control regulations, enforcement remains very weak. For example, cigarette sales continue to occur openly near schools. Children can even purchase cigarettes without age verification, despite Government Regulation Number 28/2024 concerning the Implementing Regulations of Law Number 17/2023 concerning Health, which explicitly prohibits cigarette sales to children. This is due to suboptimal oversight by authorities and local governments.

Not only is there a lack of commitment from authorities, but the normalization of cigarette sales to children has become increasingly commonplace due to low public awareness of the prohibition on selling cigarettes to children. Therefore, existing regulations are vulnerable to becoming symbolic and failing to provide a deterrent effect. A year after the implementing regulations were released, derivative regulations for Government Regulation Number 28/2024 have yet to be ratified, leading to a lack of coordination across institutions, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Trade, local governments, and law enforcement. Consequently, regulations that should protect children have not been consistently implemented and have not had a tangible impact.

Increasing Use of Electronic Cigarettes (Vape)

A new phenomenon exacerbating the problem is the increasing use of electronic cigarettes or vape among teenagers. These products are often marketed as a "healthier alternative" to conventional cigarettes and offer a variety of flavors to appeal to teenagers. However, vape contains nicotine, which is as addictive as conventional cigarettes and can damage brain development, trigger lung inflammation, cardiovascular problems, anxiety disorders, and even become a gateway to addiction to conventional cigarettes (Meehan et al., 2024; Master et al., 2025).

Behind the danger of vape, the prevalence of vape users in Indonesia has actually increased drastically. According to the 2021 Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS), there has been a tenfold surge in vape tobacco use in two years, from 0.3% in 2019 to 3% in 2021. This increase occurred because the use of e-cigarettes quickly became a lifestyle trend among young people due to aggressive marketing strategies and minimal enforcement of Government Regulation Number 28/2024, ranging from the standardization of health warnings on cigarette packaging based on Articles 435–441 to the prohibition of the sale of e-cigarettes to individuals under twenty-one years of age based on Article 434 paragraph 1.

Due to this phenomenon, the issuance of derivative regulations of Government Regulation Number 28/2024 has become an urgent need to clarify the reporting process for violations, especially regarding the distribution of cigarettes targeting minors, and to ensure that each regional government has fulfilled its obligation to provide smoke-free areas as mandated by Article 443 to prevent exposure to cigarette smoke for passive smokers and to protect children's rights more optimally.

Cheap Cigarette Prices and Unprotective Fiscal Policies

Low cigarette prices remain a dominant factor contributing to high tobacco consumption among children and adolescents. This situation is exacerbated by the government's decision to impose a three-year moratorium on tobacco excise increases. This decision has the potential to hamper child protection efforts by keeping cigarette prices affordable for young people and low-income communities.

In the context of the Prabowo–Gibran administration, the fiscal policy of not increasing excise taxes and the failure to ratify technical regulations for implementing Government Regulation Number 28/2024 indicate a weak state commitment to controlling cigarette consumption among children.

Given that, without price pressure, children can still buy cigarettes with their daily allowance. Furthermore, law enforcement remains weak. This contradicts numerous studies showing that price is the most effective instrument for reducing the prevalence of young smokers.

According to research by the Center for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives (CISDI) (2021), a 30% increase in excise tax could increase state revenue by up to IDR 5 trillion, which could be used to support tobacco workers transitioning to more suitable employment. Furthermore, a 2024 survey by the Center for Social Security Welfare at the University of Indonesia also showed that 74% of smokers stated they would quit if cigarette prices reached IDR 70,000 per pack. These two findings confirm that price policy is not only an economic policy instrument but also a highly effective child protection strategy that deserves government attention.

Household Economic Burden and the Normalization of Smoking in the Family

In addition to access and price, family social and economic factors also exacerbate this crisis. According to the 2024 National Socioeconomic Survey by the Central Statistics Agency, average monthly per capita household expenditure on cigarettes ranks second only to processed food and beverages. In fact, the amount spent on cigarettes (IDR 91,715) is 2.2 times higher than the expenditure on animal protein sources, namely meat (IDR 41,492). This fact illustrates that cigarette consumption has become part of the family lifestyle, even among the poorest groups and rural areas.

This phenomenon is regrettable because money that should be used to meet children's nutritional needs is instead spent on cigarettes. Furthermore, many children in Indonesia grow up in homes that normalize smoking. Without strong policy intervention, children will continue to be trapped in an intergenerational cycle of addiction, where smoking is passed down from home and even dominates household expenditures. Therefore, the high rate of child smoking that fails to be prevented requires vigilance, as it impacts the success of stunting treatment and poverty reduction.

Strong Tobacco Industry Intervention and Weak Policy Independence

Another factor is the high level of tobacco industry interference in public policy. According to the Tobacco Industry Interference Index

(TII Index) launched by the Indonesian Health Policy Space Foundation (2023), Indonesia scored 84, indicating a high level of tobacco industry interference in policymaking.

The tobacco industry actively influences regulation through lobbying, Corporate Social Responsibility programs, and cooperation with the government in various sectors, including health. These various forms of intervention are prone to creating significant conflicts of interest in the regulatory process. If the importance of public policymaking to protect the public is distracted by industry interests, the cycle of cigarette addiction in children will remain difficult to stop.

In conclusion, the current administration under President Prabowo's leadership requires greater assertiveness, independence, and a strategic approach to formulating policies that truly address the needs of the public. For example, this could be achieved by accelerating the development of derivative regulations from Government Regulation Number 28/2024 to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration in enforcing regulations and monitoring cigarette promotions that threaten children and violate existing regulations.

Good Practices for Controlling the Threat of Cigarettes to Children

Various countries have demonstrated that protecting children from the risks of tobacco can only be achieved through strict regulations, both fiscal and non-fiscal, political courage, and community involvement. Below, we identify lessons learned from good practices in child protection policies against the threats of the tobacco industry that Indonesia can adapt.

Table 1.
Comparison of Good Practices of Child Protection Policies from Cigarettes

Country	Policy Form	Key to Success
Philippines	Sin Tax Reform Law (high tax increases), Law Number 9211 (prohibiting advertising, promotions, sales near schools and through small packages).	Cross-ministerial enforcement with administrative sanctions and diversion of excise revenues to health programs.
Malaysia	Periodic excise tax increases, advertising and sponsorship bans, expanding smoke-free areas, and cigarette packaging designs with large images.	Enforcement by the Ministry of Health and local governments through periodic inspections and fines in public areas.
Singapore	Raising the legal smoking age to 21, raising cigarette prices (up to IDR 150,000 per pack), banning advertising, integrating public campaigns and smoking cessation services.	Strict inspections at points of sale, digital surveillance, and integration of smoking cessation services into public campaigns.
Thailand	Ban on advertising in the digital realm, eliminating cigarette categorization labels light, ultra-light, implementing plain packaging, increasing cigarette excise progressively.	Strengthening cross-agency coordination (health, fiscal, trade) with active digital regulatory enforcement and monitoring.

Source: (ASEAN Tobacconomics Cigarette Tax Scorecard, 2022); (Hendriansyah et al., 2025); synthesized by the author.

According to the table above, Indonesia has actually regulated several of the same components, such as health warnings on cigarette packaging, the establishment of smoke-free areas, a ban on cigarette sales to individuals under 21, and the provision of smoking cessation services at community health centers through Government Regulation Number 28/2024, which

implements Law Number 17/2023 concerning Health. However, weak fiscal policy, law enforcement, and oversight have prevented these policies from having a significant impact.

Learning from international practice, Indonesia needs to strengthen three key policy aspects. First, the Government needs to strengthen law enforcement and integrated inspections of regulatory implementation. Indonesia could emulate the Philippine oversight model by establishing a cross-sectoral task force to ensure that bans on cigarette sales, cigarette sales to minors, and sales near schools are strictly enforced. A digital mechanism for monitoring violating transactions, involving public participation in vulnerable areas, could be an option to strengthen monitoring efforts.

Regular inspections must be conducted, ensuring that violators are fined and their business licenses revoked. Furthermore, Malaysia's national policy can serve as a model, as it specifically regulates the classification of smoke-free areas, thus clarifying the role of local governments in oversight.

Second, improve fiscal policy consistency, such as by reviewing the impact of tobacco excise tax increases before deciding on a moratorium. Excise revenues can be allocated to fund education programs, monitoring, job transfers, and smoking cessation services, as implemented in the Philippines and Malaysia. Third, the government can emulate Thailand's approach by involving the Ministry of Communications and Digital in monitoring social media and platforms in monitoring advertising content that violates regulations.

Fourth, Indonesia needs to make extra efforts to integrate informative and educational public campaigns. For example, through smoking cessation services through collaboration with the private sector, such as game companies, national hotline programs, online counseling, and smoking cessation clinics. Such approaches have been successfully implemented in Singapore and the Philippines and can increase the effectiveness of long-term prevention policies.

Therefore, by strengthening law enforcement, consistent fiscal policies, educational campaigns, and public support as demonstrated by other ASEAN countries, Indonesia can accelerate child protection from the threat of cigarette addiction and build a healthier and more productive young generation.

By strengthening the dimensions of law enforcement, fiscal policy, prevention services, education and public campaigns, rehabilitation, and cross-sectoral governance, Indonesia has a real opportunity to emulate the success of other ASEAN countries in reducing the prevalence of child smoking and ensuring the continued protection of children from nicotine addiction."

Recommendations

To strengthen efforts to address child smoking, here are several policy responses that need to be implemented immediately:

1. The Ministry of Health, along with the Ministry of Home Affairs, must immediately issue implementing regulations and technical guidelines for the implementation of Government Regulation Number 28/2024 to ensure the mechanism for banning the sale of cigarettes by the stick, sales to children under 21, and online sales without age verification. This regulation could be strengthened by conducting regular inspections in schools and smoke-free areas, along with imposing strict sanctions for violations.

2. The Ministry of Finance needs to involve research institutions, academics, and civil society in its annual fiscal review to assess the social, economic, and health impacts of cigarette excise increases.

3. The Ministry of Communication and Digital can be the coordinator of technology development, geotagging, and spatial data to map the locations of cigarette sales that violate regulations, thus becoming a regional vulnerability database.

4. The Ministry of Home Affairs, together with regional governments, is obliged to determine a detailed classification of smoke-free areas, which needs to be regulated in regional regulations, and mandate an annual evaluation of compliance with smoke-free areas that needs to be published transparently.

5. The Ministry of Health, together with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and related ministries/institutions, is engaging the private sector and youth communities to expand the reach of educational campaigns and eliminate the stigma of smoking cessation among adolescents. Data on smoking cessation service participants could be integrated with platform SATUSEHAT to ensure continuous follow-up.

6. The Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture, along with the Corruption Eradication Commission, needs to require transparent reporting of public officials' involvement with the tobacco industry to reduce the tobacco industry's interference in public policy.

Economy

The Analysis of the 2026 State Budget and its Deficit from a Rule of Law Perspective

-Putu Rusta Adijaya-



Sumber Foto: infobanknews.com

Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa was appointed as the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia on September 8, 2025, by President Prabowo Subianto. Before serving as the Minister of Finance, Purbaya was the Chair of the Board of Commissioners of the Indonesian Deposit Insurance Corporation (LPS) from 2020 to 2025. According to ft.com (September 8, 2025), his inauguration occurred after the socio-political turmoil in August 2025, which triggered a cabinet reshuffle to rebuild public confidence in the current arduous economic situation. In general, Purbaya's economic policy, which has a technocratic/research/finance background, has been directed at growth (growth-oriented), with the President Prabowo Subianto administration targeting Indonesia's economic growth of 8 percent.

This article examines one of the Minister of Finance Purbaya's policies; namely, the 2026 State Budget (APBN) and its deficit from a rule of law perspective, and provides recommendations for the President Prabowo Subianto administration, particularly the Ministry of Finance. The principles of economic freedom refer to "2025 The Index of Economic Freedom" (2025) by Kim and Roberts (2025).

The Analysis of the 2026 State Budget and its Deficit from a Rule of Law Perspective

Before analyzing the 2026 State Budget and its deficit through the lens of economic freedom, it is crucial to first outline the status of economic freedom in Indonesia in 2025 as reported by The Heritage Foundation. According to Adijaya (2025), in *INDONESIA 2025* published by The Indonesian Institute, Center for Public Policy Research (TII), Indonesia's Economic Freedom Index in 2025 increased compared to that in the previous year, reaching a score of 65.2 out of 100. This score places Indonesia as the 60th freest economy among 184 countries and is considered "moderately free."

Indonesia has undertaken significant reforms to overcome structural economic weaknesses and enhance overall competitiveness. The domestic economy has demonstrated considerable resilience, managing to withstand the global economic slowdown relatively well. However, a critical challenge that remains for the Indonesian government is the persistent weakness of its institutions, which continues to erode the momentum for more dynamic economic progress. Without a well-functioning legal and regulatory framework, corruption remains a serious obstacle to greater private sector dynamism (Kim and Roberts, 2025).

The Index of Economic Freedom by Kim and Roberts (2025) measures four pillars. The first pillar is the rule of law, with sub-components of property rights, judicial effectiveness, and government integrity. The second pillar is government size, with sub-components of tax burden, government spending, and fiscal health. The third pillar is regulatory efficiency, with sub-components of business freedom, labor freedom, and monetary freedom. Meanwhile, the fourth pillar is market openness, with sub-components of trade freedom, investment freedom, and financial freedom.

In terms of the pillar of rule of law, Adijaya (2025) summarizes that the pillar of rule of law in Indonesia is very appalling. The sub-component scores for property rights, judicial effectiveness, and government integrity in Indonesia in 2025 are 39.8 out of 100, 45.3 out of 100, and 40.1 out of 100, respectively. On the second pillar; namely, the size of the government, which is divided into tax burden, government spending, and fiscal health, it turns out to be superior, namely, 81.8 out of 100, 90.9 out of 100, and 84.9 out of 100, respectively. The third pillar; namely, regulatory efficiency with sub-components of business freedom (73 out of 100), labor freedom (59.3 out of 100), and monetary freedom (78 out of 100) in Indonesia,

also shows promising scores. The fourth pillar; namely, market openness, which consists of the sub-components of trade freedom, investment freedom, and financial freedom, recorded a score of 79.4 out of 100, 50 out of 100, and 60 out of 100, respectively, in Indonesia in 2025.

As shown in the summary, the economic freedom index in Indonesia still faces significant challenges, particularly in the pillar of the rule of law. This pillar is one of the most critical components in advancing economic freedom worldwide, including in Indonesia. This is because the rule of law emphasizes that every individual, institution, and government entity must be subject to and equal before the law.

Examining the 2026 State Budget and its projected deficit can be analyzed through the lens of the rule of law. According to finance.detik.com (September 23, 2025), the 2026 budget deficit is IDR 689 trillion, or 2.68 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This figure has increased from the initial draft (RAPBN), which projected a deficit of 2.48 percent of GDP (around IDR 638.8 trillion). Minister of Finance Purbaya also stated that there was no need to worry excessively about the increase in the deficit, considering that the 2026 State Budget deficit is still at the limit of 3 percent of GDP mandated under Law Number 17/2003 on State Finances. The widening deficit is driven by an increase in state spending in 2026 to IDR 3,842.7 trillion from the 2026 RAPBN of IDR 3,786.5 trillion, where state income is also targeted to increase from IDR 3,147.7 trillion to IDR 3,153.6 trillion (finance.detik.com, September 23, 2025).

From a regulatory perspective, as mandated in Article 12 Paragraph (3) of Law Number 17/2003 concerning State Finances, where the budget deficit in question is limited to a maximum of 3 percent of GDP, the 2026 State Budget deficit is still at the limit set by law, even though there is an increase from the previous draft. The processes for amending and approving the State Budget appear to have fulfilled the State Budget mechanism and cycle. According to djpb.kemenkeu.go.id (accessed November 10, 2025), the first cycle of the APBN is planned and carried out by the relevant ministries/institutions, referring to the basic macroeconomic assumptions prepared by the government, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), and Bank Indonesia (BI).

The second stage in the State Budget cycle is the discussion and determination of the State Budget. During this phase, ministries and government institutions, together with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Planning, deliberate to produce the initial draft budget and the Financial Note. The process then continues with discussions between the

Government and the House of Representatives (DPR), which also considers inputs from the Regional Representatives' Council (DPD). At this stage, negotiations, revisions, and various proposals take place. Furthermore, in the process of determining the State Budget, which is determined by law, the details of State Budget implementations are further outlined in the Presidential Regulation concerning the State Budget Details. The third stage of the cycle involves the implementations of the State Budget. The fourth stage consists of reporting and recording budget realization. The final stage includes auditing and accountability. Overall, increases in spending and financing that result in a higher State Budget deficit are based on a clear legal foundation with optimal processes.

However, there are challenges in ensuring accountability for the deficit through the existing State Budget reporting mechanisms. The deficit is not merely an economic problem. A widening deficit may signal that budget management is not being carried out prudently or cautiously. Furthermore, it can reflect broader governance concerns and potential shortcomings in government compliance with established laws, which incidentally also influence institutional credibility and public trust.

Moreover, if the State Budget deficit continues to expand, or if the government decides to revise the existing upper limit on the deficit, it potentially creates conditions conducive to moral hazard, where the government becomes tempted to increase the deficit for populist or political purposes. If there is no supervision from the legislative body (DPR) and the public, checks and balances will become weak, thereby violating the principle of the rule of law. In addition, if a growing deficit is not accompanied by efficient and productive use of public funds, the result would be a rising debt burden with limited tangible outcomes. Ultimately, this could shift the fiscal burden onto future generations.

Thus, an increase in the State Budget deficit is not inherently negative. However, such a deficit must be authorized within a clear legal framework, managed transparently, and directed towards the productive rather than consumptive sectors. Without these principles accompanied by checks and balances, an expanded deficit risks undermining public trust, triggering economic instability, and ultimately reducing social welfare.

Policy Recommendations

According to the previous explanations, the following are policy recommendations for President Prabowo Subianto's administration. In general, related to strengthening the rule of law in fiscal management,

The Ministry of Finance must be able to strengthen the deficit reporting system and the realization of the APBN in real-time so that the public could monitor the use of public funds. Communication regarding the use of public funds must also be strengthened and carried out periodically. The Government must be able to uphold the existing legal framework as a fence for fiscal discipline. If relaxation is necessary, it must be done through open discussion of legal regulations with the DPR, independent institutions, as well as experts. The Ministry of Finance needs to be encouraged to prioritize the use of deficit financing in the productive sector to encourage economic and social added value. This would increase the high multiplier effect, including public welfare, as well as enhancing the public's and investors' confidence in the Government.

the Ministry of Finance must be able to strengthen the deficit reporting system and real-time State Budget realization so that the public could monitor the use of public funds. Moreover, communication regarding the use of public funds must also be strengthened and carried out regularly to provide real information to the public. The Government, together with the DPR and audit institutions such as the Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BPK), must strengthen checks and balances mechanisms.

Second, all government elements are expected not to unilaterally revise the deficit limit of 3 percent of GDP, including for populist or political reasons, because it has the potential to reduce Indonesia's legal and economic credibility. The government must be able to uphold the existing legal framework as a fence for fiscal discipline. If relaxation is needed, it must be through open discussion of legislative regulations with the DPR, independent institutions, and experts.

Third, the Ministry of Finance ought to be encouraged to prioritize the use of deficit financing in the productive sector and not in the consumer spending sector to promote economic and social added value. Spending in the productive sector will increase the high multiplier effect, as well as improving the public's and investors' confidence in the Government. This is expected to have an impact on the Government's ability and commitment to ensure that every Rupiah used or spent has a real impact on the national economy and community welfare.

Economy

The Analysis of Indonesia's Economic Conditions in 2026: Macroeconomics, Fiscal Policy, and Potential Risks

-Putu Rusta Adijaya-



Global economic growth conditions are predicted to continue to slow down in 2026. According to the report "World Economic Outlook: Global Economy in Flux, Prospects Remain Dim" (October 2025) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the slowing economic growth is driven by greater conditions of protectionism and economic fragmentations. In terms of other international policies, there have been massive cuts in development aid and a tightening of immigration. Approximately, there was a 9% decline in development aid in 2024 and 2025 (IMF, October 2025).

News related to tariff increases by the Donald Trump administration and the news on the potential for retaliation by US trading partner countries dominates during 2025. However, the US is negotiating trade agreements with several countries and is also providing relief, including to Indonesia. Most countries did not retaliate and kept the trading system open, and the private sector adapted by importing earlier and re-routing their supply chains (IMF, October 2025). Thus, the IMF estimates that these factors will have a smaller impact than expected, where global growth is predicted to be 3.2 percent in 2025 and 3.1 percent in 2026. There is a decrease of 0.2 percentage points compared to their forecast for the previous year.

This article shall analyze Indonesia's economic conditions in 2026 from several aspects; namely, the macroeconomic picture, fiscal policy, and potential risks in 2026, as well as policy recommendations for the government of President Prabowo Subianto.

The Conditions of Macroeconomic Prospects, Fiscal Policy, and Potential Risks in Indonesia in 2026

According to the "Advertorial Draft State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN) 2026" (2025) released by the Ministry of Finance, the Indonesian government is targeting several basic macroeconomic assumptions in 2026; namely, 1) economic growth at 5.4 percent driven by consumption, investment, exports and sustainable transformation; 2) inflation will be maintained at 2.5 percent, or still in the range of 2.5 ± 1 percent with the cooperation of the Central Government, Regional Government and Bank Indonesia (BI) as the monetary authority; 3) the interest rate for 10-year Government Securities (SBN) is set at 6.9 percent, which is supported by the resilience and improvement of the domestic economy.

The fourth basic macroeconomic assumption is that the Rupiah exchange rate against the US$ is maintained at a rate of IDR 16,500 per 1 US$, which is still influenced by conditions of global uncertainty; 5) crude oil prices at US$70 per barrel which are influenced by geopolitical conditions in the Middle East, global economic conditions, OPEC+ policies, and developing non-fossil fuel transportation policies, such as electric vehicles; and 6) oil lifting is targeted at 610 thousand barrels per day and gas lifting at 984 thousand barrels of oil equivalent per day.

The economic growth target of 5.4% in 2026 reflects optimism regarding economic recovery and optimism about the impact of implemented economic policies. If compared with the 2025 outlook, which is in the range of 4.7 percent to 5 percent, the economic growth target next year is 0.4-0.7 percentage points higher. However, the IMF (October 2025) estimates that Indonesia's economic growth in 2025 will be 4.9 percent and the same value next year, depending on global demand assumptions and domestic policies. As a reminder, Table 1 shows the annual growth rate of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (year-on-year/YoY) from 2019 to 2024.

Table 1.
Growth Rate (Percent)
of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (YoY)

Year	Growth Rate (Percent, YoY)	Change (Delta) from Previous Year (Percentage Points)
2019	5.02	-0.15
2020	-2.07	-7.09
2021	3.70	5.77
2022	5.31	1.61
2023	5.05	-0.26
2024	5.03	-0.02

Source: Central Statistics Agency (BPS), https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/2/MTA4IzI=/-seri-2010--4--laju-pertumbuhan-pdb-menurut-pengeluaran--persen-.html, accessed November 10, 2025.

As in Table 1, economic growth is in the range of ±5 percent after 2021, following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2025, according to the latest BPS data (November 5, 2025), the Indonesian economy grew by 5.04 percent (YoY) in Quarter III-2025. Economic growth is still supported by household consumption with a contribution of 53.14 percent, Gross Fixed Capital Formation (PMTB) of 29.09 percent, and exports of 23.64 percent.

Growth in household consumption was driven by consumption for transportation and communications of 6.41 percent due to the increase in the number of rail and international transport passengers, an increase in population mobility, and the retail sales index for vehicle fuel. In addition, household consumption for restaurants and hotels was 6.32 percent due to increased domestic tourist travel. Thus, the potential for Indonesia's economic growth in 2026 still has the potential to be driven by household consumption, PMTB, and can be driven by exports if international trade conditions improve and protectionist policies subside.

Regarding the controlled inflation target, which is still within the Bank Indonesia (BI) corridor range of 2.5 ± 1 percent, this shows that the people's purchasing power is maintained and provides flexibility for monetary policy to accommodate changes in domestic and external policies. At the Bank Indonesia Board of Governors (RDG BI) Meeting (October 22, 2025), the BI-Rate was maintained at 4.75 percent, the Deposit Facility (DF) interest rate at 3.75 percent, and the Lending Facility (LF) interest rate at

5.50 percent as an effort to maintain the stability of the Rupiah exchange rate and be consistent with inflation estimates in 2025 and 2026.

In general, as of September 2025, Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation was 2.65 percent (YoY), core inflation was 2.19 percent (YoY), which was driven by the consistency of BI's monetary policy and economic growth, which was still below capacity. Administered prices inflation was also still low at 1.10 percent (YoY), and inflation in the volatile food group increased to 6.44 percent due to increases in the prices of several crucial commodities in line with the end of the harvest period and increases in production input costs, such as chilies, onions, rice, and purebred chicken (BI, October 22, 2025).

In terms of fiscal policy, the "Advertorial on the Draft State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN) 2026" (2025) shows that the focus of fiscal policy next year is to encourage and strengthen programs according to Asta Cita's vision, including encouraging independence through food and energy self-sufficiency; downstreaming and industrialization; development of the village; bureaucratic and legal reform; as well as social and environmental harmonization. The government will also implement several short-term strategies, such as strengthening economic resilience through diplomacy and market expansion, protecting the business world and purchasing power, managing the APBN deficit, and optimizing state revenues.

These short-term strategic efforts at least show that the Indonesian government will implement the principles of economic freedom in order to maintain competitiveness, purchasing power, and encourage Indonesia's economic growth. Bureaucratic and legal reform is crucial because complicated policies hinder innovation, productivity, and increase business process costs. Adijaya (2025) in the Indonesia Report 2025 by The Indonesian Institute, Center for Public Policy Research (TII) stated that the regulatory efficiency pillar score still showed that Indonesia had a regulatory climate that provided opportunities for people to become self-employed, supports business activities, labor market flexibility, and monetary policy stability, although Indonesia's regulatory efficiency pillar score had decreased slightly. This indicates the need to monitor regulations that do not limit economic dynamics or innovation, such as environmentally friendly advanced energy technology products (Adijaya, 2025).

Apart from short-term strategies, the report "Advertorial on the Draft State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN) 2026" (2025) also explains

medium-term strategies in the focus of fiscal policy; namely, food security; energy security; Free Nutritious Meals (MBG); quality education programs; quality health programs; village development, cooperatives, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); strengthening universal defense; and acceleration of global investment and trade.

It can be seen that the 2026 State Budget is designed to encourage spending on social programs, the energy economy, and also defense, along with maintaining the APBN deficit at around 2.48 percent in 2026. This strategy has the potential to encourage more government spending, thereby encouraging domestic demand. The expansion of social programs, such as MBG and village development, cooperatives, and MSMEs, could increase household disposable income, thereby encouraging consumption in the low-income and middle-income segments, which leads to economic growth. Downstreaming and industrialization policies, such as food security and energy security, encourage the achievement of food and energy sovereignty, and raise the added value of food and energy products for export. Complementary policies to make this a success are deregulating licensing, training, and human capital development, and so on.

Apart from that, quality education programs and quality health programs could also encourage government spending through infrastructure development and public investment. Spending on education, vocational training, and development of vocational education and health could boost the quality of the workforce and national and regional productivity. However, the 'unseen effects' of this strategy are the increase in long-term financing if the funding for these programs comes from debt, and beneficiaries who are not on target if the governance and policy cycle processes are ineffective and inefficient.

Moreover, there are external risks, such as a decline in global demand due to protectionist policies, which could pressure the Rupiah exchange rate and reduce economic growth. Domestic risks, such as corruption and low realization of tax revenues, have also become obstacles in accelerating socio-economic programs if they are not accompanied by targeting, transparency, and accountability mechanisms in the implementation process.

The Government is targeting economic growth of 5.4% in 2026, which reflects optimism regarding economic recovery and also optimism about the impact of implemented economic policies. The government has also outlined short-term and medium-term strategies in the 2026 RAPBN. However, there are 'unseen effects' from this strategy. Therefore, the Government could encourage a Regulatory Impact Assessment to simplify regulations, harmonize regulations, improve digitalization of the business licensing process, carry out a Public Expenditure Review (PER), and encourage a policy of integrating one data or open data to increase efficiency and openness in budget realization, achieving achievements in narrowing down corrupt practices and encouraging public trust in the government.

Policy Recommendations

According to the explanations above, the following are policy recommendations for President Prabowo Subianto's government. First, in encouraging regulatory efficiency that is targeted and in accordance with the corridors, President Prabowo's government through the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Investment and Downstreaming/Investment Coordinating Agency, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform, the Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency must synergize and work together to encourage Regulatory Impact Assessment in simplifying regulations and harmonizing regulations while also working together with regional governments. Apart from that, the digitization of the business licensing process also needs to be improved so that the central government, regional governments, ministries/institutions could monitor and integrate, which could reduce corrupt practices and increase transparency.

Second, related to strengthening fiscal governance and the efficiency of government spending, the Government through the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency, Ministry of Home Affairs together with regional governments must be able to ensure that the budget allocation for social, educational and health programs that have been announced can be on target through the Public Expenditure Review (PER). PER is an analysis in determining whether government budget allocations reflect policy priorities and identifying efforts in progress towards policy targets (World Bank, accessed November 10, 2025). This is to ensure public spending is effective and can have a direct impact, as well as keeping the APBN fiscal deficit below the target of 3 percent.

Third, in encouraging transparency, accountability, and mitigation of corruption, the Government, through the Coordinating Ministry for Law, Human Rights, Immigration, and Corrections, the Ministry of Law, and related ministries/institutions such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BPK), must synergize and collaborate in work audits and risk-based audits. These ministries/institutions could collaborate with civil society organizations to encourage a policy of integrating one data or open data to increase efficiency and transparency in budget realization, achievements, in order to narrow down corrupt practices and encourage public trust in the government and the rule of law in Indonesia.

Laws

National Heros and the Image of the Nation

-Christina Clarissa Intania-


Sumber Foto: detik.com

The second President of the Republic of Indonesia (RI), Soeharto, was finally awarded the title of National Hero by President Prabowo Subianto on National Heroes' Day (10/11), despite public criticisms and opposition that continue to echo at the time of writing (12/11). Previously, Social Minister Saifullah Yusuf (October 21), who submitted a list of candidates for National Heros to the Council for Titles, Medals, and Honors, said that the second President of the Republic of Indonesia, Soeharto, met the requirements to be a national hero. Other names nominated were the 4th President of Indonesia Abdurrahman Wahid and labor leader and activist Marsinah (kompas.id, 10/23/2025).

On the other hand, some members of the civil society have voiced their opposition to this decision. A total of 486 individuals from the civil society have joined a movement to write to President Prabowo, asking him not to award the title of hero to former President Prabowo because (katadata.co.id, 4/11/2025). Many political and legal observers, academics, and other members of civil society have also consistently voiced their rejection of this decision since the beginning of the nomination process (bbc.com, 20/5/2025).

So, what has caused former President Soeharto to continue to advance in the National Hero selection list? How does this reflect the state's view on the human rights violations and corruption that were rampant during the

administration of former President Soeharto? This article shall attempt to provide an overview of the above thoughts. It also provides an overview of how heroism can represent a nation.

The Concept of Heroism

Actually, what is the function of heroes? Theodore L. Gross (1977) says that in literature, heroes are needed to "dramatize the moral texture" of a country. These heroes symbolize unspoken ideal attitudes, unwanted fears, and dreams of a desired life. Chalermsri Chantasigh (2003) says that heroism has been used to influence aspects of society. For example, in American sports , there is a system of awarding "star player" positions or similar titles to promote the values of teamwork and sportsmanship (Chantasigh, 2003).

Heroism, according to Anthony D. Smith (2003) in his article "Chosen Peoples," is generally an example of national values, a representation of "society," and an instrument for national purposes. These figures who are considered heroes are also seen as "authentic" and ingrained in their place of origin. They exemplify the goodness within a nation and personify goodness and hope. The advantage of having heroes is that they inspire and motivate people in society to improve themselves (Smith, 2003; Koulos, 2021). This is also in line with Cavender, *et al (*2013), who say that national heroes generally have four outstanding characteristics, namely: a significant biographical narrative, clear purpose, implications for gender representation, and manifestation of national goals and values.

Heroes become moral teachers and role models for society (Ershov, 2021). The concept of sacrifice is also central to defining the narrative of heroism. From compliance with social obligations to "great sacrifice" for the nation, which illustrates patriotism (McDermid, 2020). Cavender, *et al (*2013) describe the power of purpose as sacrifices made to achieve goals or even the willingness to sacrifice oneself. Otabek Gaibullaev (2023) describes the characterization of heroes as generally emphasizing the role of heroes as examples of national ideology, fighting for the independence and freedom of their country, fighting for the interests of the people, the dignity of the nation, and even world peace and humanity.

The suitability of heroes with the values and goals of the country according to Cavendr, *et al* (2013), according to their findings, is also adjusted based on the policies or political direction of the country at that time as a form of policy legitimacy. On the other hand, heroism can be used as a distraction from the real situation of the country. For example,

PFC Pat Tillman and Private Jessica Lynch, who according to Cavender, *et al (*2013) were distractions from the United States' war, which was widely rejected by its citizens, and from the shame caused by the torture at Abu Ghraib military prison, as well as an attempt to clear the United States' name from the invasion of Iraq.

It can be concluded that heroes, whether real historical figures in a country or fictional characters in literature, have an important function in guiding the morals of a community. Heroes are an important tool for countries to promote desired values through figures who are considered relevant and expected to be role models for the community.

National Hero Title in Indonesia

Indonesia has recognized a number of heroes who have contributed to the advancement of Indonesia. The conferral of the title of hero is regulated in Law Number 20/2009 concerning Titles, Medals, and Honors (Title Law). In this law, a National Hero is defined as "a title given to an Indonesian citizen or someone who fought against colonialism in the territory that is now the territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia who died or passed away in defense of the nation and state, or who during his lifetime performed heroic acts or produced extraordinary achievements and works for the development and progress of the nation and state of the Republic of Indonesia."

In awarding titles, several principles are taken into consideration; namely: a. nationality; b. humanity; c. democracy; d. justice; e. exemplary behavior; f. prudence; g. objectivity; h. openness; i. equality; and j. reciprocity. The purpose of awarding titles is to honor the services of individuals, groups, government institutions, or organizations that have devoted themselves and made significant contributions in various fields of national and state life; to foster a spirit of heroism, patriotism, and struggle in every individual for the progress and glory of the nation and state; and to foster an attitude of exemplary behavior in every person and encourage the spirit of producing the best work for the advancement of the nation and state.

To obtain the title of hero, Article 25 of the Title Law stipulates that a person must be an Indonesian citizen or someone who fought in the territory that is now part of the Republic of Indonesia; have moral integrity and exemplary character; have rendered services to the nation and state; be of good character; be loyal and not betray the nation and state; and never have been sentenced to imprisonment based on a court decision

that has obtained permanent legal force for committing a criminal offense punishable by a minimum of 5 (five) years imprisonment.

The specific requirements for someone to be awarded the title of National Hero after their death are that during their lifetime they must have led and engaged in armed struggle or political struggle or struggle in other fields to achieve, seize, defend, and fulfill independence and realize national unity and integrity; never surrendered to the enemy during the struggle; dedicated themselves to service and struggle for most of their lives and exceeded the duties assigned to them; have produced great ideas or thoughts that can support the development of the nation and state; have produced great works that are beneficial to the welfare of the wider community or enhance the dignity and prestige of the nation; have a high level of consistency in spirit and nationalism; and/or have fought a struggle that has a wide reach and national impact.

The initial stages of awarding titles are proposed by individuals, state institutions, ministries, non-ministerial government agencies, local governments, organizations, or community groups. Proposals are submitted to the Council for Titles, Medals, and Honors (GTK Council). The GTK Council then verifies the proposals to examine and assess the validity and eligibility of candidates for the title of National Hero through a Central Level Title Research and Assessment Team or a regional level team. The title is then confirmed by a Presidential Decree.

The honors bestowed include posthumous promotion or rank elevation; a military funeral with full honors; a state funeral or other designation at the expense of the state; burial in a national heroes' cemetery; and/or a lump sum or periodic payment to the heirs. On the other hand, for recipients of the title who have passed away, their heirs are obliged to uphold the good name of the hero and the services rendered to the nation and state; to preserve and perpetuate the struggle, work, and values of heroism; and to foster and nurture the spirit of heroism.

In its development, there has been no regulation governing the revocation of titles. Article 36 of the Title Law only regulates the revocation of medals and honors. Similarly, in the implementing regulations in Government Regulation No. 35/2010 concerning the Implementation of Law No. 20/2009 concerning Titles, Medals of Honor (*Gelar*), and Medals of Distinction (*Tanda Kehormatan*) and Minister of Social Affairs Regulation No. 15/2012 concerning the Nomination of National Heroes.

The Connection with Soeharto and the Direction of the Nation

If assessed in accordance with the series of regulations related to the conferral of the title of National Hero, Suharto has fulfilled the specific requirements that are alternative in nature, whereby he can fulfill only one of all aspects. However, it is quite difficult to assess the general requirements; namely, "having moral integrity and exemplary character" and "good behavior," which are explicitly stated in Article 25 of the Title Law. The explanations of this law define moral integrity and exemplary character as "believing in or having faith in God Almighty, as evidenced by good behavior and character." Meanwhile, there are no sufficient explanations regarding good behavior in the awarding of the title of National Hero to Soeharto.

If viewed over time, the Government has provided various opportunities that paved the way for Suharto to become a National Hero. It all started with cases of human rights violations and corruption that had never been brought to trial while he was alive due to military intervention that prevented this from happening (Eickhoff, *et al,* 2017), political consolidation that favored Suharto at the time (Riyadi *et al,* 2020), poor health that was used to avoid legal proceedings (Anderson, 2008), and other structural and systemic obstacles that tended to be problematic and weakened oversight (Dewanto, 2022).

Over time, there have also been several occasions where actions taken by the state have further distanced Suharto from allegations of human rights violations and corruption. These include the revocation of the People's Consultative Assembly Decree (TAP MPR) Number XI/MPR/1998 regarding the eradication of corruption, collusion, and nepotism, which mentioned Suharto as one of the perpetrators. The reason for the revocation of this TAP MPR, according to a statement by Bambang Soesatyo (September 25, 2024), was that Suharto had personally passed away, so the TAP could be revoked (kompas.id, September 26, 2024).

Not only that, there are also efforts by the Government, especially Minister of Culture Fadli Zon, to rewrite history in a "more positive" tone and to focus on the nation's achievements. Thus, including human rights violations that have occurred throughout history is not considered the purpose of this national history rewrite. The history that will be written is only that which is "constructive and positive" (indonesia.go.id, 5/29/2025).

This meant that Suharto had no criminal records, making him normatively eligible. Structurally and systemically, the law and history were changed

to pave the way for the erasure of traces of Suharto's human rights violations and corruption.

Therefore, in awarding the title of National Hero 2025, it is necessary to question the fulfillment of the principles of humanity, exemplary behavior, and prudence by the GTK Council and the President in awarding the title of hero to Soeharto. This is because the GTK Council has turned a blind eye to the human rights violations that occurred during Soeharto's administration. The argument that Soeharto is a role model that this country wants and that its people possess also needs to be questioned. In this case, the state has clearly not been careful in choosing the role models they want.

Returning to the concept of heroism discussed by experts in the previous chapter, heroes must reflect the values and ideals of a nation. Suharto was a major figure in the military. However, does this override the other violations he committed and commanded during his reign? The public has every right to question where this country is headed.

In line with the current President and Vice President's Asta Cita, which prioritizes human rights and the eradication of corruption, the state has instead awarded National Hero status to a person who is at the center of a whirlwind of human rights violations and corruption. So, in what form will the Prabowo-Gibran administration's commitment to and prioritization of human rights and the eradication of corruption be carried out if the perpetrator is made a role model for the nation?

Recommendations

Referring to the discussions of the controversy surrounding the awarding of the title of National Hero to Soeharto, here are some recommendations:

a. President Prabowo must revoke the Presidential Decree (Keppres) that named Suharto a National Hero of the Republic of Indonesia. This has set a bad precedence for the efforts to enforce human rights and eradicate corruption during President Prabowo's term.

b. The House of Representatives and the National Human Rights Commission must bridge the gap between public rejection and the Government by urging the Government to revoke this Presidential Decree;

President Prabowo's decision to award Soeharto the title of National Hero must be critically noted and challenged by the people. So, in what form will the Prabowo-Gibran administration's commitment and prioritization of human rights and eradication of corruption be carried out if even a perpetrator is made a moral role model for the nation?

c. Civil society, comprising various groups, needs to try to challenge the Presidential Decree designating President Suharto as a National Hero in the State Administrative Court. Although there is no mechanism for revoking the title of National Hero, and it is unlikely that the lawsuit will proceed, it is worth trying as part of the people's movement and demands to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights.

d. Members of civil society must educate each other to remind them that there is a history of human rights violations and corruption surrounding President Suharto. In this way, moral values and role models in the society could be maintained to condemn human rights violations and acts of corruption, collusion, and nepotism.

Laws

The Freedom of the Press in the Prabowo Era

-Christina Clarissa Intania-



Recently, PT Tempo Inti Media, publisher of Tempo magazine, was sued by Indonesian Minister of Agriculture Amran Sulaiman for publishing a news poster on May 16, 2025 titled "Poles-poles Beras Busuk" (Polishing Rotten Rice). The post was deemed "highly judgmental and damaging to the sense of justice because it was not supported by data or facts, and therefore its truthfulness is uncertain," according to the lawsuit document filed by the Minister of Agriculture (hukumonline.com, 9/16/2025). Initially, Tempo was asked to change the poster's title, apologize, moderate the content, and report the implementations of these recommendations to the Press Council. These recommendations were carried out within 48 hours (kompas.id, 5/1/2025). However, the Minister of Agriculture continued with legal action in court.

According to the Chair of the Indonesian Independent Journalists Alliance (AJI) Nany Afrida, the legal action taken by the Minister of Agriculture should not have been taken because it should first have been resolved through the mechanisms stipulated in Law Number 40/1999 concerning the Press. Nany considers this to be an attempt to silence and bankrupt the media (aji.or.id, 3/11/2025). On the other hand, the Minister of Agriculture's legal counsel stated that the lawsuit against Tempo was not intended to silence press freedom, but rather to uphold journalistic ethics and protect the dignity of Indonesian farmers. If granted, the proceeds

from the lawsuit will reportedly go to the state treasury to support national food programs, irrigation improvements, and fertilizer provision (viva.co.id, 8/11/2025).

The prosecution of Tempo serves as a warning to examine the current state of press freedom. This article shall elaborate further on other incidents that reflect the current state of press freedom in Indonesia, policies that protect press freedom, and government actions that reflect or restrict press freedom.

The Current State of Press Freedom in Indonesia

Reflecting on the press freedom values and rankings issued by Reporters Without Borders (2025), Indonesia currently has a press freedom value of 44.13 and ranks 127th out of 180 countries. This score is lower than the previous year, which was 51.15, ranking 111th out of 180 countries. The press freedom score from Reporters Without Borders assesses political, economic, legal, social, and security aspects (Reporters Without Borders, 2025).

From a political perspective, the administration of President Prabowo, who has a history of involvement in human rights violations, and Vice President Gibran, who is the son of former President Joko Widodo, does not provide a good guarantee for press freedom. From a legal perspective, Law No. 1/2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law No. 11/2008 on Information and Information Technology, Law No. 27/2022 on Personal Data Protection, and Law No. 1/2023 concerning the Criminal Code, which will come into effect in 2026, pose challenges to press freedom (Reporters Without Borders, 2025).

The lawsuit filed by the Minister of Agriculture is not the only example of political interference in academic freedom. There was also the incident where the State Palace confiscated the press cards of CNN Indonesia journalists for asking President Prabowo for instructions regarding the Free Nutritious Meals poisoning case, which was of a doorstop nature. However, the press cards were returned to the journalists concerned and it was confirmed that such actions would not be repeated (hukumonline.com, 29/9/2025).

Economically, ten large media groups dominate the mainstream media market. Most media outlets, especially traditional ones, struggle to find a sustainable economic model, particularly after the decline in advertising revenue. As for online media, many still rely heavily on advertising on

social media. Economic protection for media practitioners has become difficult (Reporters Without Borders, 2025).

The economic challenges faced by the journalism industry today are also reflected in how print media companies are transforming their business models to become fully digital (Supadiyanto, 2015). Examples include Koran Sindo and Harian Republika (tempo.co, 1/7/2023). Not only that, AJI also noted that there was a wave of layoffs affecting hundreds of workers in the media industry due to the industry's difficulties in surviving (AJI.or.id, 5/6/2025).

Based on social considerations, the strong religious culture that often restricts the publication of journalistic content on topics such as LGBT is one issue that stands out. One recent incident was the boycott of Trans7 by a group of Islamic boarding school students due to the investigative journalism program "Xpose Uncensored," which criticized feudalistic practices in Islamic boarding schools in an "unconventional" manner. A number of communities, such as the Nadhlatul Ulama Executive Board's Legal Aid and Counseling Institute, have also stated that they are preparing legal action against Trans7 for the broadcast. The broadcast sparked discourse on social media regarding the relevance of the feudal culture of Islamic boarding schools. However, the broadcast was considered to have damaged the image of Islamic boarding schools and misrepresented the teachings of these schools. Following a meeting with alumni of the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, Trans7 ultimately acknowledged its negligence and apologized (news.detik.com, October 14, 2025).

Then, in terms of safety, many journalists face danger when covering corruption cases or mass demonstrations and have to deal with the police or even the army (Reporters Without Borders, 2025). AJI recorded that from January 1, 2025 to August 31, 2025, there were 60 cases of violence against journalists and the media (aji.or.id, 1/9/2025). The threats varied, ranging from intimidation in the form of a pig's head sent by an unknown person to a Tempo journalist; cyber attacks on the Narasi TV, Konde.co, and Batamnews.co websites; to physical violence (kompas.id, 20/3/2025; aji.or.id, 11/4/2025; amnesty.id, 25/8/2025).

Attitudes, Partiality, and the Direction of Press Freedom

The situation of press freedom as described above shows that press freedom in Indonesia is still not fully protected by the state. This is because the actors who violate press freedom are mostly state actors, such as officials and law enforcement officers. This is in line with what AJI has

With the prevalence of violence, threats, and other challenges faced by the press, it is important to urge a clearer and more tangible commitment from the state and all its officials, as well as all elements of the nation, to freedom of the press."

stated, that most of the attacks and violence are suspected to have been carried out by the military and police institutions (aji.or.id, 1/9/2025).

Since the 1998 Reform, the state's commitment to press freedom began to be realized with the enactment of Law No. 40/1999 on Basic Provisions on the Press. However, laws alone are not enough if cases of violence continue to occur frequently. The welfare of workers in the media world also remains an issue to this day.

Following the confiscation of press credentials by the State Palace, the Palace reiterated President Prabowo's commitment to upholding openness and freedom of the press, as stated by Yusuf Permana, Deputy for Protocol, Press, and Media of the Presidential Secretariat (September 29, 2025). Therefore, given the increasing number of acts of violence and other threats faced in defending press freedom, the state's stance needs to be clearer and more explicitly supportive.

This commitment should not only be reflected in statements but also in consistent policies that provide space for the press to operate without fear of threats and criminalization.

Recommendations

Referring to the discussions above, here are some recommendations to promote and protect press freedom in Indonesia:

a. The Indonesian National Police must stop prosecuting the press for anti-public participation or anti-Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (anti-SLAPP) activities;

b. The Ministry of Human Rights and the House of Representatives should reevaluate laws and regulations that threaten press freedom or draft regulations that have the potential to threaten press freedom in order to propose amendments;

c. All ministries/government agencies must understand the Constitutional Court's ruling, which reaffirms the limitations in the ITE Law regarding hate speech and defamation so that it is not misused to restrict the press; and

d. Civil society from all walks of life needs to understand the concept of an independent and free press, but also needs to understand how to discern the news provided in the media.

Politics

The Analysis of Political MKD's Decision on Five DPR Members: Perspective Ethics , Parties , and the Public

-Felia Primaresti-



Sumber Foto: jawapos.com

Alleged ethical violation case involving five members of the House of Representatives (DPR); namely, Ahmad Sahroni, Nafa Urbach, Eko Patrio, Surya Utama (Uya Kuya), and Adies Kadir, had caught the public's attention. (Kompas.id, 11/5/2025). The allegations of violations included dancing during a meeting, controversial comments, as well as triggering big demonstrations in August 2025. The public felt that their criticisms and inputs had not been responded seriously by the relevant members of the DPR. This had resulted in a tragedy in the form of the looting of the houses of some DPR members, including Ahmad Sahroni and Uya Kuya. These incidents had confirmed the tensions between the society and DPR members (Kompas.com, 30/8/2025).

The DPR Honorary Council (MKD) held hearings for three months to investigate the alleged violations. The process was not only for evaluating individual actions but also for reflecting dynamics politics and governance ethics in DPR. From the process, MKD decided that Ahmad Sahroni, Eko Patrio , and Nafa Urbach were proven to have violated the DPR's code of ethics, so they have been given sanctions of being suspended between three and six month. Meanwhile, two other members, Adies Kadir and Uya Kuya, were proven not guilty, escaping any sanctions. (Kompas.id, 11/5/2025).

From a political perspective, the case is important to be analyzed. First, the involvement of DPR members has caught the public's attention. The public tends to evaluate their behavior, not only from a DPR internal law perspective but also from a moral/ professionalism perspective. This shows that the popularity and public image can be tainted by bad behaviours.

Second, the case shows the bad public communication by officials in Indonesia. This was also discussed in The Indonesian Institute report (2025) article titled "The 200-Day Evaluation of the Red and White Cabinet Ministers " shows the weak political communication of government officials. Many officials are not used to facing criticisms from the public and to building effective relationships with the society. The Indonesian Institute's report also emphasizes that the capacity to communicate, openness, and the ability to explain policies transparently are very important for aspect public officials.

Many new public officials should learn and adapt. They need to understand ethics, governance legislations, and sound interactions with the society. This case should become a momentum for the DPR to strengthen the mechanisms for internal supervisions, ethical training, and improvements programs so that similar incidents could be minimized in the future.

In addition, the case has questioned the accountability of DPR members. The MKD's sanctions, even though were very limited, provided a signal that MKD could take actions against DPR members who have violated ethics. However, the public also needs certainty that DPR's ethical mechanisms are not only formality but serious efforts to save guard integrity, commitment , and professionalism.

The presence of celebrities in politics, as seen in the case of this, has created a dilemma. One one side, public figures can bring a new energy. On the other hand, they also face greater reputational risks. This confirms the need to balance between popularity and responsibility and between sound political communication and consistent professionalism .

From the perspective of socio-political dynamics, the cases also underlines the connection between response the Government's response and the reactions of the society. The big demonstrations in August 2025 and the looting of DPR members' houses show the public's distrust could trigger further escalation. This was a reminder that public officials need to respect internal norms, social stability, and the society's trust society.

From the perspective of institutional politics, this case shows a serious challenge to DPR's credibility. The reputation of DPR has been questioned. MKD must show its capacity in upholding principle accountability and transparency.

Parties like the National Democratic Party and the National Mandate Party are being tested. Have the parties' supports affected cadres sanctions? Or have they upheld strict internal discipline as part of the learning process? The parties' decisions could influence the narratives in the society.

This case also affects the public's perception public towards DPR members, especially because some of the members are celebrities. A perception that "artists become politicians" could cause skepticism about the professionalism of DPR members. This is why political communication becomes important . The narratives constructed by the parties — the DPR members , the political parties, MKD, and media— play a big role in managing the public image. For example, Uya Kuya has been able to maintain his professionalism according to existing evidence, while some other members have not been successful. This narrative has become a strategic tool for bad reputation mitigation and public perception management.

In the perspective of regulations and policies, this can be associated with a number of normative instruments. The DPR Code of Ethics is the base for MKD in evaluating the behavior of its members. In addition, DPR's internal regulations regulate sanctions to members, starting from suspension to the revocation of salaries. The relationship between sanctions of the parties and those of MKD is also important. The principle of *good governance,* transparency, accountability, and service public must be implemented. The MD3 Act also acts as the legal umbrella for the rights and authorities members of the DPR.

The political communication strategy aspect has become a key factor in understanding the implications of the case. The narratives delivered by the DPR members and political parties have influenced the credibility of DPR. In addition, the media plays a role as the amplifier of the pressure from the public, forcing DPR and political to act in accordance with the expectations of the society. This could impact the electability of political parties and the perceptions towards DPR members.

The evaluation of sanctions shows a number of things. First, the suspension may provide enough deterrent effect but not ensure a long-term behavior change. Second, the inconsistency of sanctions could

The ethical violations of five new members of DPR have caught the public attention and and questioned the professionalism of DPR members. This case highlights the behaviors, ethics, political communication , and accountability of DPR members. Therefore, it is very important the DPR, political partiesn and the public to strengthen the public's trust public on the National Parliament .

weaken the perception of justice and ethics. Third, the political parties and public figures could influence the effectiveness of sanctions.

Therefore, some policy recommendations are important to improve the transparency of the MKD process, to implement sanctions, to educate about ethics, as well as strengthening oversight through the media and the public. This should also be strengthened via the party political internal discipline towards DPR members.

In conclusion, the case has become an important reflection on the connection between ethics, party politics and interests of stakeholders. MKD, as the DPR's internal ethical instigution, must uphold the principle accountability. Political parties must be wise in responding sanctions to its cadres, balancing internal support with need for guarding public image.

The public and the media must keep supervising DPR members, forcing DPR to be transparent and responsible. From the policy perspective, strengthening internal regulations and the code of has become the prerequisite to a healthy culture in the National Parliament.

Recommendations

a. The DPR Honorary Council (MKD) should strengthen the internal mechanisms for enforcing ethics, providing full transparency and upholding consistent sanctions. This is important to show that the MKD remains independence.

b. DPR together with political parties must organize training on ethics for DPR members, including regular training on legislative ethics, good governance, and public communications.

c. In addition, senior members should become memtors for new DPR members so that they could understand professional standards professional and expected behaviors and could adapt to the culture of the National Parliament.

d. DPR and political parties need to strengthen the accountability in the eyes of the public. Meanwhile, the media and the public should play a supervisory role.

e. DPR members must response to criticisms from the public so that similar incidents similar could be avoided.

Politics

The Importance of a Democratic Policy Formulation Process in the Revision of the Election Law

-Arfianto Purbolaksono-



In the demonstrations conducted by the Labor Party and the Labor Unions at the end of August, one of the demands raised was for a revision of Law (UU) Number 7/2017 concerning General Elections (Pemilu). The demand is voiced because the current regulation has not yet delivered clean elections. The current election implementations only lead to corrupt behaviors due to money politics and reciprocity, a situation that impacts the people, including laborers (kompas.id, 27/8/2025).

The Chair of the Labor Party, Said Iqbal, stated that the public must be involved in the discussions so that the revised Election Law sides with public interest and not just with the political parties discussing it in the National Parliament. Furthermore, the public must also ensure that the Constitutional Court's (MK) decisions related to the Election Law are accommodated in the new Law (kompas.id, 27/8/2025).

The demands of the labor represent a loss of confidence in the implementations of the current Election Law, primarily because the regulation is deemed incapable of controlling the practice of money politics, not adequately protected the representation of marginal communities, and ambiguos in election administration.

Moreover, the provisions in Election Law Number 7/2017 have proven inadequate to face contemporary political dynamics. Current regulation

has not addressed new challenges such as digital-based campaigning, weak regulation and sanctions on political financing, and minimal protection for candidates from minority groups. Consequently, the election proceeds with legal loopholes that allow manipulative practices, both in campaigning and in the recruitment of legislative candidates.

In fact, a number of Constitutional Court (MK) rulings also demand the adjustment of norms in the Election Law, the latest being MK Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024, which separates the implementations of National Elections and Regional Elections (Pilkada). This decision certainly requires legal certainty to prevent overlap or a void in regulations. If not responded to immediately with a revision, the conduct of the election has the potential to stumble on legality issues.

Considering the the situation above, the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) plans to discuss the revision of the Election Law in 2026. This is certainly a political momentum that will determine the future direction of Indonesian democracy. This revision is not only related to the technical aspects of the 2029 Election administration but also concerns how the country will solidify its democratic foundations. Therefore, the discussion on the revision of the Election Law must not be treated as a short-term pragmatic agenda, but rather as a public policy process that must be carried out transparently, deliberatively, and based on broad public interest.

The Importance of the Policy Formulation Process

In public policy literature, the policy formulation process is viewed as a crucial stage in the overall policy-making cycle. According to William N. Dunn, policy formulation is the stage where public problems are clearly defined, alternative solutions are designed, and the implications of each policy option are rationally analyzed. This stage is highly determinant of the quality of the resulting public decision, because a policy born from a good formulation process will be more legitimate, effective, and resilient to political pressure (Dunn, 2018).

James E. Anderson also emphasizes that public policy is not just the final outcome in the form of a law or regulation but a product of a process involving complex interaction between the government, interest groups, and the public. In the policy formulation stage, openness and public participation are prerequisites to ensure that the decisions made truly reflect public interest, not just elitist or narrow interests (Anderson, 2014).

This theoretical framework is relevant for assessing the planned revision of the Election Law. Throughout the years, revisions to Indonesia's election

laws have often been driven by short-term political logic, where large parties dominate the formulation of substantive rules to benefit their position in electoral competition. The legislative process, which should be a space for deliberation and joint policy formulation, often turns into an arena for closed political transactions. Consequently, the resulting election laws tend to be unstable, easily changed, and unresponsive to the needs of voters or the technical challenges of election administration. If this pattern is repeated in the 2026 revision, the impact will not only be on the technicalities of the 2029 election but also on the decline in the quality of democracy as a whole.

The Chair of Commission II of the DPR RI, Rifqinizamy Karsayuda, believes that a comprehensive revision of the Election Law is necessary to address crucial issues. He highlighted three main problems that had historically caused confusion and inconsistency in the implementation of both national and regional elections (Pilkada). According to Rifqi, the first problem is the overlap of norms and provisions regulating similar matters in different laws. This condition, he said, often created disharmony between legislative election and regional election rules (metrotvnews.com, 26/10/2025).

The second problem is the large number of multi-interpretive norms in election rules that lead to different interpretations at the implementation level. The third problem is the failure to accommodate practical political realities on the ground in the legislation (metrotvnews.com, 26/10/2025).

This statement reflects the awareness that the discussion on the revision of the Election Law is a strategic and complex process. However, this awareness must be translated into mature policy formulation practices, and not becomimg an excuse to narrow the space for public dialogue or to make the revision merely an elitist process in a closed room.

On the other hand, Titi Anggraini, an election law expert from the University of Indonesia, asserted that the current Revision of the Election Law was recorded as a priority bill in the 2025 National Legislation Program (Prolegnas), proposed by the DPR Legislation Body (Baleg) , as well as a priority in the 2026 Prolegnas, proposed by Commission II of the DPR. This must be interpreted as an effort for comprehensive transformation, not just a patch-up of rules. Every new provision formulated must not stop at pragmatic compromise but must be directed towards strengthening the integrity and quality of democracy (hukumonline.com, 7 Oktober 2025).

According to the opinions above, previous election experiences show how technical rule ambiguity and differences in regulatory interpretation cause heavy operational burdens, increased risks of legal disputes,

and weakened supervisory effectiveness. Therefore, the 2026 Election Law revision needs to provide sufficient legal stability long before the election stages begin so that organizers have adequate time to prepare the election properly.

The revision of the Election Law must also be directed at expanding political representation. In a democratic system, elections should be an instrument that allows all citizens, including women, people with disabilities, indigenous groups, and minorities, to participate equally. However, the design of election rules often reinforces the dominance of the elite of large parties, either through high parliamentary thresholds or a nomination system that is not entirely open.

Therefore, in the process of revising the Election Law, if referring to the theories of Dunn and Anderson, the public policy formulation stage must not be skipped or narrowed down to just a political meeting among a handful of elites. This stage should be an arena where election problems are defined precisely, alternative solutions are developed based on empirical evidence, and policy implications are carefully considered. The involvement of public actors, including civil society, academics, election organizers, and young voter groups, will enrich the policy formulation process and strengthen the legitimacy of the decision.

To achieve this, DPR needs to change the pattern of deliberating bill revisions, which has often been closed and rushed. A good policy formulation process requires open deliberation, transparent documentation, and a substantive mechanism for public participation. If the process of revising the Election Law is carried out openly, the public will not only be spectators but will also participate in shaping the direction of national election policy.

Recommendations

The future of Indonesian democracy will be highly determined by how the revision process for the Election Law is carried out. If the process is transparent, inclusive, evidence-based, and prioritizes public interest, this revision could strengthen the legitimacy and quality of Indonesian democracy. Conversely, if the process is controlled by narrow, closed, and elitist interests, the resulting law would be politically and legally fragile.

To that end, there are several important policy recommendations that need to be considered: First, the DPR must formulate a roadmap for the discussion of the Election Law revision from the start so that the public can anticipate and participate in every stage. Second, the DPR must establish a permanent deliberative forum involving civil society, election

Good public policy is always born from an open and rational formulation process. The 2026 revision of the Election Law is not just about the technicalities of election rules but a test of our commitment to building a democracy with integrity."

organizers, academics, and vulnerable community groups to ensure public input is properly absorbed.

Third, the formulation process must be based on a comprehensive evaluation of previous election implementations so that the revision is not reactive, but strategic and solution-oriented. Fourth, the entire process must be documented and published openly to strengthen accountability.

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CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

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Research and Program Manager
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Made Natasya Restu Dewi Pratiwi

Program and Supporting Staff
Gunawan

dministration Office
Nadine Ufairah

Finance Officer
Rahmanita

IT Staf
Usman Effendy

Design dan Layout
Gilang Aditya

Jl. HOS. Cokroaminoto No. 92,
Menteng, Jakarta Pusat - 10310
Ph. (021) 315-8032
contact@theindonesianinstitute.com
www.theindonesianinstitute.com

ISSN 1979-1976