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OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**
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INDONESIA PROGRAMME
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» The “Indonesia Election Watch 2009” is a weekly analysis of the key issues surrounding Indonesia’s 2009 Elections, from the parliamentary to the presidential elections.

» The analysis is produced by the Indonesia Programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

» The analysis would benefit leaders in the business, policy-making, media, and research community in Singapore and beyond.

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Indonesia Election Watch 2009

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Teething Problems for the Parliamentary Elections

As Indonesia heads to the polls today (Thursday 9 April), questions over the technical preparations by the General Elections Commission (KPU) are brewing. Issues like the alleged numbers of fictitious voters; the delayed distribution of ballot boxes and papers—along with shortages and damaged ones—are just some of the main hurdles facing the 2009 legislative elections.

As a result, the idea of postponing the elections—in the spirit of having a more “prepared and better one”—has been mooted, triggering comments and speculation from party officials and observers. Given these complications, *Election Watch* looks at some of the challenges facing KPU in its attempt to organise one of the world’s most -complicated elections.

Shadow voters?

One of the most worrisome “technical” aspects of the legislative elections is the issue of the voters list—dubbed Fixed Voters’ List or DPT. The problem lies in the alleged “manipulation” of the voters list with fictitious voters—ranging from under-age kids and deceased persons to the simple duplication of names.

Though initially reported in the case of the recent East Java gubernatorial election, such “shadow voters” are now being reported in other areas as well, including Central Java, East Java and Riau. Officials from the Local Elections Supervisory Committee (*Panwaslu*) were reported by the *Jakarta Post* as claiming recently that in Banyumas, Central Java, there were 6,854 “shadow” voters—4,000 were deceased individuals, and 1,000 names were registered twice—out of around 1.2 million registered voters in the regency.

A similar case of “shadow voters” was found in Pekanbaru, in addition to the 50 active military officers who were included in the DPT for Marpoyan Damai district, where an Air Force base is located. Recent laws forbid active military officers from exercising their voting rights.

The *Jakarta Post* also reported that in West Java, nearly 38,000 voters were deleted from the DPT, while in Jambi, over 2,400 names were slashed. In other provinces, those who were previously registered in the temporary voters list simply

disappeared from the DPT. With cases of voter fraud potentially brewing, local polling bodies at all levels have come under heavy fire, with some 20 small political parties saying they will reject the election results.

Logistical hurdles

Organising an election for over 171 million voters spread across 33 provinces and over 440 regencies can certainly be a logistical nightmare. Indeed, as polling gets under way, KPU is still struggling to make sure that all the necessary logistical support is in place at the designated polling stations, especially the ballot papers, boxes and booths.

However, the General Elections Supervisory Body (*Bawaslu*) claimed that by April 4, only 60 percent of ballot papers had reached their destinations, with more than 13 million papers assigned to 24 provinces still unaccounted for. KPU promised that the ballot papers would arrive at polling stations by April 8 (a day before the election), although local Election District Committees (PPK) were supposed to have received the ballot papers by April 3. *Bawaslu* also found 5.1 million damaged and missing ballot papers, while the Election Monitoring Working Group (P4) reportedly claimed that it found at least 1.7 million damaged papers in Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Palembang, Riau and Aceh.

In the case of Aceh, after a flood washed out ballot papers kept at the Samudra district polls committee office, the district-level KPUD demanded that KPU print out 2,000 new ballot papers, and if damaged papers could not be replaced, then the election in the area might be delayed. Regardless, KPU claimed on April 6 to have sent all election materials, including the 5.7 million ballot papers that were supposed to replace damaged and missing ones. However, the new papers KPU sent out might not be sufficient as around 700 million ballot papers are needed.

Additionally, various regencies across Indonesia were reported to be having problems with their ballot booths. In other areas, an adequate supply of writing materials is also a problem considering that new elections regulations require voters to mark their ballot paper with a pen. This is not to mention the distribution of logistics to remote areas in provinces like Papua. For this reason the military and police have been deployed to assist KPU in managing these logistical hurdles—from folding the unusually large ballot papers to transporting ballot boxes.

Not surprisingly, such logistical hurdles and the incredibly tight deadline set by KPU have created fears that the elections may have to be delayed—even though this might be a bit too late now.

What's next?

Indeed, despite the heavy criticism from all sides and the logistical quagmire, as of April 6, the KPU declared that they would not delay the polls. The problem however is that such “technical” problems might eventually lead to post-election conflicts, whether at the elite or grassroots level. Vote counting in local polling stations could well be the first “battle ground” among unsatisfied parties—who might discount the tallies on “technical grounds.” Moreover, issues of voter fraud could not only raise doubts about the legitimacy of the elections, but also lead to countless legal battles, possibly embroiling the country in a post-election

political melee.

However, political analysts state that the majority of voters themselves might not pay too much attention to the post-election results, as many of them are quite tired with numerous elections that have little impact on their daily lives. Thus, post-election conflict might ensue between party supporters and political elites, though not necessarily involving the general public.

That said, postponing the elections could also be problematic because it might create an unnecessary power vacuum. In this respect, KPU has been urged to stick to the current schedule by a coalition of Muslim groups who call themselves the Team for a Successful Election, consisting of elements from the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) and the Islamic Propagation Council (Dewan Dakwah Indonesia). They speculated that if the legislative elections fail, chaos and conflict could ensue—leading to a possible take-over by military elements.

In the final analysis, although technical issues relating to the legislative elections might compromise the legitimacy of the next government and parliament, the prospect of numerous post-election conflicts with far-reaching consequences should be of greater concern. However, despite of these challenges, with a new parliament directly-elected for the first time in its history, Indonesia's democratic journey will continue to move the country forward—no matter how tumultuous the path may be.

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