

Indonesia's decisive moment

NEW PRESIDENT:

There is anticipation and concern about where the country will go from here

TOMORROW will mark the decisive moment when Indonesians will know who will be the country's next president. The mood in the country — already anxious and tired after a long wait and a hard-fought contest — is one of anticipation and also concern about what will happen next.

It is interesting to note that despite the fact that both candidates have refused to concede defeat, cracks have begun to show among some of their supporters already: Abdillah Toha, one of the founding leaders of the Peoples' Trust Party (PAN), has appealed to the Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa camp to admit defeat and to accept the results, whatever the outcome may be.

Unfortunately, it is not likely that this stalemate will be resolved any time soon. For starters, the final margin between the two candidates proved to be much smaller than hoped for, by both sides.

The Joko "Jokowi" Widodo-Jusuf Kalla camp had signalled that it expected, and wished for, a lead of more

than 10 per cent. This has not happened, and after the quick count results came in two weeks ago, it appeared that the lead enjoyed by Jokowi-Kalla's camp was less than five per cent. A smaller number of quick count agencies suggested that the Prabowo-Hatta camp had gained the lead, but again, with a margin of less than five per cent.

Thus, there is the likelihood that whoever wins the race by tomorrow would have done so by the narrowest of margins and, thereby, opening up the opportunity for the other side to dispute the results and, perhaps, even take the matter to court. Hopeful though many political analysts are at the moment, it seems that tomorrow will not see a final, neat, clean conclusion to what has been a messy race.

Then, there is the question of how the new president of Indonesia will be able to gain support within the Peoples Assembly, or DPR. At the moment, the parties that dominate DPR happen to be aligned with Prabowo's Gerindra and Hatta's PAN. The Gerindra-PAN-led alliance totally dominates DPR at the moment, and should Jokowi-Kalla manage to win, the next president of Indonesia will be faced with the challenge of having to push for laws and reforms against what may well be a hostile assembly.

But, the uncertainty does not stop there, for the Gerindra-PAN alliance may also face its own internal difficulties if some of the parties aligned with it now decide to jump ship and hop over to PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party — Struggle)-led alliance. Over the past week, voices of discontent have emerged among the ranks of Golkar, in particular (that is currently part of the Gerindra-PAN alliance), where members have called for a serious rethinking of their current position. Golkar has never been in opposition, and should it turn out that Jokowi-Kalla wins after all, some of the leaders of Golkar have called for the party to join the ruling and winning coalition.

All this is taking place amid a society that has grown bored and tired with sensational politics, and where everyone seeks a quick and neat resolution. What is worrisome, however, is that already there is talk of parties sending out thousands of members and supporters to "safeguard" (*mengamankan*) the election results and announcement of the new president tomorrow. When analysts note that this may well be Indonesia's most serious challenge and test so far, they were not exaggerating. Indonesia's fate may well be decided by tomorrow, and the rest of Asean will feel the impact as well.



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Indonesian police taking part in a roll call and drill at the general election commission building in Jakarta. AFP pic