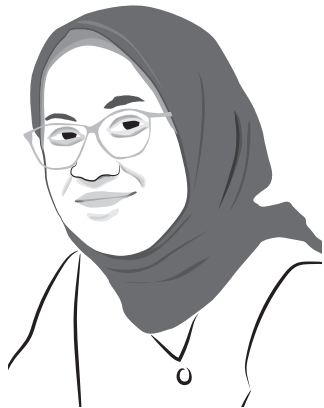


# Ministry Bill: adding, reducing, or merely rearranging?



**Felia Primaresti**

Political Researcher at The Indonesian Institute, Center for Public Policy Research (TII)

Supratman Andi Agtas, Chair of the Legislative Body (*Baleg*) of the House of Representatives (DPR), suggested that the amendment of Law Number 39 of 2008 concerning State Ministries has been proposed for inclusion in the category of “open cumulative bills” or “drafts” that the DPR or the President may submit outside of the National Legislation Program (*Prolegnas*) under certain circumstances.

Changing the number of ministries in Indonesia’s government structure is a strategic step to significantly improve the efficacy and efficiency of the state bureaucracy. In light of the dynamic political landscape and increasing demands for bureaucratic reform, the discourse over adding or reducing ministries must be carefully considered. This requires objective considerations free from personal biases. Although the number of ministries is entirely up to

the president’s prerogative right, as is the choice of the ministers, the step toward establishing an effective government must be taken into account. The addition or reduction of ministries should be based on objective needs, bureaucratic efficiency, and the public interest, not merely on political interests.

For Indonesia, adding ministries would potentially result in an even more complex and uncontrollable bureaucracy. Coordination between ministries would become increasingly difficult, hindering efficient decision-making and effective policy implementation. Instead of providing solutions, adding ministries potentially creates new challenges for existing bureaucratic reform efforts.

Adding ministries may also result in significant resource waste. With each additional ministry, government administrative expenditures rise rapidly, putting an added burden on the state budget, thus squandering valuable resources. This increased spending is not always accompanied by an improvement in the quality of public services.

Moreover, adding more ministries potentially increases the risk of corruption and abuse of power. During Jokowi’s 10-year presidency, six ministers and one deputy minister in his cabinet have been involved in corruption cases. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS), Indonesia’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) has declined from 40 in 2019 to 34 in 2022, while the Anti-Corruption Behavior Index (IPAK) also dropped from 3.93 in 2022 to 3.92 in 2023.

More positions of power cause more potential for corrupt behavior, and weak oversight systems exacerbate the situation. This certainly jeopardizes the integrity and public trust in government institutions. According to a survey conducted by Indikator Politik Indonesia in 2023, public trust

in the president and other state institutions was still relatively high, at 70-85 percent. The trust level needs to be maintained and not degraded by impaired civil servant integrity.

In contrast, reducing the number of ministries can simplify the bureaucratic structure, speed up the flow of information and reduce administrative costs. However, reducing ministries must be done carefully, to ensure that no critical functions are overlooked. To avoid overlap or gaps in responsibilities, ministries must clearly define and divide their tasks and functions.

To address this situation, the government needs to take bold and comprehensive measures. The first and most essential step in adjusting the number of ministries is to ensure the move is aligned with the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and existing laws and regulations. The amendment of the State Ministry Law is genuinely in the interest of the people and aims to fulfill the mandate of bureaucratic reform. Moreover, the legislative process must be rigorously conducted to ensure that the changes are legal, valid, and in line with constitutional principles.

To reach an agreement that benefits the country, the executive and legislative branches must work closely together on this ministry reform, with the intention of enhancing government effectiveness and efficiency. Adding ministries should accommodate new functions to address contemporary challenges such as climate change, digital technology, and socio-economic issues. Therefore, adding or reducing the number of ministries should not complicate the bureaucracy, impede decision-making or significantly increase operational costs.

The public and numerous stakeholders must also accept the change in the number of ministries. The

DPR, as the people’s representation, plays a key role in gathering grassroots aspirations and reacting to feedback. This is necessary since the process involves communicating and conveying the reasons and benefits of the adjustments. To gain support and political legitimacy, the government must be transparent and engage in open discussions with the public, as without public support, there may be resistance that will impede implementation.

To guarantee a smooth process, changes must be approved and implemented with a clear transition plan, which involves changes in organizational structures, procedures and administrative systems that support new or streamlined ministries. The transition must be closely monitored to avoid disruptions in public services. Changes in the number of ministries require adjustments in organizational structures and administrative systems that support the new or streamlined ministries.

Close monitoring and evaluation are pivotal in ensuring that ministry reforms achieve their defined purpose. The government must establish effective oversight mechanisms to monitor these changes. Periodic reviews should be carried out to examine the impact of changes to the ministry structure and identify areas needing improvement. Changing the number of ministries in the Indonesian government is a strategic decision to consider carefully and thoroughly.

This reform has the potential to improve the state bureaucracy by focusing on legal compliance, government effectiveness and efficiency, budget and resources, human resource capacity, policy stability, public acceptance, implementation and oversight. This measure is expected to result in a more responsive, transparent, and accountable government to face future challenges.