

Navigating Zaken Cabinet & Ministry Expansion

As the October 20, 2024 inauguration of President-elect Prabowo Subianto and Vice President-elect Gibran Rakabuming Raka approaches, discussions regarding cabinet formation have emerged. One of the attention-getters is establishing a “Zaken Cabinet,” or “cabinet of experts”.

Ahmad Muzani, Secretary General of the Gerindra Party, stated that President-elect Prabowo Subianto aims to form a *zaken* cabinet in his administration. Muzani further emphasized that Prabowo intends to appoint experts qualified in their respective fields to lead the ministries.

The term *zaken* cabinet refers to a cabinet made up of professionals and specialists in their respective areas, also known as a “business cabinet” (Mochtar & Madinier, in Nggilu & Wantu, 2020). However, forming such a cabinet requires balancing the interests of political parties that supported Prabowo-Gibran. At the same time, the coalition backing Prabowo-Gibran is now broader than it was during the 2024 presidential election. Eventually, Prabowo’s leadership and cabinet will depend on how he navigates his administration.

The discussion around forming an “expert cabinet” has aroused another debate: the potential expansion of the number of ministries. Since May 16, 2024, the idea of adding more ministries has surfaced, along with the talks to amend Law No. 39 of 2008 on

State Ministries. The Legislative Body’s Working Committee (*Baleg Panja*) of the House of Representatives (DPR) has approved the law revision as a DPR-led initiative.

During a plenary session to discuss drafting the State Ministries Bill, all political factions expressed their support for moving the bill forward. Some critical revisions were approved, including removing Article 10, which previously stated that deputy ministers are career officials, as included in the draft law explanation.

Another significant amendment is to Article 15, which previously limited the total number of ministries to 34. However, the revised article allows the president to determine the number of ministries based on the government’s needs to ensure effective governance. The revisions to the law also suggest monitoring and reviewing the State Ministries Law.

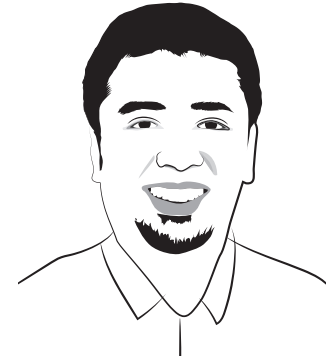
The discourse around expanding ministries was also backed by the approval of DPR’s Legislative Body (*Baleg*) on revising the State Ministries Law on September 12, 2024. It will soon be ratified at the plenary session next week. As the discussions progress, the question remains: how will the government balance forming an expert-driven cabinet without adding more ministries?

Forming a cabinet is a president-elect’s prerogative, including the decision to add ministries. However,

it’s important to remember that expanding ministries also means a bloated bureaucracy. Maintaining an efficient, effective structure that delivers top-notch public services should remain a priority. Prabowo Subianto must optimize the existing bureaucracy, ensuring it operates efficiently while upholding good governance principles to enable excellent public service delivery without expanding ministries or agencies, while improving current performance.

The Prabowo-Gibran administration also has the option to form an expert-driven *zaken* cabinet while retaining the support of their political allies, by requiring party representatives to possess specific expertise, aligning them with his government’s vision. Hence, a broad coalition and an expert cabinet can coexist. However, transparent internal selection from political parties is required, and they must delegate only qualified individuals to serve in the administration. Beyond party affiliates, professionals and experienced volunteers could also be included in the *zaken* cabinet.

Another crucial aspect Prabowo and Gibran must consider in forming their cabinet is their commitment to anti-corruption efforts, which should be upheld by the Prabowo-Gibran team and their supporting political parties. A strong stance on anti-corruption is vital to ensuring a clean



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and effective government.

Addressing these factors will allow the next cabinet to reflect diverse interests, successfully implement the vision, mission, and programs promised during the 2024 election campaign, and continue the work of the previous administration. Constructive opposition will also play a key role in maintaining checks and balances within the government and parliament, ensuring a healthy democracy and sound governance.