

Muslim scholar to head Pancasila body

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President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has assigned Muslim scholar Yudi Latif to lead the newly established presidential working unit on the implementation of the state ideology of Pancasila.

The working unit has been tasked with combating growing extremist ideologies in the country.

Yudi, co-founder of the Nur-cholish Madjid Society, is a renowned Pancasila scholar. He is known for his book, *Negara Paripurna: Historisitas, Rasionalitas, Aktualitas Pancasila* (A Perfect State: The Historicity, Rationality and Actuality of Pancasila).

Megawati Soekarnoputri, leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), meanwhile, has been chosen as the

Yudi Latif tapped to head Pancasila working unit

Unit tasked with combating extremist ideologies

body's chief advisor.

Noted Muslim intellectual and pluralism activist Ahmad Syafii Maarif said he had been asked by the presidential office to become a member of the advisory board and confirmed that Jokowi had selected Yudi to lead the non-ministerial institution.

"Around three days ago, I was asked by Cabinet Secretary Pramono Anung on behalf of the President to become a member of the advisory body. The head of the working unit is Yudi Latif," Maarif told *The Jakarta Post* on Friday.

Maarif said he had yet to be

briefed by the presidential office about who would lead the nine-member advisory board, but a source familiar with Jokowi's decision confirmed that Megawati would serve in the top job at the advisory body.

Presidential spokesman Johan Budi confirmed that Jokowi had selected several names for the unit's advisory and executive bodies, but refused to reveal any names.

Johan said the inauguration of the selected individuals would take place next week. "The oath-taking ceremony will probably take place sometime next week," Johan told the *Post*.

Contacted separately, Yudi did not deny or confirm his appointment as chairman of the presidential working unit. "It is not yet official," Yudi told the *Post*.

Critics have raised concerns that the decision of Jokowi to es-

tablish the new body through the issuance of Presidential Regulation No. 54/2017 will replicate the now defunct Agency for the Propagation of Pancasila (BP7) established by former president Soeharto to indoctrinate citizens about the five founding principles of Pancasila for the purposes of his propping up his own hold on power.

Jokowi has set up the body amid rising concerns over the growing influence of movements that he has labelled intolerant or anti-Pancasila.

The executive board will have three deputies respectively on examination, advocacy as well as prevention and evaluation.

Johan shrugged off concerns linking the presidential working unit with BP7. However, he said both institutions had the same goals, namely to ensure that the

values of Pancasila were well implemented in society. They will differ, however, in how they achieve these goals, he claims.

"For sure, the working unit will employ different methods from BP7. We will focus on developing creative ways to spread the message of Pancasila, for example by posting videos on YouTube and social media," Johan said.

Johan said the body would visit schools, government offices and conduct seminars in public to disseminate the spirit of Pancasila, adding that discussions in the public sphere as well as in the media would also be driven by discourses related to Pancasila.

The team will also ensure that curriculums at school comply with the values of Pancasila.

Johan further said the unit would not be used by the government to label any organization or

movement critical of the government as anti-Pancasila.

"The body is set up to disseminate the values of Pancasila and it does not have any authority to label organizations or someone as anti-Pancasila," Johan said.

The government recently announced that it would ask the court to ban the hard-line Islamist group Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) for campaigning to establish a caliphate to replace Pancasila as the country's ideology.

Haris Azhar, executive director of human rights organization LOKATARU, argues that Jokowi has taken a wrong turn in his attempt to deal with growing sectarianism by creating an indoctrination program to contain the situation, adding that the program would not be effective because people were now resistant to any form of indoctrination.