

**Voters Cool on Veteran Jakarta Governor**  
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**By Our Correspondent**

***Race regarded as a proxy battle to foreshadow the 2014 Presidential race***

If the Jakarta governor's race is being looked upon as a curtain-raiser for the Presidential election in 2014, the chances look pretty slim for additional *reformasi* at the top, as President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono once practiced it (or didn't, as the case may be).

Each of the country's potential presidential candidates or principal parties backed a gubernatorial contender in a bid to demonstrate organizational and money-raising clout in yesterday's race. Joko Widodo, the popular mayor of the central Java city of Solo, pulled ahead of the incumbent, Fauzi Bowo, with 43 percent of the vote against 34 percent for Fauzi. Although official results for the race, held yesterday, won't be known for more than a week, several polling organizations have come up with largely the same totals.

With none of the candidates winning a majority in the six-way race, a runoff election will be necessary to decide the winner.

The one encouraging point to make is that while the Old Guard may be lining up for the presidential race, in fact the gubernatorial election had an interesting sidelight, according to a veteran political observer in Jakarta. Of the six candidates in the race, three were reformers – Jokowi, Nurhayat Wahid and Faisal Basrie. Together, the three of them finished first, third and fourth and garnered somewhere near 55 percent of the total vote, leaving the old guard behind. And if Jokowi can make anything like the headway he made in Solo, where he was credited with reviving a riot-scarred city, at least Jakarta comes out ahead.

Prabowo Subianto, the former head of Indonesia's special forces unit Kopassus and the divorced son-in-law of the late strongman Suharto, was Joko's primary backer although he was a candidate of the Indonesian Party of Struggle, headed by former President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

While Joko, known universally as Jokowi, was named Indonesia's best mayor in 2011 and is regarded as a reformer, having run a relatively clean and efficient government in Solo, a city of 520,000 people, Prabowo doesn't enjoy nearly as sterling a reputation. While he has managed to rehabilitate his name somewhat after for involvement in human rights atrocities in both the attempt to keep Timor Leste in Indonesia and in the 1998 race riots that shook the country in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis, he is firmly in the country's Old Guard.

Prabowo heads the Great Indonesia Movement Party or Gerindra, He teamed with the Indonesian Party of Struggle (PDI-P) headed by former President Megawati Sukarnoputri. At this point, Prabowo may well be the strongest presidential candidate despite condemnation of his 1998 activities. If there were such a thing as an Indonesian princeling, he would be it. He comes from a wealthy family and married into the Suharto clan. His father served as Suharto's economics minister after having founded Bank Negara Indonesia in 1946.

Despite Prabowo's alleged involvement during the 1998 riots, when an estimated 1,000 Chinese died and more than 160 Chinese women were raped as army units ran wild in Jakarta, Solo and other cities, the Chinese are said to be slowly warming to him, partly because he is supposedly anti-Islamist and because he looks better to them than any of the other candidates. In part that appears to be because Prabowo lured Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, an ethnic Chinese, from the Golkar Party headed by Aburizal Bakrie to be Jokowi's running mate.

Thus, having engineered Jokowi's candidacy and found him a Golkar running mate, Prabowo has made himself central to the gubernatorial race.

Fauzi Bowo, a member of Yudhoyono's Democratic Party, had been expected to be the frontrunner. But the party is nearly paralyzed by a multimillion dollar scandal over the construction of the athletes village for last year's Southeast Asian Games. Party officials all the way up to Anas Urbaningrum and possibly SBY himself have been implicated. The Corruption Eradication Commission is methodically picking its way through the mess and indicting and convicting officials as it goes. The fact that Fauzi did so badly is emblematic of the collapse of the party and its long-gone reformasi reputation. He is largely considered to have failed his five-year stint as governor in a city that is considered almost ungovernable because of burgeoning population growth and conflicting jurisdictions.

The major loser appears to be Aburizal Bakrie, the accused tax-dodging tycoon who heads Golkar. Bakrie backed Alex Noerdin, who got only 4.4 percent of the vote and finished fifth of the six candidates. He was hampered by an announcement that he was being investigated by the Corruption Eradication Commission on charges of financial misdealings in a previous office.

The next thing to watch is the coalitions that will form between political parties. Prabowo must find a bigger horse to ride. Under the 2008 presidential election law, candidates must be nominated by a party or coalition that won at least 25 percent of the popular vote.

It certainly won't be Golkar, which is headed by Bakrie, who has long since announced his intention to run for the presidency himself although he remains as deeply unpopular as Noerdin was in the current election.

Likewise, the Democratic Party appears to have nearly collapsed in on itself as a result of the athletes' village scandal and a slowly fading Yudhoyono, who seems nearly paralyzed politically at the top. Whatever is salvaged from the ruins of what in the 2009 election was the country's biggest political party is liable to be no. 2 in a presidential coalition for the next race.

Some political observers in Jakarta believe Prabowo could lead a PDI-P-Gerindra ticket, although the party's old guard remains leery of him, preferring Megawati, whom most of the political establishment regard as a spent force, however. But Indonesia's party politics are malleable to the extreme. With two years to go, the current ones could very well evanesce into something else entirely.

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