We use cookies to enhance your experience, analyze site traffic, and deliver personalized content. By continuing to use our website, you agree to our use of cookies as described in our Cookie Policy and Privacy Policy.

Accept All Cookies Reject All
Manage Cookies

X

We use cookies to enhance your experience, analyze site traffic, and deliver personalized content. By continuing to use our website, you agree to our use of cookies as described in our Cookie Policy and Privacy Policy.

Allow All

Manage Preferences

- Always Active
  Essential Cookies
- Performance and Analytics Cookies
- Functionality Cookies
- Advertising and Targeting Cookies

Confirm My Cookies

- NATIONAL STRATEGY
- National Resilience
- Energy & Resources
- Policy
- SECURITY & INTELLIGENCE
- Defense & Security
- Cyber & Espionage
- EXPOSÉ
- Investigations
- Financial Crimes
- Profiles
- ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY & CULTURE
- Hidden Truths
- Environment
- Society & Culture
- VOICES
- Video & Podcast
- Editorial
- Perspective
- CEO & Leaders Interview



Legislators grill Culture Minister over 1998 sexual violence remarks

- **Published on 02/07/2025 GMT+7**
- **Reading time 3 minutes**
- **Author: Renold Rinaldi**
- **Editor: Imanuddin Razak**

A House of Representatives (DPR) hearing on July 2, 2025, saw a heated verbal clash between PDI-P lawmaker Mercy Chriesty Barends and Culture Minister Fadli Zon over the minister's controversial comments denying mass rapes during the 1998 riots.

Mercy, a member of House Commission X and a former investigator for the Joint Fact-Finding Team (TGPF) on the 1998 tragedy, accused Fadli of undermining the experiences of victims and the credibility of past investigations.

"If we talk about the 1998 mass rapes, it hurts. I was part of the team that documented testimonies from victims," Mercy said during the hearing.

She asked the minister to visit the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) to review its archive of reports, and demanded that Fadli apologize for his remarks, which she said disrespected victims and humanitarian activists.

In response, Fadli Zon clarified that his comments were not intended to deny historical facts but to encourage a more "positive tone" in historical narratives. He emphasized the importance of highlighting national unity rather than focusing solely on divisive events.

"Our goal is not to forget history, but to ensure that it serves as a constructive lesson," Fadli said.

"I am not denying what happened. I strongly condemn it. But when we use terms like 'mass rape,' we must consider the legal and historical implications. The term implies a systematic and structured act, like what happened in Nanjing or Bosnia," he cited.

Fadli acknowledged the existence of victims and said that he supports lawful documentation and recognition of their suffering. However, he maintained that historical writing should avoid narratives that could reignite ethnic or religious tensions.

The controversy did not end there. Fellow Commission X member and historian Bonnie Triyana raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest in the national history writing project, particularly the dual role of Susanto Juhdi, who serves as both an editor of the current historical text and a previous editor of the controversial "Kamus Sejarah".

"I think that is part of the problem," Bonnie said, questioning the integrity of the editorial process under the Ministry of Culture's oversight.

Fadli responded by distancing himself from direct editorial decisions, saying he did not intervene in the content or personnel selections.

"Please ask the historians themselves if I intervened. Even when it comes to terms like 'Orde Lama', I asked whether such a term even existed at that time," he said, referring to the Soekarno-era governance.

He reiterated that the goal of the new historical narrative was to present Indonesia’s achievements such as the Asia-Africa Conference as part of a broader, more balanced portrayal of the nation's past.

Tag

History Culture Violence Controversy

Already have an account? Sign In

- **Freemium**

  Enter email address
  Start reading

- **Monthly Subscription**
  20% OFF

  $29.75 ~~$37.19~~/Month

  Cancel anytime

  This offer is open to all new subscribers!

  Subscribe now

- **Yearly Subscription**
  33% OFF

  $228.13 ~~$340.5~~/Year

  Cancel anytime

  This offer is open to all new subscribers!

  Subscribe now

Set up email notifications for these topics

- ☐ Susanto Zuhdi
- ☐ Fadli Zon
- ☐ Ministry of Culture
- ☐ National History
- ☐ 1998 riots
- ☐ Bonnie Triyana
- ☐ Mercy Chriesty Barends



Read Also

[View All]

- 

  History Narrative Culture

  ### New Indonesian history project stirs debate over objectivity, political complexity

  As Indonesia prepares to celebrate the 80th anniversary of its independence, the governmen's initiative to rewrite the nation's history has reignited old tensions over how the past should be remembered and who gets to decide.

- 

  Policy

  ### Indonesia to revise colonial history narrative, emphasizing resistance over occupation

  Minister of Culture, Fadli Zon, has announced a major revision of Indonesia's historical narrative, particularly focusing on the Dutch colonial period, aimed at shifting the emphasis from a prolonged narrative of colonization to one that highlights the enduring spirit of resistance by the Indonesian people.

- 

  Policy **Governance**

  ## Indonesia allocates Rp9 billion to rewrite national history

  The Ministry of Culture has allocated a budget of Rp9 billion (US$551,000) for a major national project to rewrite Indonesia's history books.

- 

  Policy **Law** **DPR** **State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)**

  ## House accelerates deliberation of revised SOE law amid institutional changes

  The House of Representatives (DPR) Commission VI is expediting discussions on the revision of Law No. 1/2025 on State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) following the transfer of several SOEs ministerial functions to the Daya Anagata Nusantara Investment Management Agency (Danantara), which was established in late February 2025.



www.indonesiabusinesspost.com © 2021-2026 Indonesia Business Post - PT. IBP Media Group