

BILLY ARMAN

FROM A RUBBERTAPPER TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

The Biography of the Innovator Behind
Affordable Mobile Call Tariffs in Indonesia

ZULFIKAR FUAD

BILLY ARMAN FROM A RUBBER TAPPER TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

***The Biography of the Innovator Behind Affordable
Mobile Call Tariffs in Indonesia***

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Cover Design: Fachmy Casofa
Book Layout: Fachmy Casofa
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First Edition, September 2016
Second Edition, September 2018
Third Edition, February 2024
New Edition, September 2025
English Edition, May 2026

ISBN: 978-602-14481-3-7

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Romantisme Kehidupan

Adalah ada seorang pun yang tau, tentang
apa yang akan terjadi pada masa hari, masa hari
tahun depan. Bahkan bisa tahun setelah pun.

Pengalaman hidup ini mengajarkan saya bahwa
komisi dan bukannya akhir dari sebuah harapan.
melainkan awal dari sebuah perjuangan.
Saya bersyukur dapat melewati setiap ujian
kehidupan sehingga memperoleh ketekunan.
Cukup mengabdikan kepada negeri bertaqwa
Indonesia.

Semoga kitab saya buku ini menjadi sumber
inspirasi, motivasi, dan semangat bagi
generasi penerus bangsa Indonesia.

Udah Romantisme Kehidupan

~ Billy Arman ~


The Romance of Life

No one knows what tomorrow, the day
after, next year, or even 30 years from
now will bring.

This life experience has taught me that
poverty is not the end of a hope. Instead,
it is the beginning of a struggle. I am
grateful to have passed through each of
life's tests to earn the honor of serving my
beloved country, Indonesia.

May the true story in this book be an
inspiration, motivation, and spirit for the
next generation of Indonesian leaders.

That is the romance of life.

Billy Arman

“The Indonesian people should be proud and grateful for the achievements and contributions of Billy Arman, an innovator who helped shape the progress of telecommunications development in our country. Not many people know that Indonesia’s affordable GSM call rates — which eventually made Indonesia one of the countries with the cheapest telephone tariffs in the world — were first conceived by Billy Arman. Thanks to Billy Arman’s ideas, Indonesians today can enjoy affordable GSM telephone services. In the past, only the wealthy and middle class could afford mobile phones because the tariffs were expensive. Today, almost every segment of society is connected through mobile phones.”

— **Ir. H. TIFATUL SEMBIRING**, Minister of Communication and Information Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (2009–2014), Member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia for three terms since 2009.

“Intelligent people are not always creative, but creative people are generally intelligent. Every time one door closes, they quickly find another. That is exactly what happened with Billy. Even though his formal education was limited, he was persistent, highly self-driven, and extraordinarily creative. Thanks to his perseverance, Indonesians today are able to enjoy affordable telephone services.”

— **Prof. RHENALD KASALI, Ph.D.**, academician, business practitioner, and Professor of Management at the Faculty of Economics, University of Indonesia.

“Before this book was officially published and distributed, I had already finished reading it. Mr. Billy’s life story is deeply moving. His life journey is extraordinary. I truly admire him.”

— **Prof. Dr. DAHLAN ISKAN**, Minister of State-Owned Enterprises of the Republic of Indonesia (2011–2014),
Founder of Jawa Pos Group.

“There are many golden stories hidden within the lives of people with extraordinary mental strength. They are wellsprings of life wisdom whose benefits emerge when they are presented in a book. Mr. Billy’s story radiates waves of wisdom and enlightenment. His life is a collection of trials that he continuously transformed into blessings. Those who view life’s trials as a form of honor are capable of changing their circumstances for the better. That is the most striking message conveyed in this book.”

— **ALBERTHIENE ENDAH**, biographer and novelist.

“I deeply admire Billy Arman’s extraordinary perseverance and fighting spirit in pursuing his dreams. Mr. Billy succeeded in realizing his dream of becoming a successful entrepreneur in Jakarta — something that would have seemed impossible considering his background, environment, and difficult childhood. Even today, his hometown remains largely unchanged from what it was during his youth. I believe this biography will greatly inspire countless other ‘Ek Ans’ to step into the future with optimism through the fighting spirit to pursue dreams of a better life, just as Billy Arman has demonstrated.”

— **Drs. CHRISTIANDY SANJAYA, S.E., M.M.**, Vice Governor of West Kalimantan (2008–2013, 2013–2018), Member of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (2019–2024).

“Mr. Billy’s life story is compelling and deeply moving. I believe this book will become a bestseller. Congratulations and success to Mr. Billy.”

— **Ir. HASNUL SUHAIMI, M.B.A.**, President Director of PT XL Axiata (2006–2015).

“Billy Arman is persistent, resilient, courageous in making decisions, full of brilliant ideas, and tolerant in religious life. These are the qualities that led him toward the gates of success. Congratulations, Om Billy. Continue contributing your work to the nation and the country.”

— **Dr. dr. RACHMAWATI ARSYAD**, Presidential Physician of the Republic of Indonesia (2004–2014).

“My family and I warmly welcome the publication of Billy Arman’s biography, A Rubber Tapper’s Journey to the Palace. During the years Billy accompanied my late father, Zahid Husein, as his personal assistant at the Presidential Palace, we communicated very frequently, even though I often lived in Taiwan for educational purposes. Especially with my late brother, Drh. Syamsudin Hidayat. Hopefully this book will inspire underprivileged children. They, too, can become like Billy.”

— **NUR HIDAYAWATI**, Head of Arts, Cultural Affairs, and State Palace Household Management, Presidential Palace of the Republic of Indonesia (2009–2014), daughter of the late Zahid Husein.

FOREWORD

Admiral (Ret.) Dr. DIDIT HERDIAWAN ASHAF, M.P.A., M.B.A.



Billy Arman is a man whom I have come to know well as a person of strong character. Forged by a life journey marked by hardships and severe trials since childhood, he faced every challenge with resilience and succeeded in transforming obstacles into opportunities. These invaluable life lessons shaped him into a resilient, creative, hardworking individual with an unyielding spirit.

A native son of Pontianak, known in his childhood as “Ek An,” he has grown into a successful entrepreneur in Indonesia as the leader of Tuas Mas Group and Tunas Mandiri Group. Yet despite his achievements, simplicity and a deep sense of social concern remain firmly rooted in his character.

Not only is he a man of remarkable creativity, but important innovations in the development of telecommunications in Indonesia are also among his many contributions and achievements. In addition, he possesses a profound spirit

of service to the nation and the state, which earned him the trust to serve as the personal assistant to the Head of the Presidential Assistance Bureau under President Soeharto and as the personal assistant to the Coordinating Special Staff of Vice President Jusuf Kalla.

This biography of Billy Arman is important reading for the younger generation who will carry the future of this nation. Through this book, they will understand that success never comes overnight. It must be achieved through a strong determination to fulfill one's aspirations, the willingness to step outside one's comfort zone, hard work carried out consistently, and an unwavering refusal to give up.

I hope this book will inspire the future leaders of our nation.

** Admiral (Ret.) Dr. Didit Herdiawan Ashaf, M.P.A., M.B.A., served as Vice Chief of Naval Staff of the Indonesian Navy (2014–2015), Chief of General Staff of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (2015–2019), Inspector General of the Ministry of Defense (2019), Special Assistant to the Minister of Defense for Naval Affairs (2019–2024), Vice Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia (2024–present), and Head of the Pantura (North Coast) Management Agency (2025–present).*

FOREWORD

Lieutenant General (Ret.) WARIS



I am grateful to Almighty God for having had the opportunity to know a man whose hardworking character had been forged since childhood — Om Billy, or Billy Arman — during the New Order era within the Presidential Palace environment.

Since holding the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, I served in the Presidential Security Force (Paspampres) from September 1996 until September 1997, during the administration of President Soeharto and Vice President Try Sutrisno. After serving as Commander of District Military Command 0814 Jombang from 1997 to 1998, I was reassigned to Paspampres during the presidency of President B.J. Habibie as Deputy Commander of Group B. Later, when Abdurrahman Wahid became President, I was promoted to Deputy Commander of Group A, serving until 2001.

Because of my duties within the Presidential Security Force, most of my activities took place around the North Wing and South Wing of Merdeka Palace, as well as at the residences of the President and Vice President.

During President Soeharto's administration, around 1996, while serving as Battalion Commander of Security Group B Paspampres, I first came to know Billy Arman. At that time, I addressed him as Om Billy. We both worked within the Palace environment, and Om Billy was most frequently stationed at the North Wing of Merdeka Palace and only occasionally at the South Wing.

At the time, Om Billy served as the personal assistant to Mr. Zahid Husein, Head of the Presidential Assistance Bureau of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as treasurer of several foundations led by President Soeharto. We often met, whether for official matters or simply casual conversations as people who had grown close over time. During relaxed conversations with colleagues, we often jokingly referred to Om Billy as the “dalang” of the palace — the man behind the scenes at the Palace. He had long been a familiar presence within the State Palace environment since President Soeharto's era and maintained relationships with people from all walks of life.

Later, after I became Commander of the Presidential Security Force with the rank of Major General during President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's second presidential term, I met Om Billy again at the Palace. It turned out that Om Billy was still very much part of the Palace environment. May his dedication and service be of lasting benefit to the nation and the state.

** Lieutenant General (Ret.) Waris served as Commander of the Presidential Security Force – Paspampres (2010–2011), Commander of the Jakarta Military Regional Command (2011–2012), and Secretary General of the Indonesian National Resilience Council (2012–2015).*

NOTES FROM DR. Ir. UMAR SAID “Faith, Surprises, and Miracles”



Reading Billy Arman’s book feels like reading the tales of One Thousand and One Nights — a story filled with surprises and miracles. I personally feel that my own life, from childhood through adolescence, was also filled with poverty and hardship in every way. Even after completing my education and becoming a civil servant, I still had to live with many limitations. But compared to Ek An’s life story, the hardships of my youth were nothing in comparison. There are many unfortunate people in this world, yet I feel I have never heard of anyone whose life was more difficult than Ek An’s.

I do not remember exactly when I first came to know Ek An after he had changed his name to Billy Arman. What I clearly remember is that it was around the year 2000. I have met many people who enjoy talking endlessly about various subjects, including their businesses and personal lives. Most of them

eventually become boring, and it becomes easy to predict where their stories are going. But listening to Billy Arman's business experiences and life stories was entirely different.

My educational background is in engineering, so I was deeply amazed hearing the story of how Billy Arman created what he described as Indonesia's first "mobile telephone." I do not believe sophisticated laboratories, expertise in electronics, wave physics, or other engineering sciences were the primary forces behind his invention. Rather, it was his need for such a "mobile telephone" that drove Billy Arman to learn, experiment, and eventually succeed in creating it. Not many people possess such a mindset. I thoroughly enjoyed this story. Perhaps I was slightly more fortunate than others because I had heard the story directly from Billy Arman long before reading it in this book.

Another fascinating story is Billy Arman's theory about how to choose profitable locations for building material stores and restaurants. At first, I thought Billy Arman was going to talk about fortune-telling, mysticism, or occult practices. But I was wrong. Billy Arman spoke instead about the rhythms of working people — people who had construction workers building or renovating their homes.

According to Billy Arman's theory, a building material store should be located on the left side of a road commonly used by people commuting to work. While heading to work, people can easily stop by a building material store on the left side of the road to order the supplies they need. As a result, construction workers can continue working smoothly every day without waiting for materials to arrive. On the other hand, restaurants or food vendors should be located across from the building material store so that, on their way home, people

can conveniently purchase food for their family dinners. Busy people do not have time to cook.

Billy Arman developed this theory empirically through his intelligence in observing the bustle of urban life. Of course, the theory does not apply universally. It may primarily apply to roads connecting residential areas with business districts — and such roads are common in many cities. Billy always places practical human needs at the center of his thinking and as the driving force behind his actions.

I have observed many strengths within Ek An that enabled him to navigate his own “one thousand and one nights” of miracles. His strong determination to succeed, his refusal to surrender, his lack of inferiority, his constant desire to learn combined with analytical ability, his courage to experiment and take risks, his willingness to think beyond what others had imagined, his ability to build friendships, and the strength of his faith. It is a faith not merely expressed through rituals, but one that shapes his entire outlook on life.

I do not know whether Billy Arman’s faith emerged as an expression of gratitude to Almighty God after emerging from the mud of life and poverty, or whether such faith had already existed within him since childhood. What I do know is that when I came to know Billy Arman, that faith was already alive within him.

There are many other stories in Billy Arman's book. I truly enjoyed reading it. I strongly encourage young people to read this book so they can view the world with optimism. Whether one has lived through hardship or not, this book deserves to be read.

** DR. Ir. UMAR SAID is an energy expert and senior bureaucrat, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Republic of Indonesia, former Commissioner of PT PLN, and former Commissioner of PT Pertamina.*

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PROLOGUE

Rp 1 Per Second That Changed Indonesia



Jakarta, a blistering afternoon in 2001. Amid the roar of the capital's traffic and the restless rhythm of the city, a man sat quietly in the corner of a telecommunications company's meeting room, lost in thought. Spread before him were market reports and rows of numbers understood by only a handful of people in Indonesia's telecommunications industry. Yet what filled his mind was not graphs, profit margins, or corporate gain.

He saw the faces of ordinary Indonesians: farmers in remote villages, fishermen along distant coastlines, small street vendors clutching worn secondhand mobile phones, and pregnant women in rural areas anxiously hoping their phone credit would not run out in moments of emergency when they needed to contact a midwife or doctor.

The man was Billy Arman — a modest young man with only a high-school education who had become deeply interested in the world of telecommunications.

As a child, he had once been a poor boy named Ek An in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, who learned to read, write, and count by peering through cracks in the walls of a village school because his family could not afford elementary school fees.

Since the age of five, he had already been working: extracting coconut meat, tapping rubber trees, and guarding durian orchards at night. Later, in Jakarta, he survived by sleeping for months inside building-material warehouses and cardboard factories. From rubber tapper to construction laborer to door-to-door carpet salesman, his life became a continuous cycle of relentless hard work.

Yet beneath all the emotional wounds carved into him by the harshness of life, Billy Arman carried one unwavering conviction: life would only become meaningful if he could truly play a meaningful role and make a real contribution to his family, to society, and to the nation of Indonesia.

That afternoon, Billy Arman presented an idea to Hasnul Suhaimi, President Director of Indosat — an idea that was revolutionary for Indonesia’s telecommunications industry during the early Reformasi era, and one that even sounded crazy at the time.

“Why,” Billy asked, “should Indonesians pay Rp 2,500 per minute for mobile calls if they only speak for a few seconds? Why not Rp 1 per second instead?”

Billy’s proposal sounded simple, but in reality it was radical. At the time, nearly every telecommunications operator in Indonesia charged mobile tariffs at a minimum rate of Rp 2,500 per minute. Whether someone spoke for ten seconds or thirty seconds, customers were still charged for a full sixty-second block. To Billy, this was not merely a matter of pricing — it was a matter of fairness.

“Imagine millions of Indonesians paying for airtime they never actually use,” Billy told Hasnul. “Mobile phones and airtime should no longer be luxury products for society, especially when

in other countries they can already be purchased at affordable prices. Communication is an essential public need, especially in emergencies involving safety, health, and education. People deserve fair tariffs.”

Billy Arman convinced Hasnul Suhaimi through careful business calculations. He believed Indosat would not suffer losses by implementing affordable mobile tariffs that ordinary Indonesians could reach. On the contrary, he believed Indosat would capture the market more quickly because the benefits of affordable communication would genuinely be felt by the Indonesian people.

“I am convinced,” Billy explained to Hasnul, “that this affordable tariff scheme will receive a very positive public response. Indosat will not only dominate the youth market, but will reach all levels of society. Once this idea is implemented, mobile-phone ownership and usage will spread more widely across Indonesia.”

It did not take long for Indosat, under Hasnul Suhaimi’s leadership, to begin lowering its mobile tariffs below the prevailing market rate of Rp 2,500 per minute. Although the reduction still fell short of Billy’s ultimate vision, the policy was warmly welcomed by the public.

About a year later, Hasnul Suhaimi moved to XL and became its President Director. There, he pushed Billy’s idea even further. The Rp 1-per-second mobile tariff proposed by Billy Arman was finally implemented in full. History would later record that, for the first time, Indonesians could truly enjoy affordable mobile communication. Within only a few months, Telkomsel, Indosat, and other operators were forced to slash their own tariffs to follow XL’s breakthrough.

The tariff war had begun.

Mobile-call prices plunged to the lowest levels in the history of Indonesian telecommunications — even among the lowest in the world. From there, a profound transformation began. Farmers in remote regions could now contact buyers directly, reducing their dependence on middlemen. Fishermen along distant coastlines could report their catches before reaching shore. Villagers living far from health facilities could quickly contact doctors, midwives, or ambulances during emergencies.

The Rp 1-per-second mobile tariff opened the doors of communication to every layer of Indonesian society. Rickshaw drivers, farm laborers, and street vendors now carried mobile phones in their pockets. From that moment onward, affordable mobile communication truly belonged to the Indonesian people.

In recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the nation through the Affordable Tariff Scheme in the Telecommunications Industry — an innovation whose benefits were deeply felt by Indonesian society — President Joko Widodo awarded Billy Arman the honorary medal Satyalancana Wira Karya on August 7, 2015.

Yet affordable mobile call tariffs were only one among Billy Arman's many innovations. For the benefit of Indonesian society, he also pioneered long-distance wireless telephones, mobile phones with three SIM cards, free multimedia public telephones, the SOP Deposit Dealer Operating Account system for telecommunications operators, and anti-counterfeit fuel vouchers.

All of Billy Arman's innovations were born from one simple principle:

“Technology and services must exist to make people’s lives easier.”

This book is not merely the story of Billy Arman and his innovations. More than that, it is a story about the courage to challenge established systems, about how a single idea can transform millions of lives, and about a poor child who proved that there are truly no limits to dreams and achievement. The only real limits are minds filled with fear and doubt.

More than three decades of relentless hard work carried Billy Arman toward unimaginable success: from a poor rubber tapper to a public servant within the Presidential and Vice Presidential Palace environment of the Republic of Indonesia, serving from the era of President Soeharto to the administration of President Prabowo Subianto, while also becoming the owner of Tuas Mas Group and Tunas Mandiri Group — business groups he built from nothing through various breakthroughs for the nation, particularly in telecommunications and energy.

Billy Arman is not merely an entrepreneur or public servant. He is an innovator forged and shaped by genuine concern for the realities faced by ordinary Indonesians. A creator of telecommunications solutions without academic titles. A pioneer of practical innovations for the people. A fighter shaped by life itself. Billy Arman’s leadership and example are an invaluable inspiration.

Welcome to the life story, struggles, and journey of creation of Billy Arman — The Innovator.





**PRESIDEN
REPUBLIK INDONESIA**

P E T I K A N

KEPUTUSAN PRESIDEN REPUBLIK INDONESIA

NOMOR 89 /TK/TAHUN 2015

T E N T A N G

PENGANUGERAHAN TANDA KEHORMATAN SATYALANCANA WIRA KARYA

DENGAN RAHMAT TUHAN YANG MAHA ESA

PRESIDEN REPUBLIK INDONESIA,

Menimbang : - dst -
Mengingat : - dst -

MEMUTUSKAN:

Menetapkan : **KEPUTUSAN PRESIDEN TENTANG PENGANUGERAHAN TANDA KEHORMATAN SATYALANCANA WIRA KARYA**

KESATU : Menganugerahkan Tanda Kehormatan "SATYALANCANA WIRA KARYA" kepada mereka yang nama, jabatan, dan jasanya tersebut dalam Lampiran Keputusan ini, sebagai penghargaan atas jasa-jasa dalam memberikan darma baktinya yang besar terhadap negara dan bangsa Indonesia sehingga dapat dijadikan teladan bagi orang lain.

KEDUA : Keputusan Presiden RI ini mulai berlaku pada tanggal ditetapkan.

SALINAN - dst -

PETIKAN Keputusan Presiden RI ini disampaikan kepada yang bersangkutan untuk dipergunakan sebagaimana mestinya.

Ditetapkan di Jakarta
pada tanggal 7 Agustus 2015

PRESIDEN REPUBLIK INDONESIA

ttd.

JOKO WIDODO

LAMPIRAN KEPUTUSAN PRESIDEN REPUBLIK INDONESIA

NOMOR 89 /TK/TAHUN 2015

TANGGAL 7 AGUSTUS 2015

NOMOR URUT	N A M A	JABATAN	J A S A
4	BILLY ARMAN	Asisten Deputi V Bidang Analisis Umum pada Kantor Staf Presiden	Tahun 2001 berhasil memberikan gagasan Skema Tarif Murah Dunia Telekomunikasi melalui operator telepon IM3 dengan program promosi gratis telepon ke sesama pengguna IM3, yang kemudian diikuti oleh operator telepon lainnya antara lain XL dan Telkomsel, sehingga masyarakat bisa berkomunikasi dengan tarif murah.



Untuk Petikan:
Sesuai dengan aslinya
Sekretaris Militer Presiden

Laksamana M.T. Wahyudi Sukarno, S.E., M.M.

PRESIDEN REPUBLIK INDONESIA,

ttd.

JOKO WIDODO

CERTIFICATE

**OF THE HONORARY MEDAL
SATYALANCANA WIRA KARYA**

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

HEREBY CONFERS

**THE HONORARY MEDAL
SATYALANCANA WIRA KARYA**

UPON

Name : Billy Arman

Rank : —

Position : Assistant Deputy for General Analysis at the Presidential Staff Office

In accordance with Article 18 of Government Regulation Number 35 of 2010 (State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia of 2010 Number 43, Supplement to the State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5115), as recognition for his meritorious services in rendering outstanding devotion and contribution to the State and Nation of Indonesia, so that he may serve as an exemplary role model for others.

**PRESIDENTIAL DECREE OF THE REPUBLIC
OF INDONESIA
NUMBER 89/TK/YEAR 2015**

Jakarta, August 7, 2015

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
INDONESIA**

Joko Widodo

EXCERPT

OF THE DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
NUMBER 89/TK/YEAR 2015

CONCERNING

THE CONFERRAL OF THE HONORARY MEDAL
SATYALANCANA WIRA KARYA

BY THE GRACE OF ALMIGHTY GOD

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA,

Considering : - etc. -

In View Of : - etc. -

HEREBY DECIDES:

To Stipulate : PRESIDENTIAL DECREE CONCERNING THE CONFERRAL OF
THE HONORARY MEDAL SATYALANCANA WIRA KARYA.

FIRST : To confer the Honorary Medal “SATYALANCANA WIRA KARYA”
upon the individuals whose names, positions, and meritorious services are
listed in the Appendix to this Decree, as recognition for their outstanding
devotion and services rendered to the State and Nation of Indonesia, so
that they may serve as exemplary role models for others.

SECOND : This Presidential Decree shall come into effect on the date of its
stipulation.

COPY : - etc. -

EXCERPT : This excerpt of the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indo-
nesia is delivered to the person concerned for proper and appropriate use.

Established in Jakarta
On August 7, 2015

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

(signature)

JOKO WIDODO

APPENDIX TO THE DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
NUMBER 89/TK/YEAR 2015
DATED AUGUST 7, 2015

No. : 4

Name : Billy Arman

Position : Assistant Deputy for General Analysis at the Presidential Staff
Office

MERITORIOUS SERVICE:

In 2001, successfully initiated an affordable telecommunications tariff scheme through the IM3 cellular operator's free-call promotional program among IM3 users, which was later followed by other cellular operators including XL and Telkomsel, thereby enabling the public to communicate at affordable rates.

For the Excerpt:
Certified as conforming to the original,

PRESIDENTIAL MILITARY SECRETARY

Laksda TNI Wahyudi Sukarno, S.E., M.M.

PART I

LIFE STORY AND THE STRUGGLE TO ESCAPE POVERTY

Pontianak (1965–1970): A Hardworking Boy from a Poor Family

On September 10, 1965, in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, a baby boy named Ek An was born into a family of Chinese descent. Like every child who comes into this world, Ek An was born without being able to choose his parents or where he came from.

He was the second child of Abdullah Munsyi and Siti Aminah, a humble couple who lived modestly while staying under the roof of Pak Go, Abdullah Munsyi's adoptive father, at Jalan Muhammad Yamin 144, Kapuas Besar, Pontianak.

The name “Ek An” carried a hope and a prayer. “Ek” meant older brother, while “An” meant healthy. His parents simply hoped that Ek An would always remain healthy and protected by God.

Although the family lived with very limited means, they never truly considered themselves poor. Abdullah Munsyi initially worked as a laborer before later becoming a property broker with unstable income, while Siti Aminah devoted herself wholeheartedly to caring for the household and raising the children.

When Ek An was two years old, he frequently cried for no apparent reason. Because traditional Dayak beliefs were still deeply rooted in the family's culture, his parents eventually

entrusted him to his grandfather in Dusun Kalimas Tengah, Desa Kalimas, Kecamatan Sungai Kakap, Kabupaten Kubu Raya, West Kalimantan.

Liem A Mie, Ek An's grandfather, was a respected coconut trader in Desa Kalimas, while his grandmother, Gou Po Hiang, was a housewife. According to the family's belief, the reason young Ek An cried so often was because he was being disturbed by spirits. Moving him to his grandparents' house was intended to protect him from those disturbances.

Interestingly, ever since he began living there, his crying was rarely heard anymore.

A Coconut Laborer, Rubber Tapper, and Rice Granary Worker

Living with his grandfather in Kalimas taught Ek An many valuable lessons. He witnessed people already working long before dawn broke. Those experiences caused his understanding of life to mature quickly. Even as a small child, Ek An had already begun to understand that hard work could produce money to meet life's necessities.

When he turned five years old, Ek An chose to work as a laborer extracting coconut flesh for his grandfather rather than spending his days playing like most children his age. In fact, he could have chosen a far more comfortable life because he was the grandson of a coconut trader. Yet his decision to work came purely from his own desire after seeing the opportunity to earn wages based on the number of coconuts he successfully processed.

Every day from three o'clock in the morning until five a.m., Ek An worked diligently, pushing through sleepiness and the



This is where Ek An lived and worked at the age of five.

cold morning air. With skillful hands and a small knife, he separated coconut meat from the shells before collecting the results into baskets. He enjoyed the process and gradually became accustomed to a strong work ethic.

Once again, all of this happened while he was still so very young.

The wages Ek An received were the same as those paid to other laborers, calculated according to the number of baskets of coconut meat produced. In a single day, he was capable of filling two full baskets, and his face always brightened whenever he received payment for his hard work.



Ek An, who had changed his name to Billy Arman, visited his childhood home filled with memories on May 21, 2013.

Ek An also enjoyed working as a rubber tapper after finishing his coconut work. Every day from five until seven in the morning, he tapped rubber trees alone, cutting into the bark with a curved sickle so the latex could flow into coconut shells tied to the trunks. He then walked through rows of rubber trees, collecting the dripping latex into a drum carried on his back.

As the latex accumulated, it became increasingly heavy and exhausting for his small body. This may have contributed to his growth problems and caused him to become the shortest among his siblings. After finishing, Ek An delivered the latex to the processing site, where it was mixed with chemicals, dried, and processed into sheets of rubber.

In the afternoons, after drying and milling rice at the granary, Ek An continued processing the latex into thin sheets, which were then dried under the sun for two days. His relentless routine, without days off, gradually shaped within him strong discipline and a powerful work ethic.

Ek An admitted that he preferred working over playing. He was driven by the desire to earn money and become independent. The habit of hard work forged Ek An into a resilient child from a very early age.

A Bread Seller, Keeper of Fallen Durians, and Net Fisherman at Sea

Ek An's pattern of work was not always the same. Sometimes he had no work at all because coconut supplies arrived late or rainy weather made rubber tapping impossible. Remaining idle was never an option for him because he had already become accustomed to working every single day. He could never stay still for too long because it made him feel stiff and lazy.

Whenever his main jobs were unavailable, Ek An searched for other opportunities, including selling bread from house to house around the village using bread produced by a small home-based bakery. Naturally, he started this work without any capital. The results were uncertain. Sometimes the bread sold well, while at other times almost nothing sold at all. Nevertheless, he continued enthusiastically selling bread as a side job while waiting for his main work to become available again.

Besides that, Ek An also took on a unique seasonal job: waiting for naturally falling durians deep in the forests of Kalimantan.

Every durian fruit that fell naturally from trees purchased through a contract purchase system automatically belonged to the buyer. The contract price for each tree varied depending on the amount of fruit and the negotiations between the buyer and the durian orchard owner. Large trees with abundant fruit naturally carried higher prices. The agreement usually lasted for one harvest season, though sometimes longer depending on the arrangement.

In the darkness of night, Ek An stayed inside a simple hut near the durian orchards owned by villagers. He built campfires to drive away mosquitoes and warm his body. Whenever ripe durians naturally fell from the trees, Ek An quickly collected them before they could be eaten by animals or taken by other people.

At times, Ek An also worked as a net fisherman in the open sea, especially during periods when there was no work because durian and coconut seasons had not yet arrived. From Desa Kalimas, he traveled for approximately two hours aboard a motorboat toward the mouth of Sungai Kakap River, then continued another ten kilometers toward the Natuna Sea to reach a *bagan* in the middle of the ocean.

A *bagan* was a simple wooden fishing platform built at sea where fish caught by trawling vessels were collected. There, together with other children, Ek An worked for one or two days at a time. His main duty was pulling fishing nets and sorting the catch. Occasionally, he also joined fishing expeditions aboard trawling boats.

Although the wages Ek An received were very small, he considered the experience extremely valuable. Besides learning about different kinds of fish and marine life, he also came to

understand the lives of fishermen and fishing-net workers. Those experiences nurtured within him a deep love for Indonesia's seas and their abundant natural resources.

Ek An's daily life never stopped revolving around work. His childhood was filled with relentless labor that gradually made his small body tougher and stronger.

Learning to Read, Write, and Count Through the Cracks in a Wooden School Wall

One day, while selling bread, Ek An saw village children dressed neatly in school uniforms playing in the yard of SD Inpres in Desa Kalimas Tengah, a school located far from residential areas. The children invited him to join their games, but when classes began, Ek An could only sit quietly, mesmerized, as he watched them study.

He longed to attend school like them, but he felt unable to express that desire because of his family's difficult economic condition. As time passed, Ek An's desire to learn grew stronger until one day he found a way to study without having to pay school fees.

He peeked into classroom lessons through the cracks and holes in the school's old wooden walls. Sitting on an empty paint can, he copied lesson materials onto scraps of used paper with pencils he had found. Even though he often wrote incorrectly and had to erase his work repeatedly, he continued diligently learning how to read, write, and count.

The children and teachers knew what Ek An was doing, but no one stopped him. Starting from nothing, Ek An eventually succeeded in reading his first word: "KUDA" ("horse"). He also learned to write the word himself. That achievement gave him



Ek An at the stilt house with friends (1970).

confidence and the simple happiness of being able to learn for free.

Classes at SD Inpres only took place twice a week — every Thursday and Saturday. Yet for four years, Ek An faithfully came to study through the cracks in those wooden walls, cherishing every opportunity to learn and play alongside the other children, even though he remained outside the classroom.

After Appendicitis Surgery, Still Working from Home Making Candles

When he was nine years old, Ek An suffered from acute appendicitis and was forced to undergo surgery at Sungai Jawi

Hospital in Pontianak. Dr. Winoto explained that the illness was caused by exhaustion and irregular eating habits because, ever since childhood, Ek An had been working hard from before dawn until late at night.

The surgery went successfully, but Ek An was ordered to undergo complete bed rest for six months. Even so, remaining inactive proved difficult for him. He quickly became restless and uneasy, until eventually his family allowed him to make candles as a light job that could be done while sitting down.

For Ek An, candle-making was not particularly difficult. The candle wick was made from thread similar to the thick thread used in mattresses, only larger. There was also a wooden tool fitted with metal rods running across it like satay skewers. The threads were arranged across the rods and then dipped into melted wax. They were lifted, hung, lifted again, and hung repeatedly until candles gradually formed.

The finished candles varied in length. To make them neat and uniform, the candles were gathered together and trimmed with the touch of a heated machete.

The candle-making process moved quickly because many people worked together. Each stage was handled by different individuals. For example, the candle wicks were prepared by one person, the dipping process was done by another, and the cutting was handled by someone else.

In a single day, Ek An and his family could produce dozens of candles to be delivered to the employer who supplied the work.

After nine months, Ek An recovered and returned to his activities. Besides continuing to sell bread, he also began selling

traditional ice pops known locally as *es lilin* at Senghie Harbor, taking advantage of the hot weather as a business opportunity.

Every day, he traveled approximately six kilometers on foot. He walked barefoot for that entire distance simply to sell goods and help support his family through hard work and an unyielding spirit.

Entering Elementary School at Fourteen, and Told by a Teacher He Would Never Succeed

In 1974, as Ek An entered adolescence, Senghie Harbor had already become famous as the largest inter-island harbor in West Kalimantan. Every day, cargo ships from Java arrived carrying rice, sugar, and other food supplies for distribution throughout Kalimantan.

While selling traditional ice pops at the harbor, Ek An carefully noticed that rice and sugar often spilled whenever dock workers pierced sacks with metal cargo hooks known locally as *gancu*. He took advantage of this opportunity by collecting the spilled rice and sugar, which accumulated in considerable amounts. He later sold them or used them to cook porridge sweetened with white sugar.

Besides trading, Ek An also learned how to make bread at a small home-based bakery. He woke up before dawn to prepare dough, bake bread, and package it for sale. His hard work eventually paid off, and he began receiving larger bread allocations to sell at the harbor.

At the age of fourteen, driven by a serious determination to pursue education, Ek An finally enrolled at SD Nilam on Jalan Siam, Pontianak — a free elementary school for underprivileged

children. Because his reading, writing, and arithmetic skills were already sufficient from years of self-study, he was placed directly into third grade.

While continuing to work, Ek An studied enthusiastically and soon achieved outstanding academic results. He became the top student in his class. This success greatly increased his confidence and made him a student who attracted attention at school.

After two years at SD Nilam, Ek An transferred to SD Bruder Melati, a prestigious Catholic elementary school that also charged no tuition fees. Because of his age and academic ability, he was immediately placed into sixth grade.

At SD Bruder Melati, his creativity flourished, especially in arts and crafts lessons. One of his most memorable projects was a map of Indonesia made from cardboard and equipped with spotlights to indicate the locations of islands. The project was displayed at school and received praise from both the principal and teachers.

During this period, Ek An also formed a close friendship with two siblings, Niske and Yuki, the children of an Indonesian Army officer. They became close friends throughout his school years. Although they later lost contact after graduation, Ek An continued to hope that someday they would meet again.

In 1982, after graduating from elementary school, Ek An moved to Jakarta and continued his education at SMP St. Lukas II in Sunter. There, he experienced a moment that left a deep impression on him.

One day, for no clear reason, an Indonesian-language teacher pinched and pulled Ek An's ear with her fingernails while saying words that deeply pierced his heart.

"Just by looking at your face, I'm certain you will never become successful," the teacher told Ek An.

Shocked by the incident, Ek An responded with strong determination that one day he would prove his success to that teacher. That painful moment became a turning point that fueled his fighting spirit.

After graduating from junior high school in 1985, Ek An briefly returned to Pontianak and continued studying at St. Petrus Senior High School. However, he did not feel at home there and soon returned to Jakarta, transferring to St. Bonaventura Senior High School.

To support himself financially, Ek An worked as a home-interior salesman selling carpets and curtains. The many hardships and economic struggles he experienced taught him never to waste educational opportunities. That was why he always tried to focus on mastering his lessons and achieving the best grades possible.

His persistence paid off. Throughout junior high school and senior high school, Ek An consistently achieved average scores of nine, including in science, languages, and social studies.

In 1988, he graduated from St. Bonaventura Senior High School in Jakarta with satisfying results. After graduation, because he was living far from home under modest financial conditions, he set aside the idea of pursuing university studies and instead chose to focus on his work as a home-interior salesman.

From a Cinema Snack Vendor to a Film Projector Operator

While he was in sixth grade at SD Bruder Melati, Ek An managed to buy a pedal bicycle using savings from selling bread. The bicycle became a source of pride for him because he used it every day to travel to and from school.

One day, he stopped at Kapuas Indah Plaza, a newly built shopping center in Pontianak. There, he discovered a business opportunity as a snack vendor inside Kapuas Indah Theater, a cinema located on the fourth floor of the building.

Carrying a plastic basket filled with snacks and drinks, Ek An became the first roaming vendor inside the cinema. The business delighted him because moviegoers naturally wanted snacks while watching films. However, he was frequently chased away and scolded by the security officer, Pak Rahmat, because trash from his merchandise was often left scattered around the theater.

Eventually, Ek An approached the cinema manager, Pak Willy, to ask for a solution so he could continue selling without constantly being driven away. He promised that he would personally clean the cinema after every screening. The manager agreed — as long as Ek An truly kept his word.

From then on, Ek An sold snacks during screenings and cleaned the theater four times every day after movies ended. Because he often became exhausted, there were times when he had to sleep inside the cinema during midnight screenings.

Later, he invited three school friends to join the business using the same pricing arrangement so operations could

continue more smoothly and the burden of cleaning the theater could be reduced.

Thanks to his diligence and hard work, Ek An became well known among the cinema employees and was eventually given the opportunity to learn how to operate analog film projectors.

At times, he even became the projector operator whenever the regular operator stepped away, although occasionally he mischievously switched film reels out of boredom.

Years later, that experience unexpectedly proved useful. One day, while attending a public movie screening event in Palembang together with officials and local figures, the projector suddenly stopped working. The assigned operator failed to solve the problem.

Ek An stepped forward and successfully repaired the projector, causing the film to run again.

The projector operator was astonished by Ek An's knowledge and technical skill in handling the broken machine.

Balancing school and business was an enormous challenge. Every day, Ek An attended school in the morning, bought merchandise at the market during the day, then sold snacks and cleaned the cinema until late at night.

He did all of it simply to survive and pursue a better future. Ek An also possessed a unique ability that very few people knew about: he was ambidextrous.

Unlike most people who rely heavily on one dominant hand, Ek An could use both his right and left hands with equal strength and skill. He used his left hand for heavy work and his right hand for lighter tasks.



Ek An at Limba Jaya building materials store, taking a short break after pulling a cart.

When playing badminton, if his left hand became tired, he could immediately switch to his right hand without difficulty. Since childhood, he wrote using his right hand but used his left hand when using a hammer.

Ek An believed this ability helped both sides of his brain work in balance, making his thinking patterns and work habits more effective and productive. That unusual trait became one of the many strengths supporting him throughout his struggles in life and work.

Migrating to Jakarta and Taking Odd Jobs to Pay for Living and School

After graduating from SD Bruder Melati in Pontianak, Ek An decided to leave for Jakarta carrying a dream of becoming a successful entrepreneur.

He relied entirely on savings earned from selling bread at the cinema to buy a Bouraq airplane ticket to Kemayoran Airport in Jakarta. From the airport, he took a bajaj to the house of his uncle in Ancol Selatan, near SMP Santo Lukas II, where he intended to continue his studies.

Ek An's uncle owned a building-materials store called Limba Jaya. Although his uncle offered him both work and a place to stay, Ek An refused to live inside the house. Instead, he chose to live independently in a workers' shack beside the store.

As a worker at Limba Jaya, Ek An delivered construction materials such as cement, sand, bricks, and other supplies to customers' homes. At that time, the Limba Jaya store did not yet own pickup trucks. Sand was still transported using wooden carts with wheels made from used car tires. The carts were pulled using thick ropes wrapped in plastic hoses and hung around the neck.

Ek An carried out this exhausting physical labor every day after school.

Whenever the store became crowded with customers, he moved back and forth repeatedly, pulling heavy carts from the store to customers' homes. At first, the work felt extremely difficult. But over time, he became accustomed to it.

Even when relatives looked down on him for working as a laborer, Ek An continued working diligently while attending school.

Whenever business at the store slowed down, he learned how to make concrete blocks, which were highly sought after because of their strength and ease of installation. During spare time, he also helped haul black sand in Pangandaran.



An opportunity to pose with foreign tourists at Ancol Beach.

Unfortunately, before long, some of his uncle's relatives reprimanded the uncle for employing a young child as a manual laborer. As a result, Ek An was scolded and forced to leave Limba Jaya, leaving him confused and uncertain about where he would live next.

After being driven out of the building-materials store, Ek An wandered in search of a place to shelter for the night. As a newcomer in Jakarta, he had nobody he could truly rely on.

Then he remembered a cardboard factory on Jalan Dadap, Sunter — the place where the father of his school friend Benny worked as a manager. Hoping to find both shelter and work, Ek An met Benny and his father.

Thanks to their kindness, he was allowed to stay at the cardboard factory and was given work as a scavenger collecting used cardboard. The work itself was relatively light. He collected used cardboard from houses and shops, and his wages were calculated based on the amount of cardboard he gathered.

Every morning, Ek An walked approximately one kilometer to SMP Santo Lukas II. After school, he spent the rest of the day collecting used cardboard to support himself and pay for his education, while finding shelter from the harshness of life inside that cardboard factory.

Night Guard at a Jeans Factory, Nehru English Course, and the Elegy of a Piece of Grilled Bread

Ek An was grateful to have found both shelter and light work at the cardboard factory in Sunter. However, the income he earned from collecting used cardboard was not enough to cover his school expenses and daily meals. By the time he entered first grade at SMP Santo Lukas II, his living costs continued to increase, forcing him to search for additional work.

Near the cardboard factory stood a jeans factory called PT Bali Wig, a place already familiar to Ek An from his days working at his uncle's building-materials store. Because he frequently passed by and had become acquainted with a security guard named Pak Parno, Ek An eventually offered to replace Pak Parno's night-shift duties in exchange for money to pay for food and school expenses.

The night-guard job at the jeans factory was demanding and exhausting, lasting from midnight until dawn. Even though his daily schedule became extremely packed — attending school in the morning, working at the cardboard factory during the day, and guarding the jeans factory at night — Ek An remained enthusiastic. He often carried schoolbooks with him to the security post so he could continue studying while working.

The wages from guarding the factory were fairly decent. They allowed him to eat two simple meals a day at Warteg

Bambu Kuning, a modest food stall that became one of his favorite places. Even years later, Ek An remembered that difficult period with deep gratitude.

After obtaining the night-guard job with decent pay, Ek An decided to use part of his earnings to enroll in English classes at Nehru English Course, whose instructors were Indian. His dream of mastering English slowly began to take shape, even though his schedule became even more exhausting.

Now his daily routine became incredibly packed: attending school in the morning, working at the cardboard factory during the day, studying English from around 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., and replacing Pak Parno as night guard at the jeans factory until dawn.

No matter how exhausting life became, Ek An remained determined to continue studying and working in order to finance his education and survive. One afternoon, while walking toward his English course, Ek An passed a grilled-bread cart that always stood along the roadside.

For months, he had wanted to taste the grilled bread sold there. But that day, he only had Rp100 left in his pocket, while one piece of grilled bread cost Rp250. With honesty and innocence, Ek An openly expressed his desire and financial limitations to the bread seller.

“Sir, for months I’ve passed this road wanting to eat your grilled bread. But I only have Rp100 left. Even half a piece would be fine. Just spread some butter on it. The cheap butter is okay. You don’t need to add anything else. And for the milk, just a few drops... just a little...”



Ek An with Ridwan Main at Ridwan's Tirai Kencana Indah printing company in the Bendungan Hilir area, Jakarta.

Ek An's openness and sincerity deeply touched the bread seller. Instead of giving him half a piece, the seller gave him two full slices of grilled bread complete with condensed milk and cheese — one to eat immediately and another for the following day.

The experience left a deep impression on Ek An. It taught him that even amid the harshness of Jakarta, there were still many kindhearted people. That memory remained unforgettable throughout his life, nurturing within him gratitude and a strong belief that kindness can appear anywhere, even in simplicity.

Expelled for the Second Time: A Screen-Printing Worker, Tire Repairman, and Stamp Maker

After the cardboard factory in Sunter closed and relocated to Tangerang, Ek An automatically lost his income from collecting cardboard. Even though he no longer had work there, he remained grateful that he was still allowed to stay inside the empty factory building.

He believed God would eventually provide another way forward. One day, while traveling to school, Ek An noticed a small screen-printing business operating out of a house. He approached the owner and asked whether he could work there.

Pak Untung, the owner of the business, gave him a chance. Ek An was allowed to work while learning the screen-printing trade under a part-time system and was paid according to the amount of work completed.

He learned quickly. Before long, he understood the basics of screen-printing across various materials, from drinking glasses to patterned pants.

While working at the screen-printing business, Ek An continued performing his night-guard duties at the jeans factory previously handled by Pak Parno.

However, one day Pak Parno became ill and permanently stopped working there, causing Ek An to lose his night-guard position as well. From that point onward, he depended entirely on his screen-printing income.

Unfortunately, not long afterward, Pak Untung's screen-printing business moved to Cengkareng. Once again, Ek An lost both his source of income and his place to stay, facing another difficult trial in his life as a migrant in Jakarta.

Soon after, Ek An felt slightly relieved because one of his relatives allowed him to live and work at a building-materials store in Kangkungan. But the comfort lasted only briefly. Not long later, his uncle arrived and appeared disappointed to see Ek An working there.

A serious conversation between the uncle and the relative made Ek An feel uncomfortable and cornered. Two days later, Ek An was called in and told to stop working and leave the place.

With a broken heart, he slung his clothes over his shoulder and walked away from the building-materials store in Kangkungan. He wandered aimlessly while carrying a heavy burden in his heart.

Eventually, he found himself sitting beneath a tree beside Danau Sunter, confused and saddened by the suffering and repeated expulsions that seemed to follow his life. He questioned why his life was filled with so much hardship and being driven away from place to place.

Yet amid the loneliness, he strengthened his determination not to surrender and to continue fighting for his dreams.

“I’m already in Jakarta now. I will not give up,” he whispered inwardly to himself as a promise.

Eventually, his steps brought him to a housing complex owned by the State Secretariat in Sunter. There, he met Pak Rohim, the caretaker of a small mosque. Hoping for temporary shelter, Ek An asked permission to sleep in the mosque for one night.

Pak Rohim kindly agreed and was deeply moved after seeing Ek An voluntarily cleaning the mosque floor before

dawn. Although Pak Rohim later offered him work in Klender, Ek An refused because he wanted to continue attending school in Sunter.

Still restless and uncertain about where to live, Ek An eventually returned to the abandoned cardboard factory where he had once worked and stayed. Although the factory was now empty and quiet, its partially open gate once again became a refuge from the harshness of life in Jakarta.

He felt as though some unseen force had guided him back there for protection. Eventually, Ek An made the cardboard factory his shelter once more. Although unemployed, he still had a small amount of savings left.

Using creativity and determination, he built a handcart and purchased equipment such as an air compressor to start a tire-repair business beneath the Semanggi bridge near a prestigious university campus.

Becoming a tire repairman became one of the most memorable phases of his life. Every evening after work, he returned to the cardboard factory by taking buses and public transportation along different routes, repeating the same exhausting routine day after day.

However, after operating the tire-repair business for about a year, Ek An eventually decided to stop because the business was unprofitable. At that time, the Semanggi area was still relatively quiet. Often, he sat the entire day without a single customer arriving.

Not long after closing the unprofitable tire-repair business, Ek An met a man named Ridwan Main at a building-materials

store. Unexpectedly, that meeting opened another opportunity for him.

Ridwan offered to teach Ek An how to make rubber stamps and even lent him a handcart so he could start a stamp-making business in Bendungan Hilir, an area famous as a center for printing and stamp-making businesses largely run by migrants from Aceh and Padang.

Surprisingly, the stamp-making business Ek An built developed rapidly. The work demanded precision and patience, and Ek An carried it out with remarkable dedication, successfully satisfying customers so that his business became very busy.

Ek An's long journey from one difficult job to another showed his ability to adapt to changing circumstances and continue fighting from one opportunity to the next for a better tomorrow.

The Old Man on the City Bus and the Beginning of Sharing During Ramadan

One day during the month of Ramadan, Ek An was riding a city bus when he witnessed an incident that left a deep impression on him. An elderly man sitting nearby tried to pay the bus fare with only Rp200, even though the actual fare was Rp500.

The old man explained that he needed to save the remaining money to buy a drink for breaking his fast because sunset was approaching. But the conductor became angry and refused to understand his situation. Ek An sat there quietly, deeply moved by what he witnessed.

He wanted to help. But at that moment, his own money was also very limited. In the end, he remained silent as the elderly man stepped off the bus. Yet the incident stayed in his heart.

That day, Ek An made a promise to himself: someday, when he became financially capable, he would provide food and drinks for many people during iftar, the breaking of the fast in Ramadan.

A year later, after transitioning from tire repairman to stamp maker together with Ridwan Main, Ek An finally began fulfilling that promise. He set aside part of his income to buy food and drinks for worshippers at a small mushola near his workplace.

Ek An also collected additional funds by inviting fellow stamp makers to contribute donations. Every afternoon, he purchased ingredients to prepare iced *timun suri* drinks, which were then distributed freely at the mushola. However, as Eid al-Fitr approached, many donors returned to their hometowns, causing contributions to decrease drastically.

Funds became very limited. Eventually, Ek An and his friend Asikin had to continue financing the iftar meals themselves using whatever little money they had, sometimes only able to provide syrup drinks for breaking the fast.

One day, while preparing to buy syrup, something unexpected happened. A man named Bambang Irawan suddenly arrived and placed a large order for rubber stamps. The payment from that order alone was enough to buy food for the iftar gathering.

Ek An felt deeply grateful for the unexpected blessing. Bambang also ordered business cards and paid an advance as a sign of trust. He handed Ek An the concept for the business

cards. Printed on the sample were the name Bambang Irawan, the company name PT Delta Sarana Teknindo, and the company logo.

Bambang also showed Ek An a doctor's business card design to use as a reference for creating his own cards. Thanks to his sincerity in providing food and drinks for people breaking their fast, unexpected blessings continued to come.

The timing was completely unforeseen, and the amount was beyond what he had imagined. With that money, Ek An was able to provide iftar meals for the mushola congregation for three consecutive days before Eid.

The habit of providing food and drinks for many people during Ramadan — which began during his years building the stamp-making business — continued as a regular tradition every Ramadan until today.

A Traveling Carpet Salesman: Learning and Building Relationships with Sincerity

One day, while reading the newspaper Suara Pembaruan, Ek An found a job advertisement that immediately caught his attention: “Freelance salespeople wanted for carpets, wallpaper, and curtains.”

He instantly saw great potential in the opportunity because, in his mind, every house in Jakarta surely needed at least one of those products. Filled with enthusiasm, Ek An boarded a bus and headed to Toko Nobel on Jalan Sabang. Upon arriving, he immediately applied for the job to the store manager.

He was accepted without any hassle. The only requirements were showing his original identity card and submitting a

photocopy of it. Just like that, Ek An officially became a traveling carpet salesman.

Even though he did not own a motorcycle, he refused to give up. Every day, he walked from one housing complex to another and from one office building to another, offering carpets, wallpaper, and curtains.

His first sale happened at a newly built shop-house near his school. The transaction was large enough to pay the down payment for a Vespa motorcycle. Through hard work and persistence, Ek An eventually earned income that exceeded not only his living expenses and school fees, but also allowed him to save money.

For him, the Suara Pembaruan newspaper became the beginning of an important success in his life. Out of gratitude, he continued subscribing to the newspaper for years afterward. After finally owning a Vespa motorcycle, Ek An became even more active traveling around Jakarta carrying brochures, material samples, a calculator, and writing tools.

His courage brought him into elite residential complexes in areas such as Cinere and South Jakarta — luxurious neighborhoods with prestigious names and roads named after planets. By diligently serving the interior-design needs of wealthy homeowners, Ek An gradually became acquainted with senior state officials, businesspeople, and artists.

Many of those business relationships eventually grew into bonds that felt like family relationships. This period became proof that through hard work, noble character, and willingness to learn, even a high-school student could build remarkable connections.

In his work, Ek An designed efficient and well-targeted marketing routes, visiting important residential complexes in a single journey. For example, he would begin from the Attorney General's housing complex on Jalan Adhyaksa in Lebak Bulus, continue toward Bona Indah and Vila Delima, and end at Villa Cinere.

Inside the Attorney General's housing complex, he built good relationships with the Attorney General, Deputy Attorneys General, and many other officials. It was there that Ek An became acquainted with Nugroho, a Deputy Attorney General who later served as Secretary General of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Meanwhile, in Villa Cinere, he encountered important figures such as Ali Said, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; Ismail Saleh, Indonesia's Minister of Justice; Broery Pesolima, the famous singer and artist; and many others.

Those relationships became real evidence of Ek An's struggle and success in building both career and connections from the very bottom.

One day, while exploring another elite residential complex, Ek An noticed a newly built house still under construction. Immediately, he sensed a major opportunity to sell interior products. Before approaching the owner directly, he carefully gathered important information about the homeowner and the interior concept planned for the house.

He casually spoke with a woman who owned a small food stall in front of the property. From her, he learned the homeowner's name was Ferry and that he came from Pluit. He also asked about the construction foreman, Pak Usman.

Afterward, Ek An approached one of the plaster workers at the site and eventually met Pak Usman himself. With confidence, Ek An asked about Ferry's schedule and learned that Ferry usually visited the house on Saturdays driving a BMW. That information became an important clue for monitoring Ferry's arrival on weekends.

Sure enough, the following Saturday, Ek An saw a man arriving in a BMW and immediately approached him. He greeted Ferry warmly, subtly giving the impression that they already knew each other through Pak Usman — even though their connection had only existed for a single day.

Through that warm conversation, Ek An learned many things about Ferry's interior needs. He showed brochures and gradually attracted Ferry's interest in carpets, wallpaper, and curtains. Several weeks later, after the house had been completed, Ferry contacted Ek An.

The result was an interior sales transaction worth hundreds of thousands of rupiah — certainly quite a large amount of money by the standards of the mid-1980s.

PART II

THE INNOVATOR: IDEAS, TRUST, AND SERVICE

Jakarta (1986): The Wireless Telephone Business Built on Ideas and Trust

As a salesman, Ek An always sought the best possible approach to building relationships with customers, fulfilling their needs as well as he could, and creating solutions to every problem they faced.

In 1986, PT Telkom's landline telephone network was still very limited, including in the capital city of Jakarta. To obtain a home telephone connection, new applicants often had to wait for months, even years. Most newly built houses owned by government officials not only lacked curtains, wallpaper, and carpets, but also did not yet have telephone lines.

Ek An became fascinated by wireless telephones. At that time, many people already used wireless telephones inside their homes. However, those devices only functioned over short distances — merely allowing communication from one room to another within the same house.

Ek An began wondering whether there might be a way to make wireless telephones work across distances of several kilometers. If such a system could be created, it would become an excellent solution to overcome the limitations of landline telephone networks — and naturally, it could also generate income.

Behind the limitations of telephone infrastructure, Ek An saw a golden opportunity. He could help fulfill the communication needs of officials and homeowners while simultaneously building a business by selling wireless telephones. He decided to expand the products he offered. Besides home interior products, he also began exploring wireless telephones.

To investigate the possibility further, Ek An went to Glodok Market. At a shop called Sinar Hero, he met the owner, Merry.

“Do you have long-distance telephones, Cik?” Ek An asked.

“Yes, but they must be sold quietly. If people find out, you could get arrested,” Merry replied while showing him a wireless telephone branded Superphone, which looked similar to a walkie-talkie.

At that time, long-distance wireless telephone systems were prohibited by the government because they used Telkom’s 72 MHz frequency.

Still, Ek An was intrigued. He purchased one Superphone set without an antenna, but already equipped with a base station. After installing and testing it, he discovered the wireless range only reached around 300 to 400 meters — far below the manual’s claim that the Superphone could operate up to five kilometers.

Even so, the system was still more flexible than a conventional house telephone because it could be carried around instead of remaining fixed in one location.

Ek An became increasingly curious. He then went to Gramedia searching for books about wireless telephones. Those books introduced him to the technical principles of wireless

communication, including the fact that operational range depended heavily on antenna capability. He studied how to calculate antenna dimensions, how to draw antenna designs, and how to construct wireless telephone antennas himself.

The next day, Ek An ordered aluminum materials. Using the calculations and sketches he had prepared, he assembled the aluminum pieces into a Yagi antenna and installed it using pipes at the home of a prominent figure in Pondok Indah.

He then connected the Superphone wireless telephone to the Yagi antenna system he had built. The experiment worked beyond his expectations. The modified wireless telephone could now reach distances of up to seven kilometers. This moment marked the beginning of Ek An's deep interest and love for telecommunications — the field that would later become the foundation of his business life.

One major advantage of Ek An's modified wireless telephone system was portability. For example, someone could carry the telephone unit from Pondok Indah to Lebak Bulus while the central base station remained fixed in Pondok Indah. The system could also be used as an intercom.

One day, Ek An was contacted by Zahid Husein, Head of the Presidential Assistance Bureau of the Republic of Indonesia, who invited him to his residence on Jalan Kartini, Jakarta.

Zahid Husein was known as President Soeharto's treasurer responsible for distributing presidential aid throughout Indonesia. He was also recognized as a commissioner of Bank Duta and treasurer of President Soeharto's foundations.

At Zahid Husein's house, Ek An demonstrated his modified wireless telephone system. In front of the senior State Palace



First trip to Singapore, July 1, 1990.

official, he showed how a single telephone number could be used for two different houses at the same time. By utilizing the landline number installed in Zahid Husein's old house, Ek An enabled wireless telephone communication in the official's new residence.

Through this arrangement, Zahid Husein could communicate freely between the old and new houses without paying additional charges because the wireless telephone system functioned like an intercom. At the same time, incoming calls to the original number could still be received from the wireless telephone located in the new house.

Zahid Husein eventually purchased Ek An's modified wireless telephone system. This became the first sale of a telecommunications product personally modified and developed by Ek An himself.

Word about Ek An's wireless telephones spread naturally from one user to another. Almost every official or businessman who saw how the system worked became interested in purchasing and using it. Thanks to the trust of officials and entrepreneurs, Ek An increasingly received wireless telephone orders. The rare product quickly became highly popular.

Gradually, Ek An became widely known among officials, businessmen, and artists as both a curtain salesman and wireless telephone seller. He built good relationships with many prominent figures, including Idris Siregar (Head of a Bank Exim branch), Major General Nugroho (Deputy Attorney General for Intelligence), Agus Suhadi (Head of the High Prosecutor's Office in Lampung), Sukardi (Deputy Attorney General for Special Crimes), Zahid Husein (Head of Presidential Assistance Bureau, Sesdalopbang), Ismail Saleh (Minister of Justice of Indonesia), Broery Pesolima (singer and artist), and many others.

However, Ek An's wireless telephone business eventually encountered serious obstacles. He was repeatedly arrested by Telkom officers acting under instructions from Telkom leadership. Ek An was accused of illegally using Telkom frequencies and causing interference within Telkom's network.

"I never expected this wireless telephone business would create problems. I was arrested by Telkom officers because they believed I was harming them. What I did was considered a legal violation. Even though my role was actually helping people obtain communication services more easily and conveniently," Ek An later recalled.

During one meeting with Telkom executives, Ek An spoke frankly. "You should support me instead of arresting me. So many people are waiting for telephone services while Telkom

cannot yet provide lines to those homes. I used my knowledge to solve that problem. Haven't I actually helped Telkom?" Ek An argued before the Telkom leadership.

The Telkom executives appreciated Ek An's good intentions. As a result, they advised him to move his wireless telephone operations to safer frequencies. Following their suggestion, Ek An changed his system to UHF (Ultra High Frequency) frequencies above 450 MHz.

After switching to the new frequencies, his wireless telephone business could operate again without repeated warnings or arrests from Telkom officers. Every week, his customer base continued growing — from one official to another.

Ek An even succeeded in helping Minister Ir. Radius Prawiro connect the office telephone at Amita House in Pondok Indah to a chicken slaughterhouse telephone in Gunung Sindur, Bogor — a distance of approximately forty kilometers.

Later on, Ek An became acquainted with Garuda Sugardo, who was assigned to lead Indonesia's GSM project, the precursor to the establishment of Telkomsel. After Telkomsel was established, Garuda Sugardo, in his capacity as Director of Engineering and Technology, recruited Ek An as a colleague to follow and study Telkomsel's products and services.

As GSM mobile phones gradually entered the market, Ek An slowly began reducing his wireless telephone business. Eventually, when GSM handset prices became increasingly affordable to the public, he fully discontinued the wireless telephone business.

As a businessman, Ek An always adapted to technological developments and changes in market demand — especially

in telecommunications, an industry where older technologies could quickly become obsolete with the arrival of newer and better innovations.

Love for Indonesia: Changing His Name from Ek An to Billy Arman

In 1992, amid the busyness of selling home interior products and wireless telephones, Ek An began reflecting on his business journey. He felt grateful because his efforts had already brought significant progress into his life. The businesses he built had changed his circumstances for the better. He now had enough money to support his life in Jakarta and had built good relationships with many important figures.

Yet there was still one thing that troubled his mind. He no longer felt comfortable using the name given to him by his parents — “Ek An” — because it carried a strong Chinese nuance. Moreover, at that time, Indonesians of Chinese descent still frequently faced discrimination in various aspects of life.

Besides that, Ek An preferred to be known simply as an Indonesian rather than constantly identified through his Chinese background. He deeply loved Indonesia — the land where he was born and where he would someday be laid to rest. For all these reasons, Ek An intended to change his identity by adopting a new name that reflected Indonesian culture and society more naturally.

Coincidentally, Ek An had long been fond of attractive number combinations, including vehicle license plates and telephone numbers. That was why he once dreamed of owning a car with the license plate: B 1 AR

However, he failed to obtain the plate because it already belonged to someone else and was attached to a silver Toyota Kijang. Ek An had even personally met the owner and expressed his wish to buy the plate number, but unfortunately the owner had no intention of selling it.

Because he could not obtain the B 1 AR plate, Ek An reconsidered using the name “Biar.” To him, the name sounded awkward, especially when spoken repeatedly. It felt strange to imagine people greeting him: “How are you, Mr. Biar?”

So Ek An explored other possibilities. He searched for names that could still represent the word “Biar.” Unable to find a suitable idea, he went to Gramedia and searched through books containing names and their meanings.

Later, he recalled the experience. “From the list of names beginning with the letter B, I found the name Billy, which seemed suitable for someone with my appearance. The meaning was also good. In the book, Billy meant ‘to save.’ Billy already represented part of the word Biar, so to complete it I added the word Arman behind it, which means ‘desire.’ That was how the name Billy Arman came about. With Arman added behind it, my name sounded more Indonesian — similar to names like Sutarman, Suparman, and many others commonly used by our people,” he recalled.

Feeling increasingly certain about his new identity, three years later — in 1995 — he officially formalized the name change through a name-change certificate at the Civil Registry Office. From that day forward, Ek An officially became Billy Arman.

As Billy Arman, he grew increasingly confident presenting himself as an Indonesian businessman, introducing himself with

an Indonesian name both to business relations in Indonesia and abroad.

Telkomsel Launches Indonesia's First Cellular Service, Billy Arman Becomes a Distribution Partner

In November 1993, PT Telkom began developing a Cellular Mobile Telecommunications System (STBS) using Global System for Mobile (GSM) technology on Batam and Bintan Islands. The project was carried out under the control of PT Telkomsel, one of PT Telkom's business divisions.

Through a series of trials, PT Telkomsel eventually succeeded in creating GSM-based mobile telecommunications services. This success positioned Telkomsel as Indonesia's first GSM cellular telecommunications operator.

When Telkomsel officially launched its prepaid service Simpati and postpaid service Kartu Halo on May 26, 1995, Billy Arman became interested in joining Telkomsel's marketing network by selling Kartu Halo, Simpati, and Simpati prepaid recharge vouchers.

At the time, there were two options within the marketing network: becoming an official distributor working directly with Telkomsel, or becoming a sub-distributor operating under a Telkomsel distributor partner. Naturally, profit margins for distributors were much larger than those for sub-distributors.

Billy briefly considered becoming a distributor. Unfortunately, the position required extremely large capital. That was why the twenty-one companies appointed by Telkomsel as distributors were mostly owned by conglomerates. Even companies outside

the major corporate circle generally became distributors because of intervention from powerful state officials.

Realizing that he did not possess sufficient capital to become a distributor, Billy eventually decided to register as a sub-distributor instead. In this case, he joined Koppotel in Cawang — a cooperative owned by PT Telkom and one of the business entities that had obtained a sales cooperation contract for Telkomsel products.

For Billy, it did not matter whether he operated as a distributor or sub-distributor. What mattered most was that performance was judged based on sales volume of Kartu Halo, Simpati, and Simpati prepaid recharge vouchers.

Operating under the company name Panda Jessica Karunia, Billy obtained Kartu Halo, Simpati, and Simpati prepaid recharge vouchers from Koppotel. At Koppotel, Billy actively built communication with Adam Fadillah, the account manager responsible for coordinating sub-distributors. Years later, Adam himself would become one of Telkomsel's executives.

Even though his company only held sub-distributor status, Billy continued thinking big. He challenged himself to achieve the highest sales volume possible. Billy challenged himself to sell Telkomsel products in quantities far exceeding those of the official distributors appointed by Telkomsel.

He believed that if he could achieve greater sales volume, he would eventually earn profit margins surpassing those of the official distributors and ultimately elevate his company's status from sub-distributor to distributor.

Of course, it was not easy. It demanded both hard work and smart work. But for Billy, something difficult did not mean something impossible.

People were free to underestimate him as a businessman with only modest financial capital. Still, nobody could deny that there were no limits to the results produced by brilliant marketing ideas and brilliant business thinking.

The Three-Axis Strategy: Telkomsel, Pertamina, and Hiswana Migas

Billy fully understood that if he wanted to sell Telkomsel products at a level above the official distributors, he needed to distribute them through a very large number of outlets. However, building a large number of outlets independently was unrealistic. Besides requiring billions of rupiah in capital, expanding a retail outlet network across Indonesia would also require a long time.

Billy repeatedly designed different marketing concepts for Telkomsel products. Then one day, a unique and promising idea emerged in his mind.

“After thinking it over carefully, I realized it would be far better to partner with existing outlets using a profit-sharing system. Especially outlets frequently visited by the public because they sell essential daily necessities. That approach would save both time and money. Through this system, Telkomsel products — especially prepaid refill vouchers — could be sold quickly and in much larger quantities. The most strategic outlet for selling refill vouchers is gas stations. Fuel is a primary necessity, and gas stations are among the places most frequently visited by the public,” Billy thought.

To follow up on this idea, Billy met Harry Poernomo, Downstream Director of Pertamina, who had previously led UPPMS III (Domestic Marketing Supply Unit III) at Pertamina. Billy explained his intention to collaborate with gas stations (SPBU) to sell Simpati refill vouchers through a profit-sharing system.

Coincidentally, at that time Pertamina was experiencing conflict with Hiswana Migas, the organization representing private gas station business owners throughout Indonesia. Harry Poernomo invited Billy to attend a meeting between Pertamina and Hiswana Migas at Hotel Parahyangan in Bandung.

During the meeting, Hiswana Migas threatened Pertamina that gas stations throughout Indonesia would stop operating if Pertamina refused to increase their profit margin from 3% to 4%.

Pertamina representatives could not immediately respond because all such decisions required consultation with the government as the owner of Pertamina. Hiswana Migas gave Pertamina one month to respond. If within one month the requested profit margin increase was not approved, all gas stations under Hiswana Migas across Indonesia would cease operations.

Billy sensed there was no clear meeting point between the two parties. The threat represented a massive problem — not only for Pertamina and the government, but also because it could trigger security disturbances in various regions. Everyone understood how dependent society was on fuel. If gas stations stopped operating for even a single day, it could create major problems.

Several days after the meeting, Billy visited Harry Poernomo at his office on Jalan Kramat Raya and proposed a possible solution.

“Mr. Harry, if you give me permission to sell Simpati refill vouchers at gas stations, I will provide commissions for every SPBU. If the voucher sales rights are granted to me, we can create a profit-sharing system to increase SPBU income. That means Pertamina would be giving gas station owners a new source of revenue. Perhaps this could solve the profit margin issue being protested by Hiswana Migas,” Billy explained.

“What’s the business concept?” Harry asked.

“For every voucher sold at Rp250,000, I’ll give the SPBU a 7% discount,” Billy answered.

“Which gas stations would participate?” Harry asked curiously.

“Any SPBU willing to participate and provide capital, Sir. I’ll discuss the matter further with Telkomsel,” Billy replied.

“And who will provide the capital for the vouchers themselves?” Harry continued.

“I’ll supply the vouchers, Sir. Of course, Telkomsel will support the program if Pertamina issues official permission,” Billy replied.

Eventually, Pertamina issued a letter granting gas stations across Indonesia the opportunity to sell refill vouchers and appointing Billy’s company as the voucher supplier. Billy then submitted the letter to Telkomsel.

Later, Billy recalled Telkomsel's response. "Telkomsel asked me, 'Why did you choose gas stations as voucher outlets?' I explained that mobile phone users are generally highly mobile people. Logically, they buy fuel and phone credit at the same location. It's much more practical than forcing them to stop elsewhere after already refueling. Besides that, Telkomsel needed many outlets, while gas stations themselves were trying to increase their income."

After Pertamina and Telkomsel approved Billy's proposal, information sessions were organized involving hundreds of SPBU owners from Aceh to Manado. The events were held twice at Hotel Horison and Hotel Park Land in Jakarta.

During those meetings, Billy personally explained the technical system for selling refill vouchers at each SPBU and the structure of the profit-sharing cooperation model. Unexpectedly, within a very short period, around 800 gas stations expressed interest in participating.

Gas station owners were pleased because the profits were quite attractive. For every voucher sold, an SPBU earned Rp13,500 — an amount equivalent to the profit from approximately thirty-one cars, with each car purchasing twenty liters of gasoline at that time when fuel prices were still around Rp1,200 per liter.

Voucher sales also became repetitive because gas stations gradually became known as places where people could buy phone credit. Whenever customers purchased fuel, attendants offered refill vouchers at the same time.

Billy later recalled. "Do you remember those stickers on gas station pumps that said: 'Top Up Your Phone Credit While Refueling Here'? Those were my stickers. They were installed at gas stations across Indonesia."

By 1999, Billy's voucher distribution network had become the largest in Indonesia. The extremely high sales volume from Billy's outlet network caused Telkomsel to allocate increasing quantities of starter packs to his company.

The growth occurred naturally through market demand generated by Billy's marketing innovations. Nothing was manipulated. It was simply the natural law of supply and demand at work.

And what happened afterward?

Gas station owners stopped protesting about profit margins entirely. They focused on selling vouchers. Unlike fuel sales, which required large daily working capital, voucher sales generated profit without major upfront expenses. In fact, many SPBU operators preferred selling vouchers because gasoline sales required large daily working capital.

Besides distributing vouchers through SPBUs nationwide, Billy also expanded voucher sales through the taxi network of Centris Group. As a result, the voucher distribution network managed by Billy's company became the largest and widest-reaching in Indonesia.

Thanks to those marketing innovations, Billy's company — which had initially operated only as a Telkomsel sub-distributor — successfully sold more Telkomsel products than the official distributors themselves. Some distributors even requested Billy to help sell their own vouchers.

Following that success, Telkomsel became increasingly curious about Billy's methods and invited him to participate more deeply in helping market Telkomsel products.

Billy continued developing increasingly creative marketing strategies by integrating Telkomsel products with products and services already closely connected to people's daily habits and needs.

Finally, in 1996, Telkomsel officially elevated Billy's company, Panda Group, from sub-distributor to distributor status. With that promotion, opportunities for expanding market reach and increasing revenue became far greater.

After Billy's company officially became a Telkomsel distributor, he realized it would no longer be possible to sustain massive voucher demand merely by relying on Telkomsel's trust through product credit facilities. Now he needed substantial capital to purchase vouchers directly.

At that time, purchasing 1,000 vouchers earned a 7% discount, while purchasing 500 vouchers earned only a 4% discount. Billy immediately began thinking strategically: how could he purchase only 500 vouchers yet still obtain profits equivalent to buying 1,000 vouchers — while simultaneously gaining enough public exposure to place his business on television?

A new idea suddenly emerged in his mind. Back then, all prepaid vouchers were still physical products. Electronic top-up systems did not yet exist. Billy remembered that a company had once asked him to create cigarette packaging sleeves designed as advertising space for sponsors. Many companies were eager to place advertisements on prepaid vouchers, but Telkomsel had never approved such proposals.

Billy adapted the concept creatively. He designed sleeves or covers to wrap around Telkomsel vouchers and starter packs.

These sleeves would function as advertising pages. Billy later registered this innovation for patent protection.

On those sleeves, cigarette advertisements and other sponsor promotions could be printed. From cigarette distributors, Billy earned an additional 3% commission. As a result, the original 4% voucher discount, combined with the 3% advertising commission, gave him a total effective margin of 6%.

Billy printed the sleeves in enormous quantities — tens of thousands of copies.

Later, he explained. “Alright, I bought 500 voucher units and collaborated with cigarette agents and other sponsors. The cooperation wasn’t with the cigarette factories themselves, but with their distributors.”

When the idea became highly successful and Billy began earning substantial profits, conflict eventually erupted between Telkomsel and its official distributors. Other distributors accused Telkomsel of secretly giving Billy unfair pricing advantages and claimed he was damaging market prices.

In reality, Billy had violated no rules whatsoever. The additional profits he earned came purely from creativity in combining products and market opportunities. However, because Telkomsel faced strong protests from distributors, Billy’s distributor status was eventually frozen.

After separating from Telkomsel, Billy shifted into manufacturing and selling consumer goods products under the Panda brand. The products included toothpaste, mosquito repellent, detergent soap, cream soap, noodles, tea, coffee, and many others.

Afterward, he searched for distributors throughout Indonesia by placing advertisements in local newspapers.

Between 1998 and 2000, GSM mobile phones became increasingly popular across Indonesian society. Many people even carried two or more phones simultaneously — one for business, one for family, and another for personal matters. Naturally, carrying multiple phones became impractical.

Billy then introduced a new idea: a single phone capable of accommodating three or four SIM cards simultaneously. The slogan became widely known:

“Three operators in one hand.”

It was the first innovation of its kind in Indonesia. Billy later continued developing another idea: fuel vouchers (voucher BBM). This time, he involved mobile operators outside Telkomsel as sponsors.

The fuel vouchers could function not only as payment instruments for purchasing gasoline but also as souvenirs, gifts, and promotional items. For example, wedding guests could receive fuel vouchers as souvenirs redeemable for gasoline or diesel at participating gas stations. The product received highly positive responses from many parties and generated strong market demand.

After operating the consumer goods business for approximately two years, major management changes occurred at Telkomsel. The board of directors was replaced with new leadership. One of the new executives was Hasnul Suhaimi, who was appointed Commercial Director of Telkomsel.

Knowing Billy's creativity in marketing Telkomsel products and his strong sales performance, Hasnul Suhaimi invited Billy to collaborate with Telkomsel once again.

Billy later recalled. "Since Pak Hasnul invited me back to work with Telkomsel, I promised myself I would never disappoint Pak Hasnul's trust. Eventually I created many creative marketing programs. The cooperation programs with Hiswana Migas and Pertamina — known through the slogan 'Top Up Your Phone Credit While Refueling' — were continued."

In 2000, Billy introduced another promotional idea by placing Telkomsel advertisements on money boxes at gas stations across Indonesia.

He also introduced the concept known as DOA (Dealer Deposit Operating Account), which later became a standard operating procedure widely adopted by Indonesian cellular operators when appointing dealers.

After actively rejoining Telkomsel, Billy eventually discontinued his consumer goods business. In fact, the prospects for Panda consumer products were actually quite promising. However, because the brands were still relatively new and unfamiliar to Indonesian consumers, they required extraordinary effort to compete successfully in the market.

Jakarta (2001): Taking Off with Tuas Mas Group — A Turning Point in Life

After the turn of the millennium, precisely in 2001, Billy Arman founded Tuas Mas Group with a commitment to building a company that was creative, innovative, and dynamic. For Billy, this moment represented a turning point in both his personal

life and business journey. It marked the end of a dark period in his life and the beginning of a brighter chapter ahead.

Standing before his employees, Billy expressed his dream of making Tuas Mas Group a leading company in its field. To achieve that vision, he consistently worked to improve the quality of products and services, human resources, and relationships with customers.

Billy emphasized. “Although Tuas Mas Group was built upon great ambitions and large goals, it is not a selfish business entity concerned only with profit and business interests. On the contrary, it prioritizes shared success — success for business, government, and society together.”

The name “Tuas Mas” itself contained symbolic meaning. The word “Tuas” referred to an aircraft control lever, while “Mas” referred to gold. Billy chose the word “Tuas” with the hope that the company would continue progressing and rising higher like an airplane taking off and rising into the sky. The name also represented the birth date of his twin daughters, Laura and Maura, born on May 17, 2001.

Tuas Mas Group was positioned as a holding company overseeing several businesses operating in business marketing solutions and several divisions, including indoor and outdoor advertising, promotions, printing, security paper, multimedia-based free public telephones, and various voucher systems designed as alternatives to cash payments.

Over time, Billy continued expanding Tuas Mas Group into many other sectors, including LED outdoor media, solar energy, housing, consulting, travel services, money changing, hospitality, oil and gas, and mining.

One subsidiary, PT Tunas Mandiri, established cooperation with foreign companies from China, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan, many of which owned and operated mining businesses in Indonesia. As a strategic partner, Billy helped foreign companies navigate operational processes in Indonesia.

Even so, Tuas Mas Group itself was never tied to foreign interests. Billy deeply loved Indonesia and consistently protected the sovereignty of his homeland.

Tuas Mas Group also developed mining, oil, and gas businesses through PT Taman Mineral Energi (TME). TME focused primarily on sales, marketing, and distribution of mining products, oil, and gas. The company played a role in providing the best services by optimizing the business chain within the energy sector.

In 2007, Tuas Mas Group also established PT Tulis Media Bersama to fulfill the growing demand for indoor media, outdoor media, and multimedia services. Within this business sector, Billy emphasized quality performance and strong human resources.

Billy strongly believed that amid intense competition in the media industry — whether national, regional, or international — success in controlling the market would always be determined by creativity. For Billy, the true core of the media business was human resources. The best and most creative people would help advance the company despite intense competition.

Billy once explained. “Tuas Mas Group is not a labor-intensive company. Therefore, we do not need large numbers of employees. For example, in our oil and gas business, we cooperate with contractors through profit-sharing systems.

Most of the workforce comes from the contractors, not from Tuas Mas itself.”

Even though Billy was now focused on developing Tuas Mas Group, he continued preserving the existence of Panda Group — the company he had previously built in telecommunications — and kept it active in the telecom industry.

Life experience taught Billy that success benefiting many people must always be built upon values. Without values, success loses its meaning. That was why every step taken by Tuas Mas Group was founded upon honesty, creativity, and hard work.

Billy often reminded his employees. “For me, intelligence can come later — maybe fifth or seventh. Honesty must come first and be upheld highly. Those values are what support both our personal lives and our businesses. I always emphasize this principle to everyone, from office boys to directors.”

That principle also explained why every applicant seeking employment at Tuas Mas Group had to meet Billy personally. For him, direct interviews were absolutely mandatory. He felt it was essential to speak personally with each candidate to determine whether they truly deserved trust.

Billy admitted. “Conducting job interviews personally does take a lot of my time, but it has to be done before we place trust in someone — especially someone we’ve only just met.”

Winning the Market: Free Calls Between IM3 Users

In 2001, Hasnul Suhaimi returned to Indosat as Head of the Multimedia Mobile Division, the forerunner of Indosat

Multimedia Mobile, later popularly known as IM3. At that time, while Hasnul was preparing IM3's market development strategy, Billy Arman was frequently invited to join discussions related to IM3 market development, including the selection of prospective IM3 distributors.

As the former Commercial Director of Telkomsel, Hasnul naturally had extensive business relationships, especially among distributors. Even so, many distributors did not yet realize that Hasnul had moved to Indosat.

For marketing purposes, Indosat gathered and re-evaluated prospective distributors. As a close associate and in an informal capacity, Billy was asked to provide opinions and suggestions.

When IM3 was officially launched in Batam on August 31, 2001, Billy proposed a breakthrough idea to Hasnul: IM3 should create a major breakthrough by offering free calls between fellow IM3 users.

Billy explained his reasoning directly. "Even though you were once Commercial Director at Telkomsel, you still can't compete against competitors like Satelindo, Telkomsel, and XL. IM3 is a new operator. Acquiring new customers will be extremely difficult, especially because IM3 still has very limited BTS (Base Transceiver Station) infrastructure. Free SMS promotions won't be effective because other operators can easily copy them. If IM3 offers free SMS, then Telkomsel, Satelindo, and XL will likely do the same."

Hasnul then asked. "So how do we outsmart them and win the market?" Billy explained that the only strategy competitors would not be able to implement was offering completely free calls between IM3 users.

According to Billy, competing operators would not be able to imitate the same strategy. Besides that, IM3 still had relatively few subscribers, meaning the operational costs of such a promotion would remain manageable.

This was very different from Telkomsel, which already had around one million users. If Telkomsel implemented unlimited free calls between users, Billy believed the company could go bankrupt immediately.

Billy understood very clearly that most cellular operator revenue at the time came from voice calls made between users on the same network. For example, most of Telkomsel's revenue came from Telkomsel-to-Telkomsel calls. The same pattern also applied to Satelindo and XL.

Billy then illustrated his strategy with a unique analogy. "This free call program is like teaching a baby how to walk. The baby is the customer. For three months, we nurse them like our own baby. After three months, they start paying perhaps Rp500 per call, except for postpaid customers."

At that time, mobile operators generally sold products using two systems: prepaid and postpaid. Billy proposed that IM3 prepaid users should receive completely free calls between fellow IM3 customers for three months. After the promotional period ended, users would then pay a flat call rate.

Billy further explained. "For IM3 postpaid customers, free calls should be given for six months. After that, implement a flat tariff that gradually increases. For example, after six months, charge Rp250 per call, then after another three months increase it to Rp500 per call. Once the promotional period ends, customers begin paying for the service. No other operator has ever tried this strategy, and I'm convinced it will be

highly effective in acquiring subscribers. In fact, there's a huge possibility customers from other operators will switch to IM3."

Apparently, Billy's proposal was taken very seriously by Hasnul Suhaimi. The strategy was studied thoroughly from every perspective before finally being adopted as a major IM3 strategic program.

Once implemented, the results proved highly successful. Billy Arman's free-call strategy — three months free for IM3 prepaid users and six months free for IM3 postpaid users — succeeded in helping IM3 acquire customers far beyond expectations.

From the launch in Batam until December 2001, IM3 successfully obtained 139,000 subscribers, far exceeding the original target of only 25,000 subscribers. Among Indonesian society — especially young people — IM3 soon became known as the most economical and friendly cellular product.

Even mobile phone sellers at Roxy Mas, Jakarta's largest mobile phone sales center, largely used IM3 themselves and recommended IM3 to customers. The free-call service between IM3 users continued receiving praise from the public.

Satyalancana Wira Karya: Indonesians Enjoy Affordable Mobile Call Tariffs

Not many people realize that the affordable cellular tariff scheme in Indonesia was first conceived and initiated by Billy Arman. In fact, because Billy was considered to have contributed to Indonesian society by helping Indonesians enjoy affordable mobile communication, a university once offered him an honorary doctorate degree. Billy politely declined the honor

because he felt that every innovation he created was simply a form of service to society and to Indonesia.

The idea for low-cost GSM cellular tariffs began shortly after IM3 was launched in Batam on August 31, 2001. At that time, Billy's idea of free calls between IM3 users had already succeeded in increasing IM3 subscribers.

But Billy did not stop there. He later proposed another idea to Hasnul Suhaimi: a truly affordable mobile tariff structure. At that time, all Indonesian cellular operators applied tariffs based on full-minute billing. Average rates exceeded Rp2,500 per minute, meaning that even if customers only spoke for thirty seconds, they were still charged for a full sixty seconds.

For Billy, this system did not reflect fairness for society.

Billy explained. "Think about it. Indonesian people are unknowingly forced by operators to pay for mobile phone usage they never actually used. Don't just look at the missing seconds or minutes individually. Look at the millions of Indonesians who cannot afford expensive phone credit yet still need affordable communication for emergencies involving life, health, education, and many other urgent matters. Clearly, this system harms society."

Because of that conviction, Billy worked hard to persuade Hasnul Suhaimi to implement his low-cost tariff concept at Indosat. Billy presented realistic business calculations showing that Indosat would not suffer losses by reducing tariffs. On the contrary, he believed affordable pricing would allow Indosat to dominate the market more quickly because the Indonesian public would directly feel the benefits.

Billy explained. “This affordable tariff scheme will receive a very positive response. Indosat won’t just dominate the youth market — it will reach every level of society. Once this concept is implemented, mobile phones will be used by the majority of Indonesians.”

Not long afterward, Indosat under Hasnul Suhaimi’s leadership truly implemented Billy’s affordable tariff concept by introducing mobile call rates below the market standard of Rp2,500 per minute. The program received a positive response from the public.

However, after serving only one year as President Director of Indosat, Hasnul Suhaimi later moved to XL and became President Director there as well. In order not to lose customers, XL also adopted the affordable tariff approach.

This time, Hasnul implemented a policy of Rp1 per second. Billy Arman was pleased to see his idea applied by Hasnul Suhaimi at XL through a low-cost mobile tariff policy that felt fair for Indonesian society: Rp1 per second. For the first time, Indonesians enjoyed cellular tariffs calculated at only Rp1 per second.

Later, Telkomsel, Indosat, and nearly all cellular operators in Indonesia followed the same approach, reducing tariffs to some of the lowest levels in Indonesian telecommunications history, and among the lowest internationally at the time. From that point onward, a tariff war erupted among mobile operators. No operator could any longer maintain rates above Rp1 per second without offering additional facilities and services.

As a positive effect of the tariff war, mobile phone usage spread increasingly widely across Indonesian society, reaching

farmers, fishermen, and villagers who previously had not been touched by cellular communication services.

Since the arrival of Rp1-per-second tariffs, Indonesians were able to use mobile phones for daily needs because mobile call costs had become extremely affordable for all levels of society. Farmers in rural areas gained broader access to market information. Farmers in remote villages no longer depended solely on middlemen and brokers to sell their agricultural products. They could even sell products to other regions if local prices were considered unfair. Likewise, villagers living far from healthcare facilities could immediately contact doctors, clinics, and hospitals once cellular communication became affordable.

Billy later reflected. “Who benefited the most from affordable mobile communication? Of course, the Indonesian people. We should be grateful that all levels of society can now enjoy mobile services. Even pedicab drivers and farm laborers already use mobile phones. In the past, only wealthy and middle-class people owned them because phone credit costs were extremely expensive — whether calling across operators or within the same operator.”

For Billy Arman, Indonesia’s telecommunications system still needed further development by providing even more free services that could make life easier for Indonesian society. If telecommunications advanced, the economy of both society and the nation would progress more rapidly.

Billy explained. “The development of telecommunications is closely connected to economic progress. If telecommunications advance, the economy will naturally grow rapidly as well.”

Because of Billy Arman’s real contributions to Indonesia through his affordable telecommunications tariff innovations

— innovations whose benefits were deeply felt by society — Joko Widodo awarded Billy Arman the Satyalancana Wira Karya honorary medal on August 7, 2015.

In Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indonesia No. 89/TK/Tahun 2015, President Jokowi stated that the award represented recognition for Billy Arman's services and dedication to the Indonesian nation and state, making him worthy of becoming an example for others.

The Creator of Free Multimedia Public Telephones for Underprivileged Communities

Billy Arman's passion for telecommunications technology continued creating innovations designed to benefit society. In 2007, he introduced the idea of a free multimedia public telephone system intended to serve the needs of the Indonesian people, especially underprivileged communities.

The multimedia public telephone created by Billy was intentionally programmed so users could call the same number free of charge twice a day, with a time limit of one and a half minutes per call. Initially, the purpose was to help cellular operators acquire customers.

Billy explained. "Usage limits still had to exist so many people could use the phones. Otherwise, people might use them for long romantic conversations while others never got a chance to make calls."

Just like mobile phones, these digital public telephones used wireless communication technology and were connected to all cellular operator networks operating in Indonesia. This made them highly flexible. They could be installed anywhere and used

to call any destination, including mobile phones. Such flexibility became possible because of newer wireless technology.

Previously, affordable calls were generally limited only to users within the same operator network. It was not uncommon for people to own more than one mobile number from different operators. One of the advantages of Billy's multimedia public telephone system was its ability to connect to all cellular operators in Indonesia.

How did the idea originally emerge?

Billy recalled the beginning. "At first, I saw that government campaigns promoting Rp1,000 generic medicine through television advertisements were ineffective and poorly targeted. Think about it — families who owned televisions were generally better-off families and unlikely to purchase low-cost generic medicines. That's why I suggested the government should use another medium capable of directly reaching the intended segment of society. After checking, I also realized the government's budget for generic medicine advertisements was extremely large. It would be a waste of public money if it continued being used inefficiently."

At the same time, Billy observed that cellular operators often struggled to obtain loyal customers. According to Billy, this was precisely why operators continuously tried selling as many SIM cards as possible. Their goal was customer growth. However, Billy believed their promotional strategies were inefficient.

He explained. "It's proven that for every eleven SIM cards sold and activated by customers, on average only one remains actively used for more than three months. So if an operator wants to gain one million customers, that means eleven million

SIM cards are wasted. Just calculate the cost. Suppose each card costs Rp2,500 — multiply that by eleven million. Billions of rupiah are simply thrown away.”

Billy then proposed a better promotional approach to cellular operators. Instead of spending enormous funds on television advertisements, operators should provide free public mobile telephone services in public areas frequently visited by ordinary people.

These phones would be placed in community health centers, village halls, subdistrict offices, schools, train stations, bus terminals, places of worship, and other public facilities. Billy believed this approach would acquire large numbers of customers, cost far less than television advertising, and make users more loyal to a particular operator.

Billy then realized that the interests of cellular operators seeking customer growth and the government’s public health campaigns promoting affordable generic medicine could actually be combined into one integrated system. That realization became the foundation for the creation of the multimedia-based free public telephone system.

Government generic medicine advertisements could be displayed directly on the monitor screens of the public telephone units, reaching precisely the lower-income communities targeted by the campaign. At the same time, operators would gain new customers who would become increasingly loyal to the network providing the service.

Billy explained the scale of the opportunity. “Suppose each multimedia public telephone is used by at least fifteen people every day. If one hundred thousand units are installed across public and social facilities throughout Indonesia, millions of people will watch and hear those generic medicine advertisements while simultaneously becoming loyal cellular operator users.”

When asked where the funding for such a massive project would come from, Billy answered simply:

“We simply use the government’s generic medicine advertising budget and combine it with cellular operator advertising budgets instead of letting the money be wasted.”

That was the origin of Billy Arman’s multimedia-based free public telephone system. After the concept became reality, Billy officially registered the invention for patent protection. The Government of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, later issued Patent Registration No. 037249 and Patent Registration No. 035273 on July 12, 2007.

Fuel Vouchers: Preventing Hoarding and Smuggling of Subsidized Fuel

During the years when Pertamina appointed him to distribute cellular refill vouchers through gas stations, Billy Arman once dreamed of owning a gas station business himself. However, he quickly realized that owning a gas station business would require enormous capital, and at that time he simply did not have the money.

So, instead of abandoning the dream, Billy searched for another path. Then he came up with an idea: fuel vouchers. In

many developed countries, fuel voucher systems had already been implemented for years.

Billy's idea gained momentum when the Indonesian government began discussing plans to reduce fuel subsidies. At that time, there was public discourse about implementing a dual-pricing fuel system. Under the proposal, Premium gasoline priced at Rp4,500 per liter would only be sold to public transportation vehicles and motorcycles, while private cars would have to purchase fuel at higher prices.

The proposal immediately created public debate. Some supported the policy, believing it was the most appropriate solution at the time. Others opposed it, arguing that the dual-pricing system would encourage hoarding and smuggling of subsidized fuel.

Billy then approached Pertamina and proposed fuel vouchers as a solution. His idea received a positive response. Afterward, Billy began communicating directly with gas station supervisors and owners.

Starting in 2006, Pertamina entrusted Billy with managing the fuel voucher distribution system. In fact, Billy became the only person trusted by Pertamina to establish fuel voucher outlets in Jakarta.

Billy later said. "Once Pertamina implemented this idea, I no longer felt the need to own a gas station business. Managing fuel vouchers across hundreds of gas stations was already satisfying enough for me."

Billy's fuel voucher system became the first of its kind in Indonesia. He later registered the concept under Copyright

Registration No. 031548 dated September 13, 2006, and Registration No. 032795 dated February 1, 2007.

Eventually, Billy Arman's fuel vouchers were used in 820 gas stations stretching from Medan to Manado. Billy then expanded the concept further. The vouchers could also function as promotional media, wedding souvenirs, birthday gifts, and other purposes. Sponsors could place advertisements on the vouchers.

When asked about the possibility of counterfeiting, Billy explained in detail. "Each fuel voucher I created contains multiple layers of security systems to prevent forgery. In fact, the security standards are even higher than those used in currency printing, making counterfeiting extremely difficult. The vouchers contain specific colors, codes, logos, and identification systems controlling usage periods, purchase quantities, purchase locations, and authorized users. That makes misuse very difficult."

Billy also changed the voucher security system every month to reduce counterfeiting risks. Additionally, voucher validity periods were intentionally kept short — only one month. Every month, voucher designs and security systems were changed. Through the voucher system, fuel distribution became measurable and well-managed.

Billy also employed marketing teams to approach companies and offer promotional advertising opportunities on fuel vouchers. For example, if an automotive company launched a new car model, the vehicle image could appear directly on the vouchers.

Naturally, the system involved detailed financial calculations regarding fuel value, advertising costs, and promotional pricing

structures. According to Billy, fuel vouchers created more effective promotional media for companies.

Billy Arman's fuel vouchers were eventually used by officials within the State Palace environment, including vehicles of the President of Indonesia, the First Lady, and ministers. Through the voucher system, fuel procurement for government operational vehicles became simpler, eliminated complicated bureaucracy, and prevented misuse of state funds.

Each government institution's vouchers displayed the official logo of the respective institution. For those government-related uses, Billy did not charge advertising fees and intentionally avoided seeking profit. He explained. "That is my form of devotion to the country. As long as it helps save state funds, I'm already grateful and happy."

Billy also believed fuel vouchers could also be used effectively for controlling subsidized fuel distribution, even more effectively than RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) systems.

He criticized RFID systems openly. "I already explained to officials at BPH Migas that RFID systems are actually not very effective. The weakness of RFID is that dishonest operators can still continue distributing fuel improperly. Many people even refuse to install the devices despite enormous state funds already being spent on the system. The truth is, the effectiveness of fuel control doesn't depend mainly on the technology itself — it depends on the gas station operators. Unfortunately, many people in BPH Migas don't fully understand that the ones who play the biggest role in the system are the fuel attendants themselves."

Billy further explained that if the government truly wanted to reduce subsidized fuel consumption, the solution was

actually quite simple. No presidential decree was necessary. A ministerial regulation would already be sufficient. However, implementation in the field would still involve gas station operators.

For example, if the government restricted Premium fuel usage only to vehicles with certain engine capacities or public transportation vehicles, implementation would simply require clear instructions posted at gas stations. To ensure the policy worked properly and achieved its objective, Billy proposed giving gas station operators an incentive of Rp1 per liter of Pertamina sold.

With such incentives, fuel attendants would actively encourage private vehicle owners to switch from subsidized Premium gasoline to Pertamina according to government policy.

Billy illustrated the scenario. “Fuel attendants could firmly tell customers: ‘Sorry, Sir, you must use Pertamina. Here is the official government regulation.’ They would willingly take on that role because there is an attractive incentive. For every liter of Pertamina sold, they earn one rupiah. So the ones who play the biggest role are the SPBU operators.”

Billy believed his fuel voucher system could be applied on a wider scale to support supervision and control of subsidized fuel distribution. Through the voucher system, it would even be possible for subsidy burdens to be shared collectively between the central government and regional governments if local governments had sufficient budgets.

For example, if fuel price increases affected certain regions more severely than others, local governments could provide subsidies through fuel vouchers. Using vouchers, fuel subsidies

could be managed in a measurable way without worrying about misuse.

Sharing Knowledge and Inspiring Young Indonesians at the University of Indonesia

As an entrepreneur, Billy Arman enjoyed sharing his life experiences with anyone interested in learning how to build and develop businesses. He especially loved inspiring young Indonesians. Billy wanted Indonesia's younger generation to continue the struggle of previous generations by contributing through entrepreneurship.

In 2012, Billy shared his life story and business experiences with students at Universitas Indonesia. At the event titled UI Student Preneurs 2012, he encouraged university students to take real roles in national development through entrepreneurship.

Billy also appeared several times on television to share business experiences with broader Indonesian society, particularly young audiences. One of the programs he joined was “Bedah Bisnis” on Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI), hosted by Rhenald Kasali.

During the program, Billy explained how his business journey was built from working every day, observing and understanding the problems faced by society, businesspeople, and government, then creating ideas and solutions capable of bridging those interests while improving people's lives.

It was during that television appearance that Billy began being referred to as: “The Innovator.”

Since 2004, Billy had also started becoming involved in politics. In fact, several of his colleagues encouraged him to run

in the mayoral election in Pontianak. At that time, Billy emerged as a new figure ready to enter the competition.

Billy later reflected. “My name may not have been very familiar yet to the people of Pontianak. Some knew me as an official in the central leadership of the Democratic Party and as a son of Pontianak who had become a businessman in Jakarta. Those who encouraged me to develop Pontianak probably saw my experience building businesses from nothing into successful businesses. They placed hope in a local son returning to build his hometown.”

At that time, Pontianak faced many serious problems: traffic congestion, flooding, unemployment, urban disorder, and many others. According to Billy, all of those issues needed the touch of a leader. He believed the problems could become a time bomb if not resolved quickly and comprehensively.

Billy explained. “As time passed, some of my other friends actually regretted the idea of me entering the mayoral election. Eventually there were both pro and contra opinions. In the end, I decided to cancel the plan.”

PART III

INNOVATIONS THAT SHOOK THE TELE- COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

The Historic Moment Behind the Birth of the Revolutionary Rp1-per-Second Idea

Batam, August 31, 2001.

That morning, the sun cast shimmering reflections across the city. The scorching air blended with sea winds carrying the salty scent of the Singapore Strait. A massive tent bearing the IM3 logo stood proudly in an open area. Government officials, corporate executives, journalists, and invited guests filled rows of neatly arranged chairs. In front of the stage, a giant screen played the launch video of a new GSM service that was being promoted as the beginning of a new era in Indonesia's telecommunications industry.

Billy Arman stood amid the excitement surrounding the launch of IM3. His eyes swept across the venue before he greeted many familiar faces. For most of the attendees, the event was simply another corporate product launch. But for Billy, it was something far greater: the entry point for an idea that would soon become a solution for millions of Indonesians and reshape the entire landscape of the nation's telecommunications industry.

He carried one simple yet revolutionary conviction: telecommunications should fundamentally be fair and affordable for all Indonesians.

At that time, every mobile operator in Indonesia applied fixed call tariffs, averaging above Rp2,500 per minute. Customers who spoke for only twenty or thirty seconds were still charged for a full minute or sixty seconds of airtime. To Billy, this was a clear and undeniable form of injustice toward the Indonesian people.

For years, Billy had been developing and testing an idea that many considered impossible: mobile phone tariffs should be calculated per second. More boldly, he proposed a figure that sounded almost absurd at the time — Rp1 per second.

Billy believed that if Rp1-per-second tariffs were implemented, low-income communities in remote villages would finally become connected to the modern world. The number of mobile phone users, he believed, would multiply dramatically across Indonesia, while telecommunications companies themselves would ultimately generate even greater profits through massive market expansion.

Indosat, through its IM3 product, became Billy's first strategic target as he began pushing the idea forward. The launch event in Batam became the perfect opening moment.

That afternoon, as the MC officially announced the launch of IM3, thunderous applause echoed throughout the venue. Billy welcomed IM3's arrival with genuine excitement, yet his mind was already racing far beyond the celebration unfolding before him. He understood something few others could see at the time: if his Rp1-per-second tariff concept were fully implemented, the competitive battlefield of Indonesia's telecommunications industry would change forever.

Shortly after the IM3 launch in Batam, Billy Arman presented his low-cost mobile tariff scheme directly to Hasnul

Suhaimi, then President Director of Indosat. Billy reinforced his proposal with powerful business arguments:

- Affordable mobile tariffs would trigger an explosive surge in subscribers.
- The market would no longer be limited to urban youth, but would expand to every layer of Indonesian society.
- The social impact would be enormous — from fishermen at sea to farmers in remote villages, millions of Indonesians would benefit from affordable mobile communication.

Hasnul quickly recognized the enormous potential behind the idea. Not long afterward, Indosat began changing its pricing strategy, breaking away from the dominance of per-minute billing and gradually moving toward a per-second tariff system.

When Hasnul Suhaimi later moved to XL Axiata a year afterward, he brought Billy Arman's idea with him and transformed it into a historic national policy: Indonesia's first Rp1-per-second mobile tariff.

The impact was extraordinary. A tariff war erupted across the telecommunications industry. All major operators — including Telkomsel and Indosat — were eventually forced to follow. Mobile tariffs fell to one of the lowest levels ever seen in the history of global telecommunications.

Mobile phones, once considered luxury items owned only by wealthy Indonesians, rapidly became tools used by pedicab drivers, farm laborers, fishermen, street vendors, and virtually every layer of society across the archipelago.

That massive social transformation emerged from Billy Arman's deeply rooted concern for ordinary people's lives. He

believed that technology should exist to ease the burdens of society — not create new burdens for the people it was meant to serve.

From Strategy to Execution: Breaking Through the Walls of the Telecommunications Industry

The days following the IM3 launch in Batam marked the beginning of Billy Arman's quiet campaign behind the scenes. The promotional spectacle had ended, but the far more difficult work was only beginning.

Inside closed-door meetings, Billy had to transform bold concepts into official corporate policy. He faced the hard calculations of business executives, navigated institutional bureaucracy, and anticipated resistance from those who had long grown comfortable with the old tariff system.

Billy understood that the telecommunications industry was an arena layered with competing interests: shareholders, management, engineers, marketers, and regulators. A single objection from one side could permanently bury an idea at the discussion table before it ever reached the public.

Because of that, Billy prepared his strategy with extraordinary care. He arrived not merely with vision, but with concrete numbers and measurable projections. He presented estimates of massive subscriber growth if tariffs became more affordable. He prepared cash-flow simulations showing that company revenues could remain stable — and even grow — despite the elimination of per-minute billing. He also compared global telecommunications trends, many of which had already begun moving toward more flexible pricing systems.

Yet Billy did not rely solely on business calculations. He continuously emphasized the social impact behind the idea. He described how per-second billing could penetrate communities that had long remained beyond the reach of mobile communication: fishermen at sea, farmers in remote villages, laborers, and small market traders who previously viewed mobile phones as expensive luxuries.

The initial implementation of the new tariff scheme at Indosat was carried out with extreme caution. Specific customer segments became the first targets, supported by carefully tailored promotional programs.

The response soon began to validate Billy's calculations. Call durations became shorter, yet the frequency of calls increased significantly. Consumers gradually felt that tariffs finally reflected actual usage. Slowly, the long-standing public perception that mobile phones were expensive and inaccessible began to fade.

When Hasnul Suhaimi later moved to XL Axiata, Billy recognized an opportunity to bring the idea onto a far larger stage. At XL, there was greater room for bold strategic moves. The full implementation of per-second tariffs became a major corporate agenda, and the symbolic figure of Rp1 per second was chosen as a powerful declaration of commitment.

The policy sent shockwaves through the market. Competitors initially viewed the move as dangerously risky. But within a short time, they began feeling the pressure. XL Axiata succeeded in capturing public attention and attracting entirely new market segments that had previously remained untouched by the telecommunications industry.

The effects on the ground were immediate and visible.

- The number of low-credit users rose dramatically. People could finally make essential phone calls without the constant fear of exhausting their credit within minutes.
- Communication activity increased sharply throughout Indonesia's informal sectors — from fishermen coordinating their daily catches to market traders arranging the flow of goods and supplies.
- Retail sales strategies also changed. Phone-card sellers began aggressively promoting per-second tariffs as a primary selling advantage.

The success of XL Axiata triggered rapid responses from competing operators. Indosat and Telkomsel soon lowered their own tariffs to follow the new market trend. For the first time, Indonesia's telecommunications industry entered an era of open tariff warfare, where pricing became the primary weapon in the battle for subscribers.

Indonesian consumers enjoyed the benefits, while operators were forced to compete through service innovation and additional features in order to preserve their profit margins. Within a remarkably short period, an idea once considered too radical had transformed into an industry standard.

Billy Arman had proven that innovation was not merely about creating new products. True innovation could also mean changing the way an entire market operated. And for millions of Indonesians, that transformation meant something deeply personal: they could finally communicate through mobile phones without living under the pressure of punishing minute-based tariffs.

Tariff Wars: When Mobile Credit Prices Became Weapons to Win the Market

The Rp1-per-second mobile tariff conceived by Billy Arman and implemented by XL Axiata was like a massive stone thrown into the still waters of Indonesia's telecommunications industry. The ripples quickly turned into waves, and the waves soon grew into a storm of competition.

Telecommunications operators once regarded as untouchable giants suddenly found themselves with only two choices: respond to the new reality, or prepare to lose market share.

Indosat, which had previously experimented with flexible tariff schemes, moved rapidly to adapt similar pricing models in order to defend its customer base. The company did not want to appear outdated in the eyes of the public, especially after XL Axiata began gaining a powerful reputation as the cheapest and most people-oriented operator in Indonesia.

Telkomsel, with the country's largest subscriber base, initially responded more cautiously. The company attempted to preserve its traditional tariff structure by relying on network quality, brand strength, and customer loyalty programs.

But market pressure continued to intensify. Gradually, Telkomsel was forced to lower its tariffs while introducing special packages targeted at specific customer segments. The tariff war reshaped the way telecommunications operators competed across Indonesia.

- Price became the dominant advertising message, replacing older slogans centered on premium services and network superiority.

- Customers turned into “promo hunters,” frequently switching between operators in search of the best offers, often carrying multiple SIM cards at the same time
- Retailers and mobile-credit agents gained increasingly important roles as grassroots promotional forces throughout cities, towns, and villages.

For millions of Indonesians, the tariff war changed everyday life. For the first time, mobile phone credit became genuinely affordable for workers, farmers, fishermen, market traders, and students living in small towns across the archipelago.

Those with higher incomes could now speak longer without concern, while lower-income users finally gained the freedom to make short but important calls without constantly worrying that their credit would disappear within minutes.

Communication between regions intensified. Information moved faster. Economic opportunities expanded more rapidly across local communities. Each telecommunications operator developed its own strategy for survival.

- XL Axiata strengthened its image as the pioneer of affordable tariffs while aggressively expanding network coverage beyond Java.
- Indosat combined competitive pricing with SMS and data-service bundles to attract customers who were beginning to explore internet access.
- Telkomsel focused on superior network quality and expansion into remote regions still beyond the reach of other operators.

As mobile tariffs fell to historic lows, telecommunications companies were forced to search desperately for new sources of revenue.

New ideas quickly emerged: discounted nighttime call packages, bonus SMS programs, bundled handset promotions, and internet packages based on daily quotas.

Although the public saw it mainly as a tariff war, something much larger was quietly unfolding behind the scenes. Indonesia's telecommunications industry was slowly transforming toward the coming era of data services.

At the same time, the tariff war also carried serious consequences. Profit margins declined sharply, forcing operators to pursue operational efficiency, asset optimization, and aggressive cost restructuring. Several smaller telecommunications support companies struggled to survive under mounting pressure.

Yet for Billy Arman, this situation represented the natural test of the market itself. He believed that only telecommunications companies willing to innovate and adapt would survive in the long run.

The tariff war permanently transformed the face of Indonesia's telecommunications industry. Mobile tariffs were no longer merely numbers printed in brochures. They became symbols of which companies truly stood with the people, weapons for winning public trust, and battlefields in one of the fiercest business competitions Indonesia had ever witnessed.

Billy Arman had ignited a revolution that forced every telecommunications operator to dance to a new rhythm shaped by the Rp1-per-second idea. And amid the increasingly powerful

current of competition, he was already looking far ahead — searching for the next wave that would once again reshape the market.

Telecommunications Innovations for the Convenience of the Indonesian People

The Rp1-per-second tariff revolution was only one chapter in Billy Arman's long journey through Indonesia's telecommunications industry. Behind that breakthrough stood a far larger vision: ensuring that communication technology would become a right accessible to all Indonesians, not a luxury enjoyed only by a privileged few.

Behind the scenes, Billy continuously conceived, designed, and pushed forward ideas that, during their time, sounded almost futuristic. Yet every one of those innovations emerged from careful observation of how ordinary Indonesians lived, worked, and struggled in their daily lives.

1. Free Multimedia Public Telephones

One of Billy Arman's most attention-grabbing ideas during the early Reformasi era was the concept of free multimedia public telephones.

Billy saw clearly that communication access remained a major obstacle in many parts of Indonesia, especially for students, job seekers, and low-income communities. In many regions, making a simple phone call was still considered expensive.

His idea was simple, yet revolutionary: public communication devices that would not only provide free telephone services,

but also offer access to information, advertising, educational materials, news, and short entertainment content.

Billy envisioned public communication terminals financed through advertising sponsorships, allowing people to access communication services without carrying financial burdens as users. The concept even incorporated digital screens capable of displaying real-time public information.

For its era, the idea felt far ahead of its time. Yet for Billy, the innovation was never merely about technology. It was rooted in a deeper belief: information access should belong to everyone equally, including people who still could not afford personal mobile phones.

He believed the system could become especially valuable in rural areas — in village offices, community halls, posyandu centers, and other public gathering spaces where communication access remained limited.

2. Wireless Telephones for Remote and Underserved Regions

Billy Arman also paid serious attention to Indonesia's widening digital divide between major cities and remote regions. At a time when cellular coverage remained uneven across the archipelago, Billy introduced the idea of utilizing long-range wireless technology to connect villages where conventional cable infrastructure or telecommunications towers were difficult and expensive to build.

His concept involved cost-efficient long-distance relay systems powered by renewable energy sources such as solar panels. Through this approach, telephone and internet access

could reach areas that large operators often considered commercially unfeasible.

The idea appeared technically simple on the surface, but its social and economic implications were enormous. Fishermen along Indonesia's coastlines, farmers in mountainous regions, and field workers in plantation areas could communicate without waiting years for expensive infrastructure projects to arrive.

For Billy Arman, this innovation represented something far greater than business opportunity. It was a genuine mission to bridge distance, expand access to communication services, and reduce isolation for millions of Indonesians living far from urban centers.

3. Triple-SIM Mobile Phones

As Indonesia's telecommunications market entered the multi-operator era, Billy Arman recognized a new pattern emerging in society. Many Indonesians began carrying multiple mobile phones at once in order to take advantage of cheaper tariffs offered by different operators. Communication had become more affordable, but it had also become increasingly inconvenient.

Billy responded with another practical innovation: a single mobile phone capable of accommodating three SIM cards simultaneously. At the time, such a concept was still highly unusual in Indonesia.

Billy pioneered the idea through a mobile-phone design that incorporated three SIM-card slots of his own creation. The innovation was not simply about convenience, but also about economic efficiency for users.

Without carrying multiple phones, consumers could freely choose the cheapest tariffs from different operators according to their needs. For the Indonesian market — highly sensitive to pricing and promotional offers — the triple-SIM-phone concept became an intelligent and highly relevant solution.

4. Deposit Dealer Operating Account (DDOA)

Another innovation developed by Billy Arman that largely escaped public attention was the Deposit Dealer Operating Account (DDOA) system for distributing SIM cards and airtime credit.

At the height of Indonesia's telecommunications tariff wars, distribution speed became critically important. Operators and retailers needed systems that could move products rapidly and efficiently across thousands of locations.

Billy's DDOA system simplified the relationship between operators and sales agents. Instead of waiting for physical stock deliveries, dealers only needed to deposit funds into a dedicated operational account. From there, they could immediately access digital product inventory in real time.

The system dramatically accelerated distribution flows, reduced the risk of unsold stock, and simplified financial management for retailers and airtime agents. On a national scale, DDOA became one of the operational foundations supporting Indonesia's increasingly agile telecommunications distribution network during the peak of tariff competition.

5. Telecommunications Systems for Public Services and MSMEs

Billy Arman believed that the future of telecommunications could never be separated from public services. Since the early Reformasi era, he had already begun promoting ideas for telecommunications systems integrated with government services, healthcare, and education.

Through this concept, people could process administrative documents, register for schools, or consult healthcare providers through a single public communication terminal — without needing to travel long distances to government offices or medical facilities.

Billy also recognized the enormous role played by micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within Indonesia's economy.

Because of that, he introduced the concept of micro-networking: low-cost local communication networks enabling small business owners to communicate more efficiently, market their products, and access market information quickly.

The system relied on community collaboration and low-cost base-station technology, allowing operational costs to remain affordable without sacrificing service quality.

Long before digital transformation became a national trend, Billy Arman had already envisioned telecommunications not merely as a commercial industry, but as infrastructure capable of improving everyday life for millions of Indonesians.

For him, technology held its greatest value not when it generated the highest profits, but when it could bring people

closer, open access to opportunity, and make life easier for ordinary citizens across the archipelago.

Creative Funding Strategies for Executing Innovative Projects

Behind many of Billy Arman's telecommunications innovations stood one recurring idea: creative financing. Billy understood that many promising ideas never failed because they lacked value, but because they lacked sustainable funding. For that reason, as early as the 2000s, he had already begun developing financing approaches built around advertising, sponsorships, and cross-industry collaboration.

Through this model, costs that would normally be passed on to users could instead be reduced — or even eliminated entirely — making access to telecommunications services far more inclusive for ordinary Indonesians.

Not every concept envisioned by Billy Arman could be fully realized. Some were constrained by regulations, while others faced obstacles involving business agreements or technological readiness during their era.

Yet even when certain projects could not materialize completely, many elements of those ideas later resurfaced in new forms across the telecommunications industry. It became a sign that Billy Arman's way of thinking often reached far ahead of its time.

His work revealed something important: Billy Arman was never merely trying to solve short-term problems. He was attempting to design systems for the future. He viewed telecommunications not simply as a commercial industry, but

as one of the foundations capable of driving social and economic transformation across Indonesia.

Although not all of his visions were immediately realized, his ideas left lasting traces that influenced how the telecommunications industry approached access, inclusion, affordability, and innovation.

Despite the diversity of Billy Arman's innovations, the core principles behind them always remained remarkably consistent:

- They began with real problems experienced directly by people in everyday life.
- They offered practical solutions capable of creating broad impact through greater efficiency and effectiveness.
- They opened access to telecommunications products and services that had previously felt expensive, distant, and exclusive to many Indonesians.

Billy Arman never viewed technology as the ultimate goal. For him, technology was only a tool. What mattered most was how that tool could be used to improve the quality of life of the Indonesian people.

Some of his concepts were adopted quickly by the market, while others became inspirations for future generations of innovators. Through his work, Billy demonstrated that innovation did not always need to be revolutionary in terms of technology itself — it needed to be revolutionary in its impact on society.

From remote coastlines to crowded urban centers, from executive boardrooms to small roadside airtime kiosks,

Billy Arman's ideas and innovations left visible marks across Indonesia's telecommunications landscape.

He helped shape a telecommunications ecosystem that was more open, more inclusive, and closer to the everyday lives of ordinary Indonesians.

And throughout every stage of his journey, one guiding question always remained at the center of his thinking: How could telecommunications technology and services be made accessible and affordable for all Indonesians — not only for those who could afford to pay more?

The Social & Economic Impact of Innovation in the Telecommunications Industry

For Billy Arman, the true success of an innovation was never measured merely by how many products or services were sold. What mattered far more was whether those innovations could create meaningful positive change in people's everyday lives.

Billy believed that telecommunications technology should function as a tool capable of improving the social and economic lives of ordinary people. When directed properly, he believed, communication technology could elevate the quality of life of millions across Indonesia.

Before mobile tariffs became affordable and access to technology expanded widely, mobile phones were symbols of social status. Only certain groups — businesspeople, government officials, and upper-middle-class communities — could use them freely.

Everything began to change after the introduction of the Rp1-per-second tariff innovation. As mobile call tariffs became

cheaper, the prices of mobile phones also gradually declined, making them accessible to ordinary Indonesians. The way people communicated across the country began to transform.

Market traders could call suppliers directly. Fishermen could report their daily catches from the coast. Villagers could quickly seek emergency healthcare assistance. Young migrants working or studying far from home could maintain regular contact with their parents in distant hometowns.

That growing connectivity did more than create convenience or a sense of security. It opened entirely new economic opportunities.

1. Business Opportunities at the Local Level

One of the largest domino effects was the emergence of thousands of small businesses centered around airtime sales, SIM cards, secondhand mobile phones, and telecommunications accessories.

Small roadside shops began offering airtime top-up services. Grocery kiosks transformed into starter-pack sales centers. Young people started opening telecommunications counters with relatively modest capital.

In many small towns across Indonesia, the telecommunications business became one of the first gateways into entrepreneurship.

2. Increased Productivity and Efficiency

For farmers, fishermen, and traders, affordable communication meant saving both time and money.

They could check market prices before shipping goods, coordinate deliveries remotely, and negotiate transactions without traveling long distances.

Information moved faster than ever before. Decisions that once required days could now be made within minutes.

Middlemen gradually lost some of their dominance because farmers and small traders could access market information more quickly and more independently.

3. Easier Access to Healthcare and Education

The impact of affordable mobile communication reached even Indonesia's most remote regions.

Students could search for information related to school assignments. Teachers could coordinate more efficiently. Villagers in remote areas facing medical emergencies could contact doctors, clinics, and hospitals far more quickly than before.

Local communities also became increasingly connected to developments beyond their own regions.

The expansion of communication access and the more equal distribution of information helped reduce the digital divide that had long slowed development in many areas of Indonesia.

4. Strengthening Human Connections

Behind all the statistics, growth charts, and industry competition, there was also a deeply personal impact. Affordable tariffs made communication within families more frequent and more intimate.

Parents could stay connected with children studying far from home. Couples could exchange news more regularly. Friendships across cities and islands could continue despite distance.

For Billy, this was the true essence of telecommunications: not merely hearing a voice at the other end of a call, but feeling the presence of another human being despite physical separation.

5. Driving Supporting Industries

Innovation in telecommunications also stimulated growth in supporting sectors throughout Indonesia. Hardware manufacturers expanded production. SIM-card printing companies grew rapidly. Advertising agencies began utilizing emerging telecommunications media platforms. New employment opportunities appeared across many sectors, from network technicians to field sales workers.

The transformation created an economic ripple effect far beyond the telecommunications industry itself. Of course, the rapid changes also brought serious challenges.

The tariff war intensified competition and placed increasing pressure on operator profit margins. Some smaller companies struggled to survive amid the shifting landscape. Yet from a broader socio-economic perspective, the benefits experienced by society far outweighed the negative consequences.

Every innovation created by Billy Arman — born from concern, observation, and genuine care for ordinary people — left traces measurable not only through sales figures, but through the daily lives of millions of Indonesians.

His ideas helped make telecommunications in Indonesia more inclusive, created new economic opportunities, expanded access to information, and strengthened social connections throughout society.

Billy Arman ultimately proved that a vision aligned with the interests of the people could do more than simply succeed in the marketplace. It could reshape and shake the telecommunications industry itself.

The Long Journey of Innovation: From Rejection to Becoming Unstoppable

Before becoming widely known as the figure behind the Rp1-per-second mobile tariff and numerous innovations in Indonesia's telecommunications industry, Billy Arman began his journey along a very unconventional path.

He was neither a telecommunications engineer nor a corporate executive shaped inside elite boardrooms. Instead, he was forged through years of direct experience in the field — developing sharp intuition, the courage to take risks, and a deep understanding of how ordinary Indonesians lived and communicated.

Billy's career as an innovator began through work that placed him in direct contact with the market itself. For years, he observed how people used communication services, what they truly needed, and what obstacles they faced in their daily lives.

From those experiences, Billy learned an important lesson: many brilliant products and services failed not because the technology was poor, but because they failed to answer the real needs of society.

From that realization, he developed a principle that would guide many of his innovations in the years ahead: innovation must emerge from problems genuinely experienced by the people.

Regulatory changes in Indonesia's telecommunications industry at the end of the 1990s opened the door for new operators and tariff competition. Billy immediately recognized it as a rare moment of opportunity.

While most telecommunications companies focused primarily on network expansion and brand promotion, Billy chose a different direction. He concentrated on developing products and services that aligned more closely with the actual needs of Indonesian society.

That unconventional perspective eventually led him into strategic roles within major telecommunications companies, including Indosat and XL Axiata.

Billy's reputation as a relentless source of ideas grew rapidly. He did not simply propose concepts. He thought through every layer of execution — from business models and distribution strategies to the challenge of educating the market itself.

Billy understood a principle that many people underestimated: ideas without execution were nothing more than talk. Because of that, he consistently followed every innovation through until it was truly used by consumers and created measurable impact in society.

Behind many of his successes stood another capability that often escaped public attention: negotiation.

Billy possessed a rare ability to bridge technical, business, and regulatory interests at the same time. He could speak in terms engineers understood, present calculations convincing to financial executives, and package ideas in ways policymakers could accept.

That ability earned him trust in developing telecommunications products and services requiring coordination across divisions, companies, and even institutions. Of course, not all of Billy's ideas were accepted immediately.

Some were considered too risky. Others were rejected because they conflicted with short-term corporate strategies. Yet Billy rarely abandoned his ideas completely. Many concepts that were initially rejected later reappeared in different forms, modified and refined until they became more relevant to changing market conditions.

For Billy, failure was simply part of the natural selection process of innovation itself.

Billy Arman became living proof that the path toward becoming an innovator does not always begin with prestigious academic degrees or enormous financial capital. Sensitivity toward society's needs, the courage to experiment, and consistency in executing ideas could be just as valuable.

His journey demonstrated that true innovators are not merely those who create technology, but those capable of making it relevant, affordable, and genuinely useful for many people.

From the frontlines of everyday struggle to corporate meeting rooms, Billy Arman built his reputation not through

slogans or empty promises, but through work whose impact could be felt in the daily lives of millions of Indonesians.

The Art of Reading Markets, Trends & Momentum

In Billy Arman's view, true innovation was never simply about creating something new. It was about creating something at precisely the right moment. He often emphasized that even the most brilliant idea could lose its power if it arrived too late, while ideas introduced too early could leave the market confused and unprepared to embrace them.

1. Eyes and Ears on the Ground

One of Billy's greatest strengths was his ability to remain closely connected to the realities of the market. He never relied solely on research reports, presentations, or statistical data. Instead, he consistently went into the field himself — speaking directly with users, airtime kiosk owners, network technicians, and even street vendors.

From these interactions, Billy captured subtle signals of shifting consumer behavior. He noticed patterns others often overlooked: increasing phone activity late at night, the growing need for affordable communication among students and informal workers, and changing habits in how ordinary Indonesians used mobile services.

Those small signals often became the starting points for much larger innovations.

2. Observing Global Technological Developments

Billy also paid close attention to developments in telecommunications technology abroad. But he never viewed global trends as ideas to be copied blindly. Instead, he filtered

and adapted them carefully to Indonesia's realities — considering infrastructure limitations, public purchasing power, and local patterns of consumption.

When per-second billing began appearing in several countries, Billy immediately recognized its potential relevance for Indonesia.

He saw it not merely as a pricing system, but as a solution to one of the public's most common frustrations: the unfairness of minute-based tariff rounding.

3. Timing: The Art of Choosing the Right Moment

One of Billy's most valuable abilities was knowing when an idea was truly ready to be executed. He understood that innovation depended not only on technology, but also on the readiness of the company behind it and the readiness of the market itself.

Because of that, Billy was often willing to delay launches for weeks or even months if necessary. He preferred patience over rushing products into the market before the timing was right.

For him, alignment mattered. When technical readiness, internal preparation, and market conditions finally aligned, adoption could happen far more naturally and effectively.

4. Building Strategic Alliances

Billy also understood that major innovation could never grow in isolation. To move large ideas forward, he actively built alliances with many different parties — from technology vendors and regulators to distribution partners and operational teams.

These relationships helped accelerate the adoption of new technologies, expand product reach, and reduce regulatory obstacles that could slow implementation.

More importantly, those alliances allowed ideas to move beyond discussion and become reality.

5. Testing Ideas on a Small Scale

Before launching innovations nationally, Billy frequently conducted limited trials in specific regions or market segments. This approach allowed him to observe real consumer responses, identify weaknesses, and refine products before broader launches.

The trials also generated curiosity and anticipation among users, creating momentum even before official releases took place.

For Billy, testing was not a sign of uncertainty. It was part of disciplined execution.

6. Managing Risks Carefully

Billy understood that every innovation carried risks — both technical and commercial. Rather than ignoring those risks, he prepared alternative scenarios carefully.

If one distribution channel encountered problems, another had already been prepared. If one market segment responded weakly, he had already designed approaches for different segments.

This method rarely eliminated challenges completely, but it prevented setbacks from becoming total failures.

7. Focusing on Real Impact

For Billy Arman, the success of innovation was ultimately measured by the impact experienced directly by consumers. Because of that, user experience always remained at the center of every decision he made.

According to Billy, advanced technology that was difficult for ordinary people to use would quickly become something admired briefly, then forgotten.

Billy Arman proved that the ability to read markets, trends, and momentum — and then execute innovation at the right time — was never a matter of luck. It was the result of market sensitivity, technological understanding, broad networks of relationships, and disciplined execution working together.

His ability to recognize momentum made him more than simply a participant in Indonesia's telecommunications industry. He became one of the figures who helped shape both the direction and the history of Indonesia's telecommunications industry itself.

Fighting for Innovation at the Regulatory Table

Bringing major ideas to the public was one challenge. Ensuring those ideas could survive within regulatory systems was another battle entirely. Billy Arman learned that the journey from concept to implementation almost always passed through one complicated and unpredictable arena: the regulatory table.

Every innovation within Indonesia's telecommunications industry had to move through layers of government oversight — whether from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, the Indonesian Telecommunications Regulatory Body (BRTI), or other related institutions.

Billy understood something many innovators often underestimated: regulation almost always moved more slowly than technology itself. This was where Billy took on another role — not merely as an innovator, but as a bridge-builder between technology, industry, and policymakers.

He offered solutions to challenges faced by both society and telecommunications operators, translating complex innovations into language regulators and decision-makers could understand, while at the same time ensuring that emerging regulations would not stifle innovation itself.

Billy rarely chose confrontation as his strategy. Instead, he built strong personal and professional relationships with regulators, officials, and industry figures. He often invited them to witness firsthand how his ideas worked in real conditions and how they could benefit ordinary people.

He understood that changing perspectives required more than arguments alone. It required data, empirical evidence, practical demonstrations, and above all, trust. On many occasions, Billy used pilot projects as instruments of persuasion — proving the benefits of an innovation first before seeking formal regulatory support.

Of course, not every idea was welcomed immediately. Some business leaders worried that lower tariffs would threaten company revenues and long-term sustainability. Others

remained skeptical of technologies that had not yet been fully tested within Indonesia's market conditions.

Billy responded to those doubts with patience. He prepared comparative data, business projections, and socio-economic impact simulations showing how innovation could ultimately benefit both industry and society. He positioned himself not merely as someone proposing ideas, but as a strategic partner willing to help manage the risks that came with change.

Billy also understood that regulatory support became easier to obtain when broader momentum existed across the industry. Because of that, he frequently encouraged business actors, academics, and user communities to speak openly about the benefits of his innovations.

That cross-sector collaboration gradually created a stronger advocacy ecosystem, allowing regulators to see Billy's proposals not as personal ambitions or narrow corporate interests, but as part of the broader needs of Indonesia's telecommunications industry.

Some of Billy's initiatives required not only regulatory adjustments, but also fundamental shifts in industry thinking itself. The implementation of per-second mobile tariffs, for example, demanded changes to national billing systems as well as revisions to tariff-setting regulations.

The process was long and often complicated, yet it became an important precedent for the emergence of telecommunications policies that were more adaptive toward technological innovation.

The results of Billy's struggles at the regulatory table were not always visible to the public.

Yet their influence could be felt throughout many layers of Indonesia's telecommunications industry. Several policies later adopted by the government grew out of proposals, data, and pilot projects Billy had initiated years earlier.

All of this revealed something larger about Billy Arman. He was not merely a creator of technology-driven ideas. He was also an industry diplomat — someone capable of navigating the labyrinth of regulation without losing the spirit of innovation itself.

That rare ability made Billy Arman more than an innovator. It made him a strategic thinker capable of bridging the worlds of innovation, industry, and public policy.

Innovation, Collaboration & the Vision of a Better Indonesia

Billy Arman understood early in his journey that meaningful innovation could never be built alone.

Throughout his career in Indonesia's telecommunications industry, Billy consistently developed collaborative networks through active involvement in the industry itself, close relationships with regulators, and participation in business and technology forums.

For Billy, innovation was never simply about creating ideas. It was about building ecosystems capable of turning ideas into real impact. Inside major telecommunications companies such as Indosat and XL Axiata, Billy cultivated strong relationships with colleagues and management teams in order to ensure that strategic ideas could move beyond discussion and gain institutional support.

At the same time, he maintained close relationships with regulatory institutions such as Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Informatics and the Indonesian Telecommunications Regulatory Body (BRTI). Through these connections, Billy stayed informed about evolving policy directions while ensuring that the projects he developed remained aligned with broader national priorities.

At the industry level, Billy also interacted actively with other telecommunications operators through both formal meetings and informal discussions addressing shared challenges — from infrastructure development to the expansion of telecommunications services across Indonesia.

He regularly attended telecommunications conferences and technology exhibitions, both inside and outside the country, to study global technological trends while searching for opportunities in technology partnerships and investment collaboration.

Through the collaborative networks he built over many years, Billy gained access to technology partners and telecommunications equipment suppliers who later became important supporters in implementing innovative projects.

Those relationships strengthened not only the technological capabilities behind his ideas, but also opened pathways toward external financing, strategic investment, and broader industry cooperation.

For Billy Arman, collaboration was never merely about expanding professional networks.

It was about bringing together people, technology, capital, and institutions around a shared purpose: creating telecommunications services that were more innovative, more accessible, and more beneficial for Indonesian society.

Those strategic alliances became one of the most important foundations supporting Billy Arman's journey through the telecommunications industry. Because in Billy's view, building a better Indonesia required more than individual brilliance. It required trust, collaboration, and a shared willingness to innovate together.

PART IV

36 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE BELOVED NATION

Meaningful Experiences Serving Behind the Walls of the State Palace

Billy Arman was one of those figures who quietly worked behind the walls of Indonesia's State Palace. His name was rarely mentioned in the media, yet his presence accompanied many important moments in the journey of Indonesia's leadership. He was never the person standing at the center of the stage, but his role remained woven into the nation's history.

Since the era of President Soeharto, Billy had already become part of the palace environment. From close range, he witnessed how the policies of the New Order government were carried out, and from those years he learned that total dedication, discipline, and selfless hard work were essential in building a nation.

For Billy, every instruction that arrived was never merely administrative duty. Behind every decision stood millions of Indonesians whose lives would ultimately be affected by it.

Beyond the rigid protocols and formal ceremonies of the palace, Billy encountered people carrying enormous responsibilities for the hopes, stability, and welfare of the nation.

Then came the Reformasi era — a period filled with turbulence, uncertainty, and new hope. As Indonesia changed,

Billy adapted himself to the new spirit flowing through the State Palace.

From the visionary B. J. Habibie, to the warm and humanistic Abdurrahman Wahid, the detail-oriented Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the humble Joko Widodo, and the firm Prabowo Subianto — Billy remained faithfully serving behind the scenes.

Through inaugurations, state meetings, and important national events, he witnessed firsthand the deeply human side of Indonesia's leaders: exhausted, pressured, yet continuing to work tirelessly for the country.

Inside meeting rooms where he was often among the busiest people ensuring major state events ran smoothly, Billy absorbed countless moments never seen by the public.

There was light laughter in the middle of tension. Quiet emotional glances when major decisions would affect millions of lives. Teamwork carrying the invisible burden of leadership.

From those experiences, Billy came to understand that leadership was never simply about authority or power. It was a constant balance between duty, conscience, political pressure, and a sincere calling to serve the people.

The determination and humanity he witnessed in many national leaders inspired him to become more than merely a guardian of protocol.

This is the story of Billy Arman at the State Palace — a figure rarely seen by the public, yet one who embodied loyalty, patience, discipline, hard work, and compassion.

Through his quiet service behind the scenes of Indonesian history, Billy left an enduring example for future generations:



At the State Palace, carrying out duties as Personal Assistant to Zahid Husein, Head of the Presidential Household Bureau (1988).

that the red-and-white flag must always remain the highest calling above personal interest.

Zahid Husein: The Man Who Opened the Door to the State Palace

In 1988, during his final year of high school, while building a small business selling home interiors and wireless telephones, Billy Arman received an unexpected phone call from a senior state official.

The official invited Billy to his residence to demonstrate a modified wireless telephone system he had developed. Over the phone, the man introduced himself simply as Zahid Husein, without mentioning any official title.

When Billy later arrived at his residence on Jalan Kartini in Mangga Besar, Jakarta, the man's dignified manner, calm

authority, and refined speech immediately made Billy realize he was standing before someone of enormous influence and respect.

Only after several more meetings did Billy fully understand who Zahid Husein truly was: a close confidant of President Soeharto who held the strategic position of Head of the Presidential Assistance Bureau (Karo Banpres) within the Operational Development Control Secretariat of the State Palace.

As time passed and their relationship grew closer, Zahid Husein contacted Billy again and asked him to assist with personal matters, family affairs, and even governmental duties. Eventually, he appointed Billy as his personal assistant.

Billy deeply admired Zahid Husein's character and kindness, though he never completely understood why he had been chosen for such a trusted role.

"Perhaps because I was always ready whenever he needed help, regardless of the matter. Or perhaps because he truly intended to educate and guide me. What is certain is that I deeply admired and respected him," Billy recalled.

As the personal assistant to a senior State Palace official, Billy handled almost everything entrusted to him by Zahid Husein — carrying bags, preparing necessities, organizing schedules, delivering documents, and handling countless small responsibilities behind the scenes.

At one point, Billy was even entrusted to represent Zahid Husein at the official unveiling of Bank Bali's new logo on August 8, 1988. For Billy, it reflected the enormous trust Zahid Husein placed in him despite his young age.

One evening, after Billy had already returned home and was resting, Zahid Husein contacted him and asked him to return immediately because senior officials from the BCA Asemka Branch had arrived at the house.

When Billy arrived, the bank officials and their representatives were still waiting outside. Zahid Husein had not invited them inside because he was waiting for Billy to arrive first. When the meeting finally began, Billy sat beside Zahid Husein.

The issue turned out to involve a check personally written and signed by Zahid Husein himself. He had apparently forgotten the intended amount — perhaps it should have been Rp2 million, but it had accidentally been written as Rp20 million.

The bank officials came to confirm the matter, and it became clear that the amount had indeed been written incorrectly.

Calmly and without anger, Zahid Husein instructed the bank to investigate who had cashed the check and, if possible, recover the funds. Yet even if the money could not be recovered, he chose not to turn the situation into a major issue.

From moments like these, Billy learned lessons that stayed with him for life.

“From Pak Zahid Husein, I learned many things about nationalism, unity, and brotherhood. He came from Yogyakarta, and as a Javanese man, his speech and manners were exceptionally refined. He often reminded me that whatever I did in life should contain values of service to society, the nation, and the state,” Billy said.



Welcoming Admiral Sudomo at Putri Duyung, Ancol.



Accompanying Alwi Hamu in a meeting with Terrelliance management at Houston Center II, United States, as part of a study on old oil wells.

Billy also became close to Zahid Husein's children: dr. H. Handoko, Nur, and Irma. Handoko had once worked at Indonesia's Department of Agriculture while also operating a veterinary clinic from his home before eventually being diagnosed with brain cancer. Medical treatment was sought in many places, including the Netherlands, but his life ultimately could not be saved.

Nur had once studied in Taiwan before later working within the State Palace handling culinary affairs. Irma had studied in Australia.

Billy maintained close relationships with all of Zahid Husein's children. Whenever Billy remembered Handoko, he also remembered one amusing incident they once shared together.

"At that time, I wasn't feeling well and asked Mas Handoko to examine me. He gave me a prescription written on veterinary clinic letterhead. When I arrived at the pharmacy, they asked me, 'What illness do you have? Why was this prescription written by a veterinarian?' But strangely enough, they still gave me the medicine, and after taking it for a day, the results were remarkable. I recovered completely. Mas Handoko was such a good person. Perhaps God chose to call him home earlier," Billy recalled.

Another moment remained vividly etched in Billy's memory.

One day, Zahid Husein and his family were preparing to travel to Australia to visit Irma, who was studying there at the

time. As Zahid Husein's personal assistant, Billy had already arranged the passports, visas, and all travel preparations.

But only two days before departure, President Soeharto instructed Zahid Husein not to leave Indonesia because he was needed to accompany the President on an official regional visit.

President Soeharto was widely known for frequently traveling to various regions to meet farmers, teachers, workers, and ordinary citizens directly.

Billy served as Zahid Husein's personal assistant for approximately three years.

When Billy married in 1991, Zahid Husein intended to attend the wedding but was unable to do so because of illness. The moment deeply touched Billy's heart. Even while seriously ill, a senior state official still wished to attend the wedding of one of his assistants.

Although Zahid Husein has long since passed away, Billy continues to maintain close relationships with his wife and children, especially Nur.

Another important chapter in Billy's service to the nation came when he became the personal assistant to Alwi Hamu, Coordinating Special Staff to Vice President Jusuf Kalla.

Alwi Hamu was widely known as one of Indonesia's most influential press figures, the founder of Fajar Group, and President Commissioner of Jawa Pos. During those years, Billy learned extensively from Alwi Hamu about business, media, and government affairs.

Billy also accompanied him on official trips to Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, and several other European countries to meet



With Alwi Hamu inspecting old oil wells in Oklahoma, United States, under assignment from Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia Jusuf Kalla.

Indonesian ambassadors. They also traveled to Thailand to meet senior military officials, and to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China in connection with meetings involving Indonesian migrant workers and evaluations of government programs.

One unique aspect of Billy Arman's life was his continued involvement in governmental work within the palace environment regardless of who occupied the nation's highest offices. Inside the palace, Billy became known as a hardworking professional who was always willing to help.

He dedicated his thoughts, energy, and time almost entirely to the nation and the state — nearly twenty-four hours a day, year after year, from 1988 until the present day.

It was not unusual for him to still be working deep into the night long after midnight had passed, only to return early the next morning to continue carrying out government duties —

whether in the office, in the field, during regional visits, or on overseas assignments.

During the administration of President Joko Widodo, Billy was entrusted with the strategic role of Senior Expert Staff within the Presidential Staff Office.

Over time, he served in several assignments supporting the Presidential Chief of Staff, including work related to household affairs, defense and intelligence coordination, information technology, national priority programs, infrastructure development, and energy projects.

Billy Arman's service continued into the administration of President Prabowo Subianto. Several months after President Prabowo's inauguration, Billy was entrusted with responsibilities as Special Staff to the Presidential Military Secretary (Sesmilpres), a position held by Major General TNI Kosasih.

At the same time, Billy also assisted the government's efforts to empower communities in reactivating and optimizing old oil wells as part of Indonesia's long-term pursuit of national energy independence. From his youth until the present day, Billy Arman's journey remained closely intertwined with service — not only to institutions and leaders, but to the nation itself.

President Soeharto: Listening, Wisdom & the Calm of Leadership

Billy Arman remembered Pak Harto as a leader who consistently tried to listen to the voice of the people, especially during times of national crisis. According to Billy, many of Pak Harto's policies reflected remarkable strategic instinct — balancing military discipline with compassion so that the

decisions he made could be felt directly in the daily lives of ordinary Indonesians.

Over the years, Billy carried many meaningful memories from the opportunities he had to spend time with President Soeharto. Those experiences gave him profound insight into how a great leader viewed the world, particularly in matters of communication, responsibility, and leadership.

The first memory was about the art of listening. One sentence from Pak Harto remained deeply engraved in Billy Arman's memory: "Listening is good. Listening is respect. And never forget to draw strength from what you hear."

For Pak Harto, listening was never merely passive. He believed that listening was an act filled with meaning — a way of showing empathy, dignity, and respect toward another human being.

Billy personally witnessed how Pak Harto practiced that principle consistently. Whether speaking with ordinary citizens or high-ranking officials, Pak Harto never appeared rushed, impatient, or only half attentive.

Everyone was listened to carefully. According to Pak Harto, listening also meant turning understanding into wisdom and strategic insight. He believed that every conversation contained important values that could become the foundation for decisions carrying real impact.

The second memory concerned harmony between human beings and the world around them.

One day, Billy accompanied Zahid Husein during a relaxed gathering with Pak Harto that lasted from morning until

evening. Beyond discussing important matters, they also shared light conversations filled with philosophy and reflection.

One of those conversations emerged when Pak Harto spoke proudly about his beloved Harley-Davidson motorcycle. While carefully wiping the motorcycle, Pak Harto offered a reflection Billy never forgot: “Everything in this world — whether objects or living beings — if we care for them, they will live. But if we neglect them, they will die.”

Pak Harto then continued with another example. “If the trees in the garden seem tired in the afternoon, perhaps they are reflecting our own exhaustion.”

It was as though Pak Harto was inviting Billy to see the living world around him with deeper sensitivity and attention.

“With affection and care, the trees will become fresh again the next day. The same goes for motorcycles. They must be cleaned, polished, even ‘spoken to,’ so they continue functioning properly and do not break easily.”

Billy was deeply impressed by Pak Harto’s words. For him, the lesson reinforced the belief that true leaders must pay attention even to seemingly small things — trees, machines, or human beings — with sincerity and responsibility.

Pak Harto also emphasized that every living being and every object possessed value that needed to be protected so it could continue functioning and giving benefit to others.

That relaxed afternoon left a profound impression on Billy. Behind the casual atmosphere and gentle humor lay an important lesson: caring for the things around us, even those

that appear insignificant, reflects the maturity and wisdom of leadership itself.

The third memory was about Banpres. Presidential Assistance, commonly known as Banpres, was an important program initiated by President Soeharto to provide direct support to communities in need.

In implementing the program, Zahid Husein played a crucial role because he was entrusted by President Soeharto to ensure the assistance reached the proper recipients. Before aid was distributed, however, strict verification and selection processes were always carried out to prevent misuse or misallocation.

Zahid Husein placed enormous trust in Billy Arman to help verify whether Banpres assistance had truly reached deserving recipients. This process was never treated as mere administrative formality. It reflected President Soeharto's seriousness in ensuring that assistance genuinely benefited people who truly needed help.

On many occasions, Billy personally went into the field before aid distribution to verify whether recipients were genuinely eligible. If they were considered deserving, Billy would report the findings to Zahid Husein. If not, alternative recipients would immediately be sought.

That was one reason Billy's role became so important to Zahid Husein, particularly because Banpres funds came directly from President Soeharto's personal finances.

Neither President Soeharto nor Zahid Husein wanted the assistance to be misdirected or wasted. The principle of caution became the moral foundation of the Banpres distribution system. By involving trusted individuals such as Zahid Husein

and Billy, the process became more measurable, transparent, and accountable both morally and administratively.

The fourth memory concerned President Soeharto's extraordinary emotional composure. One of the qualities that left the deepest impression on Billy was the fact that Pak Harto was rarely angered. In every situation and challenge he faced, Pak Harto consistently demonstrated remarkable emotional restraint and self-control.

Billy rarely saw him complain or grumble. Even while carrying immense pressures as president, Pak Harto possessed the ability to contain emotions, burdens, and personal thoughts without allowing anger to dominate him.

Pak Harto also strongly disliked spreading negativity about other people. He tended to keep unpleasant matters within himself, creating an atmosphere of dignity and mutual respect around him.

For Billy Arman, those experiences became lessons in the art of emotional discipline within leadership — especially leadership constantly surrounded by pressure, uncertainty, and enormous responsibility.

From Pak Harto, Billy learned that calmness was not weakness. Sometimes, calmness itself was a form of strength.

President B. J. Habibie: The Mission of Economic & Infrastructure Development for Timor Leste

B. J. Habibie led Indonesia during the historic transition from the New Order era into the Reformasi period with a rare combination of intelligence, honesty, and courage. Habibie approached leadership with the mind of a technocrat and the

soul of a philosopher. He did not merely calculate political strategy; he also understood the emotional pulse of people longing for change and a more democratic future.

During Habibie's years at the State Palace, Billy Arman was once entrusted with a special assignment to travel to Timor Leste. President Habibie personally appointed Billy as an informal presidential envoy to assist the newly independent nation.

Timor Leste officially emerged from East Timor on May 20, 2002, following the 1999 independence referendum held during President Habibie's administration. The decision created tension and political upheaval, yet it also opened a peaceful path for the people of Timor Leste.

With support from the international community, particularly the United Nations, the transition process was eventually completed in 2002. East Timor, once part of the Republic of Indonesia, formally stood as a new independent country.

Even after Timor Leste separated from Indonesia, President Habibie continued to show deep concern for its future. He sent Billy Arman to help strengthen the country's economic foundations and assist the young nation in avoiding instability caused by limited governance experience.

The mission reflected Habibie's style of leadership itself — leadership driven not only by strategic thinking, but also by empathy and humanitarian concern. Because Billy arrived in Timor Leste under President Habibie's recommendation, he was warmly welcomed by Safiar Amiral, who at that time was leading Timor Leste.

There, Billy Arman was entrusted as one of President Safiar Amiral's important advisors in helping organize and build the foundations of the new nation. Billy was even granted special privileges, including a vehicle carrying the prestigious Timor Leste number plate 3 — a symbol of the trust and important position given to him by the Timor Leste government.

Once in Timor Leste, Billy immediately began offering several strategic recommendations to President Safiar Amiral to support the country's long-term development.

The first recommendation concerned improving the road connecting the airport to the presidential office. At the time, the road remained dusty and largely undeveloped, reflecting the fragile condition of the country's infrastructure. Billy believed that infrastructure was not merely about physical development, but also about dignity and first impressions.

He explained that when international guests arrived, they should feel welcomed by a nation prepared to move forward confidently toward progress. A better road would symbolize seriousness, stability, and respect.

The second recommendation involved encouraging citizens to own plots of land measuring up to 150 meters along the road from the airport to the presidential office. Billy believed the land could be used both for housing and productive agricultural activity, allowing communities to build sustainable livelihoods. More importantly, he believed visitors arriving from abroad should witness a living nation rather than endless empty land.

He once illustrated the idea vividly to President Safiar Amiral. “Imagine when guests from distant nations arrive — not merely seeing stretches of empty land, but witnessing a living landscape, the movement of spirit and hard work of the Timor Leste people pulsing along that road.”

Billy understood that the sounds of productivity, the scent of fertile soil, and faces filled with hope formed the strongest image a developing nation could present to the world. Such scenes would inspire confidence, admiration, and belief in Timor Leste’s future.

The third recommendation involved relocating the military bases of the United States and Australia located near Timor Leste’s airport. Billy believed that the visible presence of foreign military forces around the nation’s main gateway created an atmosphere of uncertainty.

Speaking candidly to President Safiar Amiral, Billy said. “Mr. President, when foreign soldiers are still seen moving around this country, does that not suggest instability? Important guests — especially investors — will naturally feel uneasy.”

For Billy, investment was never merely about capital or statistics. It was about trust in a nation’s future. He therefore strongly encouraged President Safiar Amiral to relocate the military presence away from the airport area. For a newly independent country, such a move was not simply military strategy. It was a symbolic step toward sovereignty, stability, and national confidence.

Billy believed that once the atmosphere surrounding the airport became calmer and more peaceful, Timor Leste would appear more welcoming to international partners and future investment.

To him, genuine independence and stability were the true foundations of long-term economic growth. The fourth recommendation concerned candle production.

Billy realized that recurring blackouts occurring every two hours severely disrupted daily life across Timor Leste. Because of this, he encouraged families to produce candles both as an alternative lighting source and as additional household income.

Billy did not merely present the idea theoretically. He personally taught candle-making techniques inside a church temporarily used as a community training center. There, he guided residents directly until they became capable of producing candles independently.

For Billy, those small flames symbolized something far greater than light. They represented resilience, self-reliance, and hope amid uncertainty.

The fifth recommendation emphasized the importance of developing commercial centers capable of serving various levels of society — from clothing and household needs to electronics and trade goods. Billy believed commercial centers could become the heartbeat of economic activity.

They would accelerate the flow of goods and services, create employment opportunities, strengthen local trade, and increase state revenues through distribution, imports, exports, and domestic commerce.

Beyond economics, such centers would also encourage the exchange of ideas, culture, and technology between regions, helping stimulate innovation and social development.

Their existence would naturally encourage improvements in public infrastructure such as transportation, communications, banking systems, and security services — all of which were essential for long-term national independence.

The sixth recommendation involved opening a logistics distribution route connecting Timor Atambua and Timor Leste. Billy viewed the route as extremely important because it would allow goods to move more efficiently while reducing the prices of essential commodities.

At the time, the prices of basic necessities were extraordinarily high. Billy recalled that frozen chicken could cost as much as 400 US dollars — a crushing burden for ordinary citizens. Once the new distribution route was opened, however, prices began falling significantly, making essential goods far more affordable for society.

The seventh recommendation concerned foreign debt. Billy strongly advised Timor Leste not to become overly dependent on loans from the United States, particularly after a 200-million-dollar loan package had been arranged through long-term periodic disbursements.

Billy warned that dependence on foreign debt could become dangerous for a young nation whose economic foundations were still fragile. Without strong reserves, productive assets, or careful financial management, accumulating debt could eventually trap the country in inflation, instability, and long-term economic pressure.

He believed Timor Leste needed to develop carefully, strengthen its domestic economy independently, and avoid placing future generations under unsustainable burdens.

During his assignment in Timor Leste, Billy occasionally returned to Jakarta to meet President Habibie directly. During those meetings, Billy reported on the progress achieved as well as the challenges encountered in the field. Together, they discussed possible solutions and strategic next steps for Timor Leste's development.

Toward the end of his assignment, Billy witnessed encouraging signs of stability and progress gradually emerging across the young nation. For him, those changes were not merely the result of policy or infrastructure projects.

They were the result of collective hope, hard work, and the determination of a people striving to stand on their own feet after a long and difficult chapter of history.

President Gus Dur: The Oil & Gas Survey Technology Mission in the United States

Abdurrahman Wahid embodied a model of leadership that resembled a symphony of diversity — embracing differences in faith, culture, and thought into a larger harmony of humanity.

His presence was deeply charismatic, capable of building bridges of understanding amid political tension and social fracture.

Gus Dur possessed a rare ability to listen to voices often pushed to the margins of society. With humor that appeared light on the surface yet carried profound meaning, he often transformed laughter into wisdom that opened space for dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual understanding.

Yet behind the many inspiring stories surrounding President Gus Dur's leadership, there was also a lesser-known chapter

involving his determination to strengthen Indonesia's oil and gas industry through technological innovation.

During the middle years of his administration, President Gus Dur formed a special team tasked with exploring advanced technologies capable of supporting Indonesia's natural resource exploration, particularly in the oil and gas sector.

One member of that team was Billy Arman, who was entrusted with testing a sophisticated aerial survey system offered by the United States — technology believed to possess significant potential for mapping underground oil reserves.

If the technology proved successful, the team was instructed to bring it back to Indonesia and potentially use it as part of the country's future oil and gas development strategy.

Before the mission began, Gus Dur addressed the small team directly. "I entrust this mission to all of you. The future of the oil and gas industry in our homeland rests upon your shoulders. Complete this mission properly so that we may become a sovereign and self-reliant nation."

The technology offered by the United States consisted of a high-technology drone system specifically designed for rapid oil and gas field surveys. The system utilized specialized sensors that were claimed to be capable of detecting underground oil reserves accurately without requiring preliminary drilling.

For Indonesia — a country believed to possess enormous energy potential yet still facing major challenges in efficient resource mapping — the offer appeared highly promising.

Billy Arman and the team were dispatched to the United States to conduct direct testing of the technology at an oil

field in Oklahoma. The location was selected because of its advanced oil-field facilities, allowing testing to be conducted under rigorous standards and reliable technical conditions.

Billy and the team hoped the system would perform successfully and eventually become useful for Indonesia's future energy exploration efforts.

However, once testing began in the field, Billy Arman and the team gradually discovered numerous technical weaknesses within the system.

The sensors often failed to detect oil reserves accurately, while the mapping system generated data that appeared inconsistent, ambiguous, and unreliable when compared with actual field conditions.

After undergoing extensive evaluation, the team ultimately concluded that the technology was not yet suitable for purchase or implementation in Indonesia.

The decision was made carefully in order to prevent wasteful spending and avoid major risks should the technology later fail after large-scale deployment.

For Billy, the true value of technology was never determined by sophistication alone, but by whether it functioned effectively in real-world conditions. Even after the Oklahoma testing failed to produce satisfactory results, Billy Arman and the team continued searching for alternatives.

They later traveled to Hong Kong and Malaysia to explore technologies with similar capabilities, but those efforts ultimately led nowhere.

As those missions failed to produce viable results, President Gus Dur and related officials began reconsidering alternative approaches for strengthening Indonesia's oil and gas exploration strategy.

Although the drone technology was never adopted, the experience left behind valuable lessons about the importance of rigorous testing before implementing technology on a national scale.

The episode also reinforced a principle Billy strongly believed in: technology must always be adapted to actual needs, field realities, and long-term national interests.

The decision made by Billy Arman and the team — together with President Gus Dur's wisdom in choosing not to proceed with the technology — did not represent failure or retreat.

On the contrary, it reflected prudence, discipline, and responsibility in protecting national investment while ensuring that every technological decision genuinely contributed meaningful value to Indonesia's future.

And within that decision lay something even more important: the courage of a nation not to be dazzled too quickly by promises of sophisticated technology before proving its true worth in reality.

President SBY: The Lost Speech Manuscript & the Calm Behind the Pressure

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) left behind many personal memories for Billy Arman.

According to Billy, President SBY was particularly fond of two simple things: bread — especially the Sari Roti brand — and crackers, particularly the round white crackers commonly

known as *kerupuk blek*. In fact, *kerupuk blek* faithfully accompanied nearly every meal he ate.

Even during visits to the United States, amid the glitter of foreign cities and the demanding schedule of state affairs, the familiar taste of *kerupuk blek* remained part of his dining table. For Billy Arman, such a small habit carried a deeper meaning: simplicity that remained inseparable from the life of a national leader carrying enormous responsibilities.

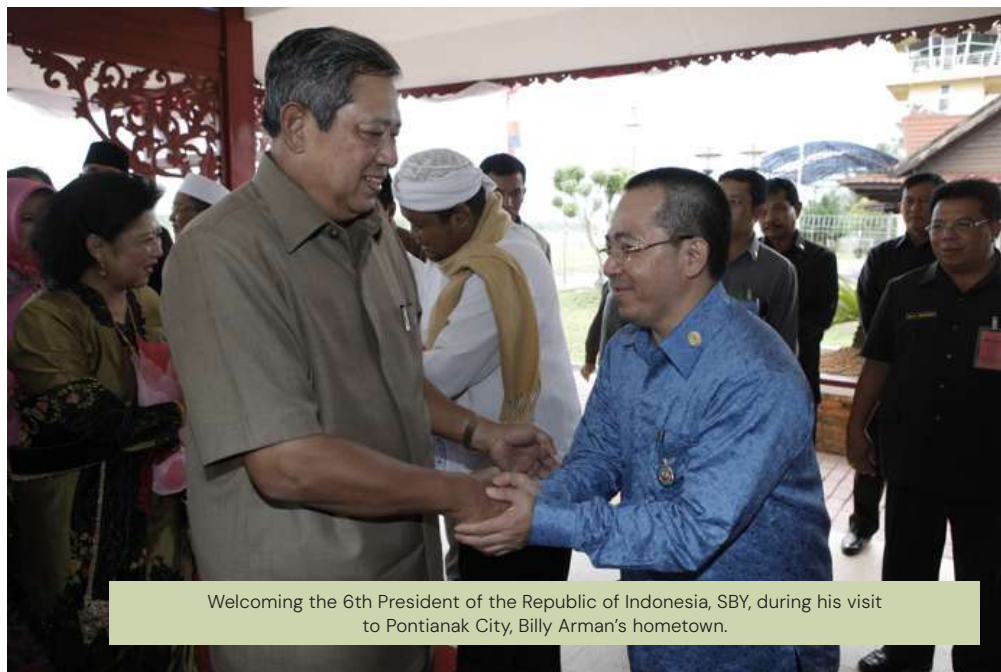
Another memory that remained deeply attached to Billy was President SBY's remarkable emotional composure. Even in moments of intense pressure, President SBY consistently demonstrated extraordinary self-control.

No matter how upset he became, he never allowed harsh or unnecessary words to escape his mouth.

To Billy, this reflected the wisdom of a leader who understood that true strength lies not in anger, but in the ability to master oneself. Amid the immense pressures of governing a nation, courtesy became the quiet shield that preserved both respect and affection toward him.

Billy vividly remembered one particular day when President SBY appeared deeply troubled after the key points of an important speech — carefully prepared on sheets of paper resting on his desk — suddenly disappeared.

Only hours earlier, everything had seemed complete. Yet as the scheduled speech drew closer, the papers vanished without explanation. The tension on the President's face was unmistakable. But even in that moment, President SBY restrained himself with extraordinary discipline.



Welcoming the 6th President of the Republic of Indonesia, SBY, during his visit to Pontianak City, Billy Arman's hometown.



Watching together the Indonesia National Team versus Malaysia match with the 6th President of the Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in Senayan, Jakarta.



The 6th President of the Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and First Lady Ani Yudhoyono greeting Billy's twin daughters, Jessica Laura and Jessica Maura, during an Eid al-Fitr open house event.

Rather than directing his frustration toward those around him, he simply swept a ream of blank paper from the table before calmly instructing his staff to investigate who had entered the room.

It was later discovered that the disappearance had been caused by a shift change involving personal assistants who had been cleaning the room.

Billy Arman deeply admired President SBY at that moment. In such a tense and critical situation, the President never released words that humiliated or wounded his subordinates. Instead, he allowed his frustration to end with the falling stack of paper.

For Billy, that moment revealed a rare form of leadership: anger that remained controlled, dignified, and fully aware of its impact upon others.

The story of the missing speech manuscript became an important lesson about patience — about how even serious problems could still be faced with calmness and wisdom. It taught that controlled emotion is not weakness, but one of the highest forms of strength.

Billy Arman also remembered another meaningful moment during a gathering with members of the Indonesian diaspora in Vietnam. While President SBY was delivering a speech, the microphone suddenly malfunctioned, causing the sound to fade in and out.

Rather than panicking or showing irritation, President SBY chose to lighten the atmosphere through humor and casual conversation while technicians and aides worked to repair the

sound system. Laughter gradually replaced awkwardness, and warmth returned to the room.

The moment revealed another side of the President: not merely a leader known for discipline and seriousness, but also someone deeply sensitive to the emotional atmosphere surrounding him. President SBY possessed the ability to transform tension into comfort and restore calmness without diminishing the dignity of the occasion itself.

For Billy, these memories revealed a side of President SBY that perhaps many people never fully saw — a leader who understood how to balance enormous national responsibilities with grace, emotional restraint, and quiet attentiveness toward the people around him.

From the Vice President's Office to Setmilpres

When Jusuf Kalla served as Vice President under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Billy Arman held the position of personal assistant to Alwi Hamu, the Coordinating Special Staff to the Vice President.

Alwi Hamu was widely known as one of the important figures behind numerous diplomatic missions and strategic negotiations during Jusuf Kalla's tenure as Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia.

As Coordinating Special Staff to the Vice President, Alwi was not merely Jusuf Kalla's trusted aide, but also one of the strategic minds behind the resolution of many complex national issues rarely known to the public.

He became known as a discreet envoy and high-level negotiator entrusted with handling highly sensitive diplomatic



Billy Arman discussing the health condition of Mr. Alwi Hamu with Mr. Jusuf Kalla, Billy's former boss and former two-term Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia. Their conversation was so warm and close that neither wanted to let go of the other's hand.



Carrying out duties as Personal Assistant to the Coordinating Special Staff of the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2004–2009 period during a closed meeting with Jusuf Kalla at Graha L9, Kebayoran Lama.

assignments. From negotiations on the national stage to meetings with foreign heads of state, Alwi's role was vital and often carried out entirely behind the scenes.

Jusuf Kalla himself once remarked that from his years as Coordinating Minister for the Economy until his service as Vice President, Alwi had always stood beside him as one of the key figures in resolving important state matters.

Beyond his governmental role, Alwi Hamu was also widely recognized as one of Indonesia's major media figures. His strategic communication abilities became valuable assets in supporting the Vice President's diplomatic positioning as well as domestic political strategies.

Because Billy served as Alwi Hamu's personal assistant, he often had opportunities to interact informally with Jusuf Kalla. The frequency of those encounters gradually created a warm familiarity between them, to the point where their conversations often evolved into playful exchanges.

One day, Pak JK suddenly held Billy's hand and joked:

"Pak Billy, it seems we're the same height, aren't we?"

Wanting to tease him back, Billy — who also did not consider himself particularly tall — immediately replied:

"No, Sir. I think you're actually shorter. I'm slightly taller. Hahaha."

"Oh really? And who says that?" Pak JK asked.

"I do, Sir," Billy answered lightly.

Both of them burst into laughter.

Not wanting to lose the playful moment, Pak JK quickly added:

“It seems we should establish POPSI immediately.”

“What’s that, Sir?” Billy asked curiously.

“The Association of Short People Across Indonesia,” Pak JK replied.

The two of them laughed together once again.

Following the end of Jusuf Kalla’s term as Vice President, Billy Arman’s assignment as Alwi Hamu’s personal assistant also came to an end.

The next strategic role awaiting Billy Arman was as staff member at the Press Bureau of the State Secretariat.

Not long afterward, Billy Arman was assigned to Setmipres — the Presidential Military Secretariat — to assist the Head of the General Bureau, Police Commissioner Syafrin.

The Presidential Military Secretariat is an institution operating directly under the President of the Republic of Indonesia, tasked with supporting military functions closely related to the President’s responsibilities as Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

Its responsibilities include coordinating military activities surrounding the President, ranging from special security arrangements to the logistical and administrative support required for presidential state activities and official visits.

Within the structure of the presidency, Setmipres became one of the vital pillars ensuring that every aspect of presidential protocol and security operated flawlessly.

Amid the immense pressures of state responsibilities, Billy Arman — while assisting Police Commissioner Syaflin within the General Bureau of Setmilpres — played an important role behind the scenes.

Together, they were responsible for ensuring that every administrative process, logistical arrangement, and interdepartmental coordination mechanism functioned smoothly.

It was work rarely visible to the public eye, yet profoundly decisive in ensuring the stability, continuity, and precision of presidential operations.

President Jokowi: Batik Cabinets, Fuel Price Increases, & Water Wells for the People

When Joko Widodo first entered the State Palace after being elected President, it was Billy Arman who introduced him to the inner workings of the palace: its corridors, rooms, restricted access points, and the many unwritten details a new occupant of the presidential palace needed to understand.

Billy also became one of Jokowi's discussion partners, because among those surrounding the new President, Billy was one of the few people who had lived through the eras of multiple Indonesian presidents inside the palace environment itself.

As someone who had risen from ordinary society before becoming President, Jokowi naturally needed trusted people who could help him understand the atmosphere of the palace and the many important things he needed to absorb quickly.

Yet ironically, it was Billy Arman who found himself deeply impressed by Jokowi. How could he not be? This slender man



With Presidential Candidate Mr. Jokowi and Vice Presidential Candidate Mr. Jusuf Kalla after attending the Nuzulul Qur'an commemoration at the State Palace (2014).



Accompanying Jakarta Governor and President-elect Mr. Jokowi after attending the state ceremony commemorating Indonesia's Independence Day on August 17, 2014, at the State Palace.



With President-elect Mr. Jokowi at Laguna Resort walking toward the Westin BICC Hotel, Nusa Dua, Bali. Mr. Jokowi held a limited meeting with President SBY to discuss fuel price increases (2014).



At 1:30 a.m. at Halim Perdanakusuma Airport, alone welcoming President Jokowi back to the capital city of Jakarta after visiting victims of the Mount Sinabung eruption disaster. This was the first time President Jokowi used the presidential aircraft (2014).

from Solo constantly created unexpected breakthroughs. Behind his calm and simple appearance lived a remarkable combination of creativity, courage, and decisiveness.

Billy carried at least three unforgettable memories of President Jokowi.

The first memory concerned the inauguration of Jokowi's cabinet ministers.

Inside a small and highly confidential meeting — one that would help determine the names composing Indonesia's new cabinet — Billy Arman played his role in ensuring the meeting proceeded smoothly.

He was not seated among the principal decision-makers. Yet as someone who had served inside the palace since the era of Soeharto, Billy understood that major state meetings required many invisible hands quietly safeguarding the process behind the scenes.

So while seated quietly in the back row, Billy carefully monitored the atmosphere and flow of the meeting to ensure that President Jokowi could remain fully focused.

Suddenly, Jokowi's voice broke the silence.

"For the cabinet inauguration, may the ministers wear batik?"

Jokowi asked the question while looking toward Billy Arman, who stood several meters behind him.

It sounded like a simple question. Yet behind it lay deeper meanings about Indonesian identity and the courage to challenge long-established traditions.

Billy Arman — accustomed to seeing cabinet inaugurations dominated by dark formal suits and rigid protocol — was momentarily surprised.

Yet inside his heart, the answer already felt obvious. Nowhere was it written that ministers were required to wear suits. Batik — Indonesia’s cultural heritage officially recognized by UNESCO — was itself a symbol of the Indonesian soul.

At the same time, Billy was not entirely surprised by Jokowi’s question. This was precisely Jokowi’s character: a reform-minded man from Solo who never feared creating meaningful breakthroughs.

Responding respectfully, Billy nodded and answered. “Of course it is allowed, Mr. President. There is no regulation requiring cabinet inaugurations to use formal suits.”

Billy understood that long before entering the presidency, Jokowi had already transformed Solo through simple yet deeply meaningful reforms.

As Mayor of Solo, he streamlined slow bureaucracy, improved public services, and built warm communication with ordinary citizens rather than ruling from behind luxurious desks.

Later, as Governor of Jakarta, Jokowi again introduced major changes.

He initiated pedestrian-friendly sidewalk projects, reorganized neglected urban areas into more humane spaces, and promoted governmental transparency through social media so the public could better understand what was happening inside government.

Every step he took reflected a new style of leadership — one that remained close to ordinary people.

Now, after being elected President, Jokowi introduced another symbolic breakthrough during the cabinet inauguration on October 27, 2014: using batik as a symbol of courage, cultural pride, and love for the homeland.

It was a choice reminding Indonesians that the nation had been born not merely from rigid formal institutions, but from rich cultural roots and local wisdom.

Behind the colors, motifs, and fabric of batik lay a powerful message: this administration intended to bring change rooted in the hearts of the people themselves.

Through gestures that appeared simple yet carried profound meaning, Jokowi began opening a new chapter in Indonesia's journey — a chapter courageous enough to challenge convention while remaining firmly grounded in culture and social justice.

For Jokowi, wearing batik was never merely about aesthetics. It was also a political and social statement about pride in Indonesian identity and the belief that local culture could become a source of strength and inspiration for national transformation.

The gesture inspired many officials to appreciate local wisdom more deeply and reminded them that government should stand close to the people rather than remain distant and overly formal.

That was the deeper reason Jokowi chose batik for his ministers during the cabinet inauguration: a decision whose meaning extended far beyond clothing itself.

By choosing batik, Jokowi wanted to demonstrate that his administration would not be trapped within rigid Western-style bureaucratic symbolism dominated by suits and ties, but would instead stand firmly upon Indonesian cultural identity and local values.

Billy's second unforgettable memory concerned Jokowi's difficult decision to raise fuel prices.

Jokowi — a president deeply identified with ordinary people — stood before one of the most painful decisions of his presidency.

Across Indonesia, hopes for progress, prosperity, and justice filled the public imagination.

Yet behind the applause and celebration lurked a looming economic storm: global oil prices were rising sharply, threatening the foundations of the nation's finances.

Not long after Jokowi's first cabinet was inaugurated on October 27, 2014, the feared reality finally arrived. Fuel prices had to be increased.

Billy Arman witnessed firsthand how emotionally difficult this decision truly was for President Jokowi. Yet leadership ultimately demands decisions.

And at that moment, Jokowi stood at one of the most difficult crossroads of his presidency. A leader known for his simplicity and empathy toward ordinary people now faced a painful dilemma.

He fully understood that increasing fuel prices would trigger social pressure, public protests, and political risks capable of damaging his popularity. Yet another voice spoke louder



Billy Arman, as Chairman of the Advisory Board of Jokowi Centre, posing with conglomerates and Jokowi Centre volunteers who were highly loyal to President Jokowi.



within him: responsibility toward the nation's future and the sustainability of long-term development.

Quietly and carefully, Jokowi and his economic team examined every possible scenario. Fuel subsidies had reached a critical point. If prices remained unchanged, national budgets for infrastructure, education, healthcare, and future development would suffer severely.

Global oil prices continued climbing, forcing the government to allocate subsidies far beyond what had originally been planned in the state budget.

This was no longer merely an economic issue. It had become a test of honesty, responsibility, and courage in leadership. With a heavy heart, Jokowi finally made the decision at the end of November 2014 to raise fuel prices. It was a bitter but necessary decision. Not a luxury — but a necessity.

The move reflected Jokowi's belief that economic stability and fiscal sovereignty were essential foundations if Indonesia wished to stand firmly in the global arena. The goal was to prevent state finances from being consumed entirely by subsidies and instead redirect those resources toward productive and sustainable national development.

News of the fuel-price increase spread rapidly and triggered protests across many regions. Tension rose. Public anger echoed loudly. Yet President Jokowi did not retreat. He addressed the people directly, explaining that this difficult decision was intended to build a brighter future.

Through both his words and actions, Jokowi demonstrated the resolve of a leader willing to bear political risks for the long-term good of the nation rather than merely seeking popularity.

He repeatedly emphasized that fuel subsidy reform was a gateway toward a healthier, stronger, and more independent economy.

For Billy Arman, this became one of the most valuable lessons in leadership: the courage to endure bitterness for the sake of long-term progress.

Billy deeply admired how Jokowi — despite wrestling with profound inner conflict — ultimately chose to stand firm for the future of the nation. It was not merely a policy decision. It was a lesson in courage for both leaders and the Indonesian people.

Billy's third unforgettable memory concerned clean water projects for communities living in dry regions struggling to obtain access to water.

In his capacity as Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Jokowi Centre, Billy Arman received an assignment connected to the construction of drilled wells for communities facing severe water shortages. Together with the Jokowi Centre team, Billy helped develop reservoirs and drilled wells using satellite-powered water-pump technology.

The projects were carried out in several regions, including Malingping, Padalarang, Pangandaran, Cilegon, and Cirebon, with each area containing approximately seven to eight well points.



Billy Arman with actor and politician Anwar Fuady at the Presidential Staff Office. Billy recalled the moment when he and retired General Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan tried to link arms while organizing the Presidential Staff Office during the early period of LBP's leadership as Chief of Presidential Staff.

Satellite-powered water pumps were specially designed technologies intended to provide clean water access in dry and remote areas difficult to reach through conventional infrastructure.

The system generally relied on renewable energy — especially solar power — allowing the pumps to operate independently without depending on electrical grids or fossil fuels.

The “satellite” concept referred to the system’s decentralized structure: independent installations spread across strategic locations, equipped with solar panels capable of drawing underground water from wells and aquifers.

The technology became especially suitable for supporting communities in drought-prone regions and formed part of broader efforts toward water security and sustainable development.

One of the clearest examples emerged in the interior region of Malingping, Lebak, Banten, where harsh environmental conditions and difficult access routes had made clean-water distribution extremely challenging.

Billy Arman and his team eventually succeeded in channeling clean water into various storage points before it was distributed to local residents.

The results gradually transformed village life. Children no longer needed to walk for hours simply to obtain water. Farmers began looking at their fields with renewed optimism because irrigation water had finally become available. Livestock health improved because water supplies became more stable.

Public health conditions also improved, while village economies slowly began to revive around new hopes for change.

Even mosques were able to function more optimally because clean water had become abundant.

For Billy Arman, the moment water finally flowed strongly into those villages brought overwhelming happiness. Every drop of water felt like proof that hard work, persistence, and sincere concern for ordinary people could truly change lives.

The flowing water became more than infrastructure. It became a symbol of hope returning to villages that had long struggled in drought and hardship.

President Jokowi's Mandate to Pioneer the Establishment of the Presidential Staff Office

One of the most memorable and strategically important roles played by Billy Arman inside the presidential palace began when Joko Widodo entrusted him with helping create an entirely new institution within the palace environment: the Presidential Staff Office, or Kantor Staf Presiden (KSP).

The institution was not established merely as another bureaucratic body. Its purpose was far more strategic. The Presidential Staff Office was designed to serve as a direct support structure for the President and Vice President — functioning as a command center for monitoring national priority programs, a bridge for presidential political communication, and a coordinating body responsible for managing highly dynamic strategic issues.

The institution was initially established through Presidential Regulation Number 190 of 2014 under the name Presidential Staff Unit before later evolving into the Presidential Staff Office through Presidential Regulation Number 26 of 2015.

Its institutional strengthening continued through Presidential Regulation Number 83 of 2019, reflecting the government's efforts to adapt to increasingly complex national challenges through a stronger organizational structure and sharper focus on political communication and strategic national issues.

The Presidential Staff Office was led by the Chief of Presidential Staff, who reported directly to the President. For this crucial position, President Jokowi firmly chose Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan.

Because the institution was entirely new, a proper office space had to be prepared inside the palace complex. The problem was that only one room was available — a very small room measuring approximately three by four meters.

Naturally, the space was considered unsuitable for someone who would carry responsibilities as significant as Pak Luhut's. Billy Arman therefore requested permission from President Jokowi to prepare a more appropriate office for Pak Luhut inside the palace.

Jokowi responded simply. "Pak Billy, please handle it. The most important thing is that Pak Luhut has a workspace where he can work comfortably. I leave this matter to you."

Carrying out the President's trust, Billy immediately requested that Pak Luhut temporarily work from Bina Graha for two days while a new office inside the palace was being prepared.

At Bina Graha, Billy had already arranged a room known as the Umar Wirahadikusuma Room to serve as Pak Luhut's temporary workspace.

Meanwhile, Billy and his team began working intensively inside the palace. For two consecutive days, they worked almost without pause preparing a special office space for Pak Luhut.

The room was equipped with high-quality carpets, comfortable furniture, and the facilities needed to support the demanding pace of presidential work. Everything was completed with remarkable speed and efficiency.

What Billy created was not merely an office. The room gradually became a center of coordination, ideas, and strategic decision-making during the early years of Jokowi's administration.

To accelerate the process and avoid bureaucratic delays, Billy even used a considerable amount of personal funds to help finance renovations and procure the necessary equipment.

For Billy, the issue was never personal gain. The priority was ensuring that the institution could begin functioning effectively as quickly as possible. If personal sacrifice was required for the sake of the country, he accepted it without hesitation.

That experience further strengthened the relationship between Billy Arman, Pak Luhut, and President Jokowi. In many important situations, Billy repeatedly proved himself dependable in carrying out urgent and sensitive responsibilities.

Likewise, in major strategic matters, President Jokowi placed enormous trust in Pak Luhut.

During Jokowi's presidency, the role of the Presidential Staff Office extended far beyond administrative functions. The institution became one of the government's most important coordinating centers — connecting the President, ministers, and various state institutions.

If President Jokowi stood at the forefront of leadership, then Pak Luhut as Chief of Presidential Staff and Billy Arman as Middle Expert Staff became part of the crucial team working quietly behind the scenes through the newly established institution inside the palace.

The establishment of the Presidential Staff Office — along with Pak Luhut's strong leadership during the early years of Jokowi's administration — demonstrated how a new institution could become an effective instrument for more precise and responsive governance.

And behind the birth of that institution stood Billy Arman, who helped prepare not only its administrative foundations but also its physical readiness from the very beginning. Transforming a completely new institution into an operational reality inside the presidential palace was far from easy.

Yet Billy successfully fulfilled his responsibility as one of the figures involved in laying the foundations of the Presidential Staff Office — an institution that continues carrying out its functions to this day.

Within the Presidential Staff Office, Billy Arman later held several strategic assignments as Middle Expert Staff.

His responsibilities included assisting the Chief of Presidential Staff through the Household Affairs Staff Division (January 2015 – July 2015), Deputy V for Defense, Intelligence & IT Affairs (July 2015 – January 2016), and later Deputy I for the Management and Oversight of National Priority Programs (February 2016 – 2022), particularly in the areas of infrastructure development and energy.

When General Luhut Was Asked to Lead the 2015 Asian-African Summit

Since 1955, the Asian-African Conference has stood as far more than an ordinary diplomatic gathering. It became a historic symbol of unity and solidarity between two continents that, for decades, had shared the aspiration of building a more just and prosperous world.

In 2015, as Indonesia prepared to host the Asian-African Summit in Bandung, Billy Arman immediately understood the magnitude of the challenge facing the nation. It was already early March, while the summit itself was scheduled to take place at the end of April. At the same time, the organizing committee suddenly found itself without leadership after the Minister of State Secretary, who had been serving as chairman of the committee, underwent surgery overseas.

In other words, one of Indonesia's most important international events was approaching rapidly without a clear leader at its helm.

Because of this situation, Billy Arman, Indra, and Taufiq Sukasar—as palace personnel and also members of the organizing committee—met with President Jokowi to discuss the urgent matter. The summit could not be allowed to fail, as it carried Indonesia's reputation before the international community.

After an intensive discussion, President Jokowi ultimately decided that General (Ret.) Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan was the right figure to lead the committee.

“Pak Billy, please meet Pak Luhut. Tell him I am asking him to lead the organizing committee for the Asian-African Summit.

Time is running short, and the current chairman is undergoing surgery overseas. This is an international event that requires experienced leadership and quick coordination. We cannot entrust it to just anyone.”

Not long after the meeting, Billy immediately met Pak Luhut and delivered President Jokowi’s message.

At first, Pak Luhut declined.

“It’s all very sudden, Pak Billy. Isn’t there another candidate?” Pak Luhut asked.

“I apologize, Pak Luhut, but this is a direct request from the President,” Billy replied. “According to the President, this event requires a strong and experienced leader because it is an international summit, and the timeline is already extremely tight. Rapid action is essential. The President believes you are the right person for this responsibility.”

Pak Luhut remained silent for a few moments before finally responding. “Alright, Pak Billy. For Indonesia. In situations like this, we must be ready. But I’ll need your help as well.”

Thus, in 2015, as the world commemorated the 60th anniversary of the historic Asian-African Conference, General (Ret.) Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan officially took command as Chairman of the National Organizing Committee for the 2015 Asian-African Summit.

Billy Arman continued supporting Pak Luhut by providing historical briefings and strategic context regarding the significance of the Asian-African Conference for Indonesia. Despite the enormous pressure and demanding schedule surrounding the event, Billy remained fully committed to



Accompanying retired General Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan at the wedding ceremony of the son of Bank Indonesia Governor Mr. Perry W.



On a Sunday morning, accompanying Chief of Presidential Staff Mr. Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan and entourage to meet the President (2015).



A discussion between Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, retired General Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, businessman Mr. Tommy Winata, Mr. Lambock (Special Staff), Mr. Seto (Deputy), and Mrs. Yona at Halim Perdanakusuma Airport before the Coordinating Minister's departure to Singapore.



ensuring that every aspect of the summit ran smoothly in accordance with President Jokowi's mandate.

Billy understood how important the summit was for Indonesia's international standing. The conference strengthened Indonesia's position as a bridge between Asia and Africa while opening broader opportunities for economic, social, and technological cooperation. More importantly, it reaffirmed Indonesia's long-standing commitment to global justice, national sovereignty, and solidarity among developing nations.

Ultimately, under Pak Luhut's leadership, the 2015 Asian-African Summit was successfully held from April 19 to 24, 2015. The summit brought together 34 heads of state and government from 77 countries, along with representatives from various international organizations, with the shared goal of strengthening cooperation and promoting peace, security, and economic development.

The conference produced three major documents: the Bandung Message 2015, the Declaration on the Revitalization of the Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership, and the Declaration on Palestine.

The summit itself was executed smoothly and without major incident. Many countries congratulated President Jokowi for Indonesia's success in hosting the international event with such professionalism and precision.

The success of the summit demonstrated how disciplined leadership, careful coordination, and quiet dedication behind the scenes could strengthen Indonesia's standing before the international community.

President Prabowo: Courage, Patriotism, & the Vision of a Stronger Indonesia

Several months after Prabowo Subianto was inaugurated as President of Indonesia, Billy Arman was once again entrusted with responsibilities within the Presidential Military Secretariat (Sesmilpres). This time, he served as Special Staff to the Military Secretary to the President, Major General TNI Kosasih.

At the time, Billy Arman also remained active in Rampas, short for Rumah Perjuangan Relawan Prabowo Subianto, a volunteer movement formed to support Prabowo Subianto's presidential campaign. Even after Prabowo was elected president, the organization continued to operate as a network that fostered solidarity, public engagement, and support for national development programs.

The movement brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds, including former military personnel, community leaders, activists, and ordinary citizens who shared a strong commitment to supporting Prabowo's leadership vision for Indonesia. Beyond political activities, the organization also focused on strengthening social networks, encouraging civic participation, and building a collective spirit among its members.

After becoming more closely acquainted with Prabowo during the early period of his presidency, Billy Arman came to believe that Prabowo's leadership style resonated with many layers of society because it emphasized courage, discipline, integrity, and love for the homeland. In Billy's eyes, Prabowo represented the image of a patriot shaped by Indonesia's long national journey—someone who had witnessed and participated in many important chapters of the nation's history.

Few people realize that behind Prabowo's firm military demeanor lies a deeply sensitive and compassionate side.

One day, Billy accompanied Pak Prabowo to watch a film about a mother separated from her child. Throughout the film, Pak Prabowo appeared deeply moved emotionally. For Billy, the moment revealed a side of Prabowo rarely seen by the public: beneath the image of a disciplined military leader was a man with profound emotional sensitivity and empathy.

Beyond his responsibilities within Sesmilpres, Billy also became actively involved in empowering local communities to reactivate and optimize old oil wells. Through persistent discussions and advocacy with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM), he helped encourage the issuance of Ministerial Regulation No. 14 of 2025 concerning Cooperation in the Management of Working Areas for Increasing Oil and Gas Production.

The regulation opened opportunities not only for regional state-owned enterprises, but also for cooperatives and small community-based enterprises to participate in the management of old oil wells as part of Indonesia's broader effort toward national energy independence.

For Billy Arman, the early period of President Prabowo's administration reflected a continuation of his long journey of national service—one that extended beyond politics alone and toward broader efforts to strengthen Indonesia's sovereignty, energy resilience, and future development.

Billy Arman's Concern Behind an Oil-Rich Nation

There was once a period in Indonesia's history when the nation stood proudly as one of the world's respected energy powers. In 1962, Indonesia officially joined the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), an organization responsible for managing and regulating global oil production. Membership was not merely a diplomatic symbol, but also a global recognition of the immense natural wealth buried beneath the soil of the archipelago.

From that moment onward, the Red-and-White flag flew alongside those of major oil-exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Iran. Within the global economic arena, Indonesia possessed a significant voice and role in influencing oil prices and shaping the direction of the world oil market. That era of glory became a source of national pride and undeniable proof that the homeland possessed extraordinary natural resources—God-given blessings that had to be protected and wisely managed.

Yet history never moves forward without challenges. As the nation entered an era of massive development—marked by the construction of factories, transportation infrastructure, and rapid population growth—energy demand surged dramatically. From a population of around 119 million people in 1971, Indonesia grew to more than 270 million in the modern era. Oil demand increased sharply, surpassing national production capacity.

Yet over time, that era of glory slowly began to dim. Oil wells that had once stood mighty and productive gradually declined in output. Production could no longer satisfy the ever-growing domestic demand. Consequently, a nation that had once exported oil was forced to reverse course and begin





RAMPAS SETIA 08 BERDAULAT



Garda terdepan



Billy arman
dewan penasehat
dpp rampas setia
08

T. helmi
ketua umum dpp
rampas setia 08

H. PRABOWO SUBIANTO
DEWAN KEHORMATAN
DPP RAMPAS SETIA 08

H. RASYID
PANGlima NASIONAL
DPP RAMPAS SETIA 08

importing crude oil and refined fuel products. It was a bitter irony for Southeast Asia's first member of OPEC.

The climax came in 2009 when Indonesia's membership in OPEC had to be suspended. That badge of pride was temporarily removed because Indonesia had become a net oil importer. This was not merely a matter of trade statistics, but a question of sovereignty and energy independence under severe test.

Moreover, contemporary data revealed a serious threat. National oil demand had reached 1.8 million barrels per day, while domestic production stood at only around 700,000 barrels. This meant Indonesia had to import more than one million barrels of oil every single day from the global market. Such dependence posed a dangerous risk to the stability and security of the nation's energy supply.

The country's operational oil reserves were sufficient to meet domestic needs for only around sixteen to seventeen days. This figure was far below the standard required by the International Energy Agency (IEA), which sets a minimum reserve threshold of ninety days, and even below the Indonesian government's own target of twenty-one days as a safety benchmark. It was a warning that demanded urgent and decisive action.

As someone who had long served within the Presidential Palace environment, Billy Arman directly felt the complexity of this issue. Behind closed doors and inside high-pressure meeting rooms, discussions unfolded that demanded intelligent decisions and practical solutions. It was there that Billy witnessed the immense burden carried by national leaders, who each day had to shoulder economic risks with direct consequences for the people.

The figures Billy Arman heard from senior officials, including former Deputy Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Susilo Siswoutomo, revealed the enormous burden caused by oil imports. Between 350,000 and 400,000 barrels of crude oil were imported daily for domestic refineries at a cost of approximately 40 million US dollars per day. Meanwhile, imports of refined fuel products amounting to 400,000 to 500,000 barrels required an additional 60 to 80 million dollars every day. Total expenditures could reach between 100 and 120 million US dollars daily—an unimaginably massive amount.

Imagine a President opening his eyes each morning only to confront not merely the ordinary affairs of state, but the bitter reality of an economic hemorrhage unfolding every second. Trillions of rupiah were being spent not to build hospitals, schools, or infrastructure, but simply to purchase fuel so the nation could continue functioning for a few more days. It was a chronic wound slowly draining the country's future if no comprehensive solution could be found.

Yet Billy Arman believed that one precise idea could change everything. Just as one breakthrough in the telecommunications industry had once transformed the national pricing system and created a domino effect felt for years afterward, Billy believed that a bold and strategic solution could also reshape Indonesia's energy future.

That was one of the reasons behind Billy Arman's deep concern and inner calling when confronting the national energy crisis. What Indonesia needed was one crucial and truly solution-oriented leap of ideas to solve the oil problem facing the beloved nation. Once again, sovereignty lay at the heart of the issue—economic sovereignty as well as political sovereignty.

Billy Arman vividly remembered the presidential debates of 2014 and 2019, during which Prabowo Subianto passionately advocated reclaiming strategic national assets. For Billy Arman, this was not merely ordinary political debate, but an expression of economic nationalism and sovereignty.

Oil represented one of the nation's strategic lifelines that had to remain under national control. The issue of oil imports and the issue of strategic asset ownership fundamentally shared the same underlying question: who truly possessed sovereign control over the nation's vital resources? The oil import issue was not merely technical, but a struggle to ensure that the Indonesian people retained full control over their economic future and national security.

Looking toward the future, Billy Arman believed that Indonesia, as a nation, had to remain optimistic while also realistic. Indonesia's natural potential remained enormous, and if managed properly and supported by the right technology, it was not impossible for Indonesia to once again reclaim its position as an important player in the global energy landscape.

The current paradox was not the end of the story, but rather a challenge that had to be transformed into a major opportunity for energy independence and national sovereignty.

The People's Oil Wells: A Forgotten Treasure Beneath Nusantara

Amid a sea of restless thoughts and burning aspirations, Billy Arman looked far into the future in search of an answer that could not come from conventional methods. How could he possibly discover giant new oil fields while major corporations were spending trillions of rupiah and years of exploration on

such efforts, while he himself possessed neither the time nor even a fraction of those resources? There had to be another way—a solution that was lighter, faster, and, most importantly, directly involved the power of the people themselves.

Unexpectedly, the answer emerged from a forgotten chapter of history. Not from vast oceans or remote dense jungles, but from remnants of the past lying silent beneath the earth. From relics of the colonial era that had long disappeared beneath stories rarely brought back to the surface.

Billy Arman remembered stories about old oil wells left behind by the Dutch colonial government—thousands of old wells scattered across Nusantara that had once flowed abundantly with oil before eventually being abandoned and left in silence after their golden era faded away. To the world, they were merely exhausted relics, discarded as worthless remnants of the past. But to Billy Arman, those wells were not merely abandoned sites. They were forgotten treasures, jewels hidden beneath creeping grass.

Deep within, Billy Arman believed there was still life hidden inside them. The remaining oil that had never been fully extracted from those old wells, if supported by the right technology and driven by the right vision, could be revived once more. This was not about embarking upon exhausting new exploration, but rather about awakening something that had already existed—something whose location and potential were already known with certainty.

However, an idea this grand could not survive merely as a dream. Billy Arman fully understood that the nation operated upon laws and regulations that had to be respected. He could not simply appear and claim those old wells without a solid

legal foundation. Thus, he immersed himself in regulations, legal documents, and legislation, determined to find the legal doorway that would allow such a mission to move forward.

Eventually, Billy Arman found it: a regulation that seemed to offer the very key he had been searching for. Ministerial Regulation of Energy and Mineral Resources Number 01 of 2008 concerning petroleum mining operations in old wells. Billy Arman studied it repeatedly, contemplating every article and every sentence with deep seriousness.

The regulation not only opened legal access for managing abandoned old wells, but also clearly defined who was permitted to operate them. Only three institutions were recognized: State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN), Regional-Owned Enterprises (BUMD), and cooperatives. The first two were familiar corporate routes that had long existed, but the third door—the cooperative model—made his heart race.

A cooperative. There lay the true key.

This model represented the foundation of the people's economy, a pillar built upon justice and independence. Through cooperatives, the project would not belong merely to a select few individuals or giant corporations, but truly to the communities living around those wells. This was no longer merely about business; it was a calling to empower communities and restore ownership over resources that had long been controlled by others.

Cooperatives not only gave people a voice, but also ensured that profits generated from natural resources remained in the hands of local communities rather than flowing entirely into the hands of large external interests. It was a path toward restoring rights once lost and reviving dreams of economic independence

upon the foundation of resources that had always existed beneath their own land.

With that legal foundation and vehicle of struggle in hand, Billy Arman moved forward in search of true partners. He searched for a cooperative that shared the same spirit and was willing to walk together along such a difficult road. His journey eventually led him to the land of Jambi, to a cooperative whose vision resonated deeply with his own: Koperasi Batanghari Sumber Energy.

There, Billy Arman believed, a new chapter of struggle would begin—an old legacy revived with a new spirit. It was no longer merely about extracting oil, but about building hope, restoring dignity, and creating prosperity for the wider community.

Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative: Turning Illegality into a National Blessing

With burning conviction and standing upon a solid legal foundation, Billy Arman journeyed to Jambi. There, together with the leaders of the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative, he began a struggle he knew would be filled with obstacles—though he never imagined the burden ahead would be so immense. The vision that had once existed neatly upon sheets of paper now had to be transformed into reality, embodied within official permits they fought tirelessly to obtain. Before them stretched a long bureaucratic marathon, winding through countless layers of procedure and uncertainty.

One by one, they knocked on the doors of government institutions with unwavering determination—from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and SKK Migas, to Pertamina and regional government offices. Meeting after meeting was

attended. Presentation after presentation was delivered repeatedly. Billy Arman never grew weary of repeating the same vision: this was not merely about reviving oil production; it was a movement to awaken the strength of the people and serve the nation itself.

Some eyes looked upon him with hope. Others with deep skepticism.

“Searching for oil in old wells?”

“Do those wells still contain anything?”

“Can such a vision truly be realized?”

Yet Billy Arman answered every doubt with undeniable data and unshakable conviction.

Month after month passed, but the exhausting wait and relentless struggle never diminished the spirit of Billy Arman and the cooperative team. Until finally, the day they had long awaited arrived: the official concession permit for a 500-hectare area was now in their hands.

This was no ordinary victory. It was merely the opening chapter of a much longer journey. Euphoria and optimism surged through them, as though half the battle had already been won. Yet reality greeted them in Bungku Village, Batanghari, with heartbreaking irony.

In a land rich with natural wealth, upon soil concealing oil beneath its surface, several hamlets still remained trapped in darkness. Since Indonesia’s independence, electricity had never reached them. The paradox of a resource-rich nation suddenly stood before Billy Arman’s eyes in tangible form. His conscience refused to remain silent.

Without hesitation, Billy Arman immediately contacted executives at PLN whom he personally knew. He described the condition of the village. To him, it was a painful injustice that natural wealth buried beneath the earth remained powerless to illuminate the lives of the very people living above it.

The response came swiftly. Two days later, a survey was conducted. Within a week, electricity poles stood tall, cables stretched across the remote land, and for the first time lights illuminated the villages.

When Billy Arman and the cooperative team witnessed the smiles and radiant joy shining across the faces of children and villagers, they realized that their true victory was not oil, but the light of hope itself.

After fulfilling the community's most basic needs, they shifted their focus toward the core of the struggle. Out of hundreds of potential locations, permits for trial operations were granted for 134 wells, with the primary plan centered on 34 points.

Yet as a careful and measured step, they decided not to work on all of them immediately. First, they would conduct trials on fewer than ten wells to observe the real conditions on the ground. The equipment they prepared was also simple, in harmony with the spirit of the cooperative movement itself.

At the time, their hope was that each well could produce around five to seven barrels of oil per day.

Filled with burning enthusiasm, the team descended into the field and headed toward the first testing locations. The old wells that had slept for decades finally awakened. Oil flowed once more.

The moment proved that they had not been chasing an empty dream. It was indeed true that those wells, dormant for generations, still contained remnants of natural wealth deep within the earth. The first time crude oil emerged from the pipes became a moment of validation: they were not pursuing illusion, but reality.

Yet challenges arrived alongside success. Dirt, technical complications, and operational obstacles confronted them at every stage. But the team learned quickly and adapted rapidly: cleaning the wells, filtering the oil, refining operational processes. Gradually, the wells began producing according to expectations.

The journey of Billy Arman and the cooperative team was undeniably difficult, but the proof stood before them. And amid the complicated struggle surrounding those old wells, Billy Arman unexpectedly discovered an even greater opportunity.

While he and the cooperative team wrestled with technical problems, Billy noticed local miners skillfully producing oil from wells they themselves had dug. The problem was that although they were productive, their operations remained illegal and they possessed no access to legitimate markets.

At that moment, a far greater idea emerged. What if Billy Arman and the cooperative team did not merely operate their own project? What if these two forces could be united?

The cooperative possessed legality, official access to Pertamina, and licensed wells serving as legal anchors. Meanwhile, local communities possessed hundreds of productive wells, manpower, and priceless field experience.

This was no longer about choosing between two separate paths. It was about creating an entirely new road. By integrating the cooperative's legal wells with productive community wells beneath one legal umbrella, the results could become extraordinary. This combination, Billy believed, would unlock the true oil potential hidden beneath the land of Jambi.

What had once been a steep and difficult road now began opening into a pathway toward possibility.

The great dream of Billy Arman and the cooperative team would not merely survive—it would rise far beyond anything they had ever imagined. Together with the people, they ignited hope and welcomed the future with open hands.

Ironically, the technical failures encountered in those old wells became hidden blessings that opened the door toward a far greater discovery. Amid the noise of machinery and the silence of oil fields, Billy Arman's attention became fixed upon one overlooked detail: the local miners themselves.

They moved quietly, earning a living with simple tools, descending into the earth as though searching for secrets still hidden below. Barrel after barrel of crude oil was lifted—not merely as work, but as a means of survival amid uncertainty.

They were like shadows faithfully waiting for dawn. Their lives unfolded in isolation, surrounded by whispers of caution and pounding hearts whenever unfamiliar sounds approached. Every unknown vehicle could signal disaster. Every conversation overheard at roadside coffee stalls might become information leading authorities to their wells.

Within such fear, they lived trapped inside a suffocating cycle—working carefully with one eye alert and one ear

constantly listening. Fear clung to them like black mud upon worn shoes, carried home each night, stealing away peace itself. Billy Arman listened to their stories—stories layered with fear and courage alike.

The miners fully understood the risks. They knew their work violated the law. Yet without alternatives, oil was the only candle capable of keeping smoke rising from their kitchen stoves amid darkness.

At the same time, Billy Arman also witnessed the dilemma faced by security officers. They stood trapped between duty and humanity. Arresting the miners meant destroying the livelihoods of hundreds of families. Allowing the operations to continue meant risking sanctions from superiors.

It was a tense social trap that suffocated everyone involved. Then suddenly, like lightning breaking through darkness, a realization struck Billy Arman's consciousness: The true treasure was not the abandoned wells of the past, but the human beings standing upon those fields.

This struggle was no longer simply about bringing sleeping wells back to life, but about liberating people from the shadow of illegality that had long imprisoned their lives.

And from that realization, a radical idea was born. What if he and the cooperative team stopped trying to revive dead wells altogether? What if, instead, they embraced the miners themselves? What if the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative no longer functioned primarily as a mining operator, but as a bridge?

And so a new plan emerged. The miners would be legalized under the protection of the cooperative. The cooperative would

become the official buyer of their oil and would legally sell it onward to Pertamina.

Under such a scheme, everyone would benefit. The miners would gain legal certainty. The cooperative would gain supply stability. And the state would gain additional oil production previously lost to the black market.

Of course, convincing all parties to accept such a “crazy” idea was far from easy. But Billy Arman continued fighting. In every discussion with stakeholders—from regional governments to security officials—Billy Arman did not merely present statistics and technical data. He sought to paint a vision: a dream of a more humane relationship between the state and its people.

He said to them. “Gentlemen, our ultimate goal is to create a condition where fear no longer exists. I want the day to come when these miners can casually say, ‘In the past, if we wanted to pass by, we had to go behind the police station, Sir. Now I can walk right in front of the police station, leave my oil there, stop by to use the restroom, and say to the officers, “Sir, please watch my oil for a moment.”’ That is the true solution.”

With that vision, Billy Arman’s struggle no longer revolved merely around numbers and regulations. He was nurturing a deeply human vision. That vision pierced through darkness like light itself, carrying a hope far greater than merely extracting natural resources from the earth.

Now, the police were no longer frightening shadows, but partners in safeguarding shared prosperity.

The true victory was no longer the moment oil first flowed from the wells, but the moment miners could finally work peacefully—without constantly looking over their shoulders in

fear. And from those technical failures was born the new soul of the entire project: a mission devoted to restoring dignity, freedom, justice, and living hope.

Letter to President Prabowo: Unlocking the Potential of the People's Oil Wells

Not long after General TNI (Ret.) Prabowo Subianto was inaugurated as President of the Republic of Indonesia in October 2024, Billy Arman addressed a letter to the President conveying his recommendation regarding the importance of optimizing the potential of Indonesia's oil wells—both old wells and newly developed wells—especially the people's oil wells, as a strategic solution to reduce dependence on crude oil imports that heavily burden the State Budget (APBN), create new business and employment opportunities, and increase both state and community income, which in turn could help realize national energy independence.

In his letter, Billy Arman explained that Indonesia was estimated to possess 44,900 oil wells, consisting of 16,300 active producing wells and 16,250 idle wells (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources data, quoted by CNBC Indonesia on August 27, 2024). Among those 44,900 wells were 13,824 old wells spread across various regions of Indonesia (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources data, 2010). Of those 13,824 old wells, it was estimated that fewer than 10 percent had been reactivated and were currently producing.

Meanwhile, Indonesia's oil consumption had reached an average of between 1.5 and 1.6 million barrels per day, while national oil production in 2023 stood at only around 605,500 barrels per day. As a consequence, Indonesia was forced to

import between 900,000 and 1 million barrels of oil every single day.

In Billy Arman's view, by optimizing the enormous potential of idle wells and old oil wells, Indonesia could gradually fulfill domestic oil demand independently, significantly reduce oil imports, and perhaps even one day stop oil imports altogether, so that the State Budget would no longer be burdened by massive imported oil expenditures.

Beyond that, such optimization could create new business opportunities and employment while increasing both state revenue and public prosperity.

In this regard, Billy Arman proposed that the government maximize the involvement of national private companies and cooperatives as strategic partners in managing oil wells, while preventing domination of Indonesia's oil wealth by foreign private corporations or foreign governments, in accordance with the spirit and mandate of the 1945 Constitution.

Billy Arman delivered these recommendations as an expression of his deep sense of concern for the fate of communities in various regions that had spent decades surviving through unauthorized oil mining activities.

Their daily lives were overshadowed by fear of arrest because their mining activities lacked legal permits, while at the same time they depended upon those very activities to feed their families and sustain their lives.









This difficult reality had even triggered tensions and conflicts between local communities and security forces. Because of that, Billy Arman sought to help the communities by initiating the establishment of the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative, which brought together several associations of oil miners and facilitated permits for the management of 143 old oil wells in Jambi Province.

Billy Arman felt deeply grateful that the oil-mining communities in Jambi that he had helped support and protect could now work peacefully and provide for their families without living beneath the constant shadow of fear.

The Birth of a Legal Framework for Optimizing the Potential of People's Oil Wells

The vision that had once lived only within the mind of Billy Arman and a small team in Jambi slowly but surely began echoing all the way to the center of power in Jakarta. From the darkness of mud and despair emerged a struggle that evolved into a case study—a pilot model that attracted the attention of policymakers. The idea that a simple cooperative could transform illegal miners into equal partners of the state, and that a complex social problem could be transformed into a strategic solution for national energy sovereignty, became a story worthy of being recorded in history.

Under the new administration of President Prabowo Subianto, which radiated a strong commitment toward achieving energy self-sufficiency, Billy Arman and the cooperative team opened doors to ideas that had previously seemed unimaginable. They searched for breakthroughs—innovative and unconventional approaches capable of reviving Indonesia's national oil and gas

production in pursuit of independence. It was precisely here that the model they pioneered in Jambi through the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative found a special place as both an answer and an inspiration.

The culmination arrived on July 1, 2025, a date that would be recorded in the history of Indonesia's people's oil well industry. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources officially announced the birth of a new policy that would revolutionize the management of people's oil wells: Ministerial Regulation of Energy and Mineral Resources Number 14 of 2025 concerning Cooperation in the Management of Working Areas for Increasing Oil and Gas Production.

Billy Arman felt his heart race as he read every article of the regulation, as though the echoes of their long struggle had finally transformed into a courageous decision of the state itself. The regulation provided a clear and firm legal framework for drilling activities carried out by communities throughout Indonesia. Now, partnership models involving cooperatives, regional-owned enterprises (BUMD), and MSMEs as Production Sharing Contract Contractors (KKKS) partnering with Pertamina were officially recognized and supported by the state. There was even a four-year development and guidance period designed to help people's oil miners achieve proper technical and environmental standards.

This was not merely an administrative regulation. It was the foundation of national pride being built—a structure for a brighter future under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto. It envisioned a system in which communities would be economically empowered, the government could breathe easier as fiscal burdens decreased, and the nation could reclaim its sovereignty. The highest vision shared by Billy Arman and the cooperative team was the day Indonesia would no longer need to import oil. More than that, they dreamed that one day this beloved nation would once again export oil to the world. Such a moment would become an unparalleled symbol of national strength and progress. This was the true legacy Billy Arman was fighting for.

And this was not merely wishful thinking. Government data projected extraordinary potential lying directly ahead: more than 7,000 wells that had long operated illegally could be legalized. The result would be an increase in national oil production of at least 10,000 barrels per day while simultaneously creating employment opportunities for more than 200,000 workers. Those figures were not merely statistics—they represented the lives of thousands of families now given renewed hope for a better future.

The long struggle Billy Arman had endured, which began from stories of despair in a single regency in Jambi, had now been elevated into a sustainable national strategy for realizing energy sovereignty. What once seemed impossible was gradually becoming reality. The giants that had long slept beneath the earth across the nation were finally awakening—not as shadows of the past, but as tangible sources of future strength.

Billy Arman felt deeply grateful to witness how that grand vision had evolved into a movement capable not only of restoring

local economies, but also of giving new meaning to the nation itself. This was no longer merely about pursuing production figures and output targets, but about carving out a source of pride born from the sweat and prayers of ordinary people.

The work of Billy Arman and the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative had become a symbol of hope—a prototype model of empowerment that could one day be replicated throughout Indonesia. Here, the strength of the people was rediscovered. Here, a new brotherhood between citizens and the state was born. And here, the dream of national energy independence began to be woven together through courage, sacrifice, and relentless hard work.

The journey toward national energy independence remains long and filled with challenges. Yet with stronger foundations now firmly established and a solid legal framework already in place, there is no limit to what the Indonesian nation can achieve.

Pilot Project of People's Oil Wells for National Energy Independence

As the new model of people's oil well management pioneered by Billy Arman through the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative in Jambi Province continued to develop, he began to realize that its impact extended far beyond the smiles and happiness of the people's oil miners. The numbers appearing before him were truly astonishing, and suddenly everything transformed into something far greater than an ordinary empowerment story. This had become the blueprint for the macroeconomic solution he had long searched for and tirelessly fought to realize in pursuit of national energy independence.

He saw direct financial benefits for the state. Under Billy Arman's scheme, Pertamina purchased crude oil from the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative at an agreed price—a 30 percent discount from global oil market prices. This meant that if global oil prices stood at 65 US dollars per barrel, the state no longer needed to spend 65 dollars importing oil, but instead paid only 45.5 dollars to a domestic cooperative. Every barrel of oil successfully produced by the cooperative represented a foreign exchange saving of 19.5 dollars for Indonesia. Imagine it: the daily hemorrhaging of 100 million dollars caused by oil imports could gradually be reduced, barrel by barrel.

Yet the most astonishing discovery emerged from Billy Arman's interactions with miners in the field. He began noticing an extraordinary pattern: every old Dutch-era well—which Billy Arman referred to as the “mother well”—was surrounded by eight to ten newer wells dug independently by local communities. These newer wells, which Billy Arman called the “child wells,” had in fact become the true centers of production.

The project's potential soared far beyond initial expectations. It was no longer merely about reviving 134 “mother wells,” most of which had already dried up, but about legalizing and optimizing the potential of thousands of productive “child wells.” Billy Arman therefore began recalculating the numbers in greater detail.

A single “child well,” using simple community-owned equipment, was capable of producing approximately ten drums

of crude oil per day. One drum contained 220 liters, equivalent to around 1.6 barrels of oil daily. In other words, if the cooperative managed 134 “mother wells,” and each was surrounded by an average of ten “child wells,” then the total number of “child wells” would reach 1,340 units. That meant the total production potential would amount to 1,340 child wells multiplied by 1.6 barrels per day—equaling 2,144 barrels every day.

Those numbers made Billy Arman fall silent for a moment, astonished by the sheer magnitude of the potential unfolding before him. What had originally begun as an experiment involving only several wells now possessed the capacity to produce more than 2,000 barrels of crude oil every single day. With further optimization, this figure could potentially reach between 2,500 and 3,000 barrels per day—from only one cooperative in one small regency.

Billy Arman began imagining the national domino effect. If the people’s oil well management model pioneered by the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative were replicated across thousands of old well locations stretching from Aceh to Papua, the scale of production would no longer be measured merely in tens of thousands of barrels per day, but could potentially reach hundreds of thousands of barrels per day. The nation would not only be capable of significantly reducing oil imports, but also strengthening the rupiah exchange rate. Stability in prices and the availability of basic necessities could likewise be safeguarded more effectively.

And what stirred Billy Arman’s heart most deeply was the realization that trillions of rupiah from the state budget—money that had long been drained away to finance oil imports—could instead be redirected toward building more schools, hospitals, and infrastructure supporting the welfare of the people. For this

reason, it was only natural that the Batanghari Sumber Energy Cooperative be designated as a pilot project for people's oil well management in pursuit of national energy independence.

The crude oil wealth of Nusantara was not some distant myth hidden in a faraway land. That wealth existed here, beneath the sacred soil of the Indonesian motherland, long asleep and waiting to be awakened. Billy Arman believed there was no need to venture into distant foreign territories at crushing costs. What Indonesia truly needed was a grounded and concrete example, appropriate technology, and the strength of its own people to set the wheels of prosperity in motion by optimizing the vast potential of people's oil wells throughout Nusantara.

Moving Together to Awaken the “Sleeping Giant” of People's Oil Wells

Billy Arman's journey from the quiet corridors of the Presidential Palace to the muddy oil fields of Jambi ultimately taught him a profound lesson about the true meaning of service. In earlier years, he believed that advancing the nation required someone to stand at the peak of power, formulating grand policies and directing major decisions from within the halls of government. Yet standing before abandoned old wells and the hopeful faces of the people's oil miners, Billy discovered a very different truth.

He came to realize that solutions to the nation's greatest problems are often not born inside luxurious meeting rooms, but within the living pulse of the people themselves. Indonesia's true strength, as he had always believed, does not reside solely in giant corporations or monumental prestige projects. That strength lives within the spirit of *gotong royong*, within

local wisdom, and within the extraordinary resilience of the Indonesian people.

More often than not, the solution lies hidden within forgotten potential: old wells long considered dead and, more importantly, within the unextinguished spirit of the people who continue struggling to survive around them. That was why Billy chose to move together with local communities to awaken the “Sleeping Giant” of People’s Oil Wells that had been neglected for decades. It was a struggle born from the depths of the motherland itself, carried out hand in hand with sincere villagers who desired nothing more than the opportunity to work and provide for their families.

As he reflected upon the journey, Billy Arman realized that the fire burning in the oil fields of Jambi was the very same fire that had once fueled his spirit during his years of innovation in the telecommunications industry. His struggle to free the Indonesian people from expensive cellular phone tariffs through the groundbreaking Rp 1-per-second concept was, in essence, the same struggle: seeing a problem, refusing to accept the status quo, and searching for breakthroughs that stood firmly on the side of the people.

The Satyalancana Wira Karya Medal of Honor awarded to Billy Arman by the President of the Republic of Indonesia became a reminder that the state values innovations born from deep concern for the condition and future of the nation itself.

To Billy Arman, the struggle for energy sovereignty was never merely about economics, politics, or production figures. It was about dignity. It was about ensuring that Indonesia’s natural wealth truly became a blessing for its own people. It was about ensuring that those who had long lived under fear

and marginalization could finally stand upright with pride, certainty, and legal protection.

Billy Arman believed that history has always belonged to those courageous enough to imagine a future different from present reality. Every great transformation begins with unrest, with the refusal to surrender to circumstances, and with the courage to take the first step even when the road ahead remains uncertain.

The old oil wells scattered throughout Nusantara were no longer merely remnants of colonial history. In Billy Arman's eyes, they had transformed into symbols of awakening. Symbols that Indonesia still possessed immense hidden strength waiting to be revived through courage, innovation, and collective struggle.

And perhaps one day, when Indonesia finally stands firmly as a truly energy-independent nation, history will remember that the awakening did not begin inside luxurious buildings or foreign boardrooms. It began quietly—from muddy lands, from forgotten wells, from the hopes of ordinary people, and from the conviction of a man named Billy Arman, who believed that the people themselves could awaken the sleeping giant beneath the earth of Nusantara.

















After the announcement of the Working Cabinet, having a discussion with a close friend since their days at PT Telkom. That afternoon, President Jokowi announced Mr. Arief Yahya as one of the ministers entrusted to lead the Ministry of Tourism (2014).



A meeting with the late Back Tohir and Bang Anto in the office workspace. Both were photographers at the State Palace and had been Billy's friends since he served as personal assistant to the Head of the Presidential Household Bureau during President Soeharto's administration.





Congratulating TNI Commander General Dr. Moeldoko on his academic achievement in earning a doctoral degree from the Postgraduate Program in Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia (2014).



Accompanying Major General TNI Andika Perkasa around the Presidential Palace complex to familiarize him with one of his new duty areas as Commander of the Presidential Security Force (Danpaspampres) (2014).



On the 3rd floor helipad of Bina Graha, accompanying General Dr. Moeldoko on a tour of the Bina Graha Building on his first working day after being appointed by President Jokowi as Chief of Presidential Staff (2018).



With close friend Major General Dr. Terawan Agus Putranto (presidential physician).



Exchanging salutes with Army Chief of Staff General Budiman and Presidential Military Secretary Major General Benny Indra Pudjihastono (2013).



Taking notes while waiting in the waiting room of Merdeka Palace.



Chatting with Mas AHY (Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono) at the State Palace.



A serious discussion with Ir. Tifatul Sembiring during his tenure as Minister of Communication and Information Technology in the United Indonesia Cabinet II.



Shaking hands with Dahlan Iskan after his inauguration as Minister of State-Owned Enterprises in the United Indonesia Cabinet II



With Minister of State-Owned Enterprises Mr. Erick Thohir attending a wedding event.



Accompanying former Governor of Central Java Ganjar Pranowo at an event.





Billy Arman congratulating Perry Warjiyo on his inauguration as Governor of Bank Indonesia, while joking warmly with Mr. Perry and his wife.



Purbaya Sadewo was an old friend from his time serving as Deputy III at the Presidential Staff Office and later became Chairman of the Indonesia Deposit Insurance Corporation (LPS) and Minister of Finance.



With Udayana Military Regional Commander Major General TNI Maruli Simanjuntak. This was the final moment just hours before leaving the Udayana headquarters. They had been friends for decades. General Maruli Simanjuntak later became Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Army (KSAD).



Embracing Dahlan Iskan during the anniversary event of Harian Rakyat Merdeka newspaper.



Billy congratulating his friend Agus Martowardojo after his inauguration as Minister of Finance in the United Indonesia Cabinet II. Agus and Billy enjoyed eating Ayau 76 crab meatballs in Mangga Besar, Jakarta.



Dr. Terawan was Billy Arman's health guardian. Billy had known the three-star general doctor for decades, since Dr. Terawan served as President SBY's presidential physician.



An event held at the State Palace, where the dancers invited everyone to take photos together.



As old friends celebrating an occasion together at the residence of Minister of Agrarian Affairs, retired General Hadi Tjahjanto.



General Andika Perkasa and Billy Arman had been truly solid friends since Andika served as Commander of the Presidential Security Force, Commander of the Army Doctrine, Education and Training Command, Commander of Kostrad, Army Chief of Staff, until becoming TNI Commander. The two frequently met and held discussions at General Andika Perkasa's residence in the Senayan area.



With General Andika Perkasa in the office of the Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Army (KSAD).



With Raul Lemos, businessman and husband of artist Krisdayanti, Billy exchanged information about business cooperation opportunities between Indonesia and Timor-Leste



With TNI soldiers on duty at Cipanas Palace.



As close friends visiting each other, such as with Guruh Soekarno Putra, younger brother of Megawati Soekarnoputri, Chairwoman of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI Perjuangan).



Billy Arman and colleagues from the Presidential Staff Office visiting Cipanas Palace to survey land use for palace purposes.



Billy with close friend Purbaya Sadewo, former Deputy III of the Presidential Staff Office and former Chairman of the Indonesia Deposit Insurance Corporation (LPS), who later served as Minister of Finance.



The Presidential Staff Office team exercising together with Chief of Presidential Staff General Dr. Moeldoko at Monas.



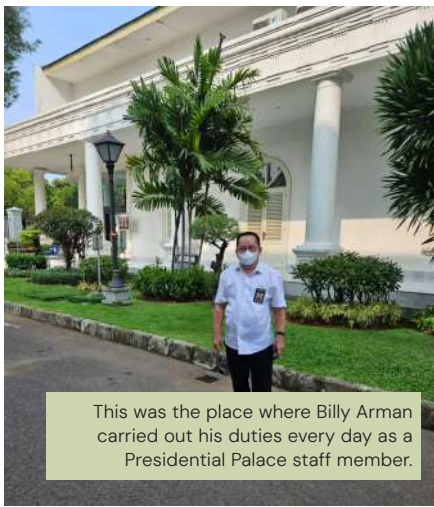
A selfie with General Maruli Simanjuntak, Commander of Kostrad, who later became Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Army (KSAD).







Visiting Cipanas Palace with family.



This was the place where Billy Arman carried out his duties every day as a Presidential Palace staff member.



Preparing while waiting for the President.



The atmosphere at the State Palace during the daytime.



This is the bedroom of the President of the Republic of Indonesia.



BILLY ARMAN BIOGRAPHY

Name : BILLY ARMAN

Email : billyarman@tuasmas.net

Place/Date of Birth : Pontianak, September 10, 1965

Address : Jl. KH. Moh. Mansyur No.11 Block B14

Religion : Catholic

INNOVATIVE WORKS

1. Long-Distance Wireless Network Assembler (1990–1994) Due to the limitations of Telkom's cable network infrastructure, this wireless system significantly helped transfer telephone numbers to different locations.
2. Telkomsel Subdealer and Dealer (1995–2002) Achieved the Largest National Sales of Halo Cards.
3. Synergy Between Telkomsel Product Sales & Other Product Promotions (1997–1998) Simpati reload vouchers were packaged together with cigarette promotions, allowing them to be sold at lower prices.
4. Synergy Between Telkomsel, PT Pertamina, and Hiswana Migas (1997–2000) Creator of the highly successful and award-winning concept: "Recharge Your Phone Credit While Refueling Your Vehicle."

5. Utilization of Taxi Networks as a Retail Distribution Channel
Pioneered the use of taxi networks for the retail sale of Telkomsel reload vouchers through the concept: “Reload Vouchers Available Here,” which successfully became the largest reload voucher distribution network.
6. Creator of the Dealer Operating Account (DOA) Deposit System (1997–2000) This system later became the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for cellular operators in appointing dealers.
7. Pioneer of the Multi-SIM Mobile Phone Concept (2000) First introduced in Indonesia with the slogan: “3 Operators in One Hand.”
8. Pioneer of Telkomsel Promotional Media on Cash Boxes at Gas Stations (2000) Created promotional campaigns using cashier box areas at gas stations.
9. Pioneer of Indonesia’s Low-Cost Cellular Tariff Scheme (2000–2001)
10. Pioneer of the First Fuel Cards and Fuel Vouchers in Indonesia Introduced Indonesia’s first fuel cards and fuel vouchers, usable at more than 100 gas stations and also distributed as souvenirs, rewards, and gifts.
11. Pioneer of the Free Multimedia-Based Public Telephone Concept (2007) Introduced free public telephones equipped with video and audio screens, installed in public facilities such as campuses, schools, hospitals, district offices, malls, and other public spaces under the motto: “FREE TELEPHONE FOR THE PEOPLE.” The system also enabled individuals, companies, and institutions to place multimedia content and information displays.

12. Pioneer of Political Campaign Media Using Toothpaste Packaging (2013) Created a campaign medium designed to better introduce and promote candidates or public figures to society.

NON-STRUCTURAL CAREER HISTORY

1. Member of the Dealer Selection Team of PT Indosat Multi Media Mobile – IM3 (2001)
2. Member of the Indosat IM3 Marketing Implementation Team (2001)
3. Guest Lecturer at the University of Indonesia: Management, Motivation & Innovation (2002)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

1. Bruder Melati Elementary School, Pontianak (1976–1982)
2. St. Lukas 2 Junior High School, Sunter Jakarta (1982–1985)
3. St. Petrus Senior High School, Pontianak (1985–1986)
4. St. Bonaventura Senior High School, Jakarta (1986–1988)

AWARDS & HONORS

1. Recognized as one of the Most Innovative Young Entrepreneurs Under the Age of 35 by a leading Jakarta-based magazine.
2. Awarded recognition as an entrepreneur with continuous innovation by Warta Ekonomi magazine.

3. Recognized as Indonesia's Most Innovative Young Entrepreneur by Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) on the program Kabar Pagi.
4. Awarded the title of "The Innovator" by Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI) on the business program Bedah Bisnis.
5. Recipient of the Satyalancana Wira Karya Medal of Honor from the President of the Republic of Indonesia for contributions to the nation through the innovation of affordable telecommunications tariff schemes.



**KEMENTERIAN SEKRETARIAT NEGARA RI
SEKRETARIAT MILITER PRESIDEN**

SURAT PENGANGKATAN

Nomor 03 /KSN/SM/10/2025

Menimbang: bahwa dalam rangka mendukung pelaksanaan tugas Sekretaris Militer Presiden, perlu dikeluarkan surat pengangkatan.

- Dasar : 1. Peraturan Menteri Sekretaris Negara RI Nomor 11 Tahun 2024 tanggal 31 Desember 2024 tentang Organisasi dan Tata Kerja Kementerian Sekretariat Negara;
2. Pertimbangan Pimpinan dan Staf Sekretaris Militer Presiden.

MENGANGKAT:

Kepada : Nama : Billy Arman;
Tempat, tanggal lahir : Pontianak, 10-09-1965;
Alamat : Pantai Mutiara Blok ZH No. 7, Pluit Penjaringan,
Jakarta Utara.

- Untuk : 1. Diangkat sebagai Staf Khusus Bidang Khusus dan Ekonomi Sekretaris Militer Presiden, dalam rangka mendukung pelaksanaan tugas Sekretaris Militer Presiden terhitung mulai tanggal dikeluarkannya Surat Perintah ini sampai dengan perintah lebih lanjut.
2. Melaporkan pelaksanaan surat pengangkatan ini kepada Sekretaris Militer Presiden.
3. Melaksanakan surat pengangkatan ini dengan sebaik-baiknya dan penuh rasa tanggung jawab.

Dikeluarkan di Jakarta
pada tanggal 6 Oktober 2025
Sekretaris Militer Presiden,



Mayjen TNI Kosasih, S.E.

Tembusan:

1. Mensesneg
2. Karo Personel TNI dan Polri, Setmilpres
3. Karo Pengamanan, Setmilpres
4. Karo Gelar, Tanda Jasa dan Tanda Kehormatan, Setmilpres
5. Karo Umum, Setmilpres
6. Karo Umum, Sekretariat Kementerian

**MINISTRY OF STATE SECRETARIAT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
PRESIDENTIAL MILITARY SECRETARIAT**

LETTER OF APPOINTMENT

Number: 03/KSN/SM/10/2025

Considering : That in order to support the implementation of the duties of the Presidential Military Secretary, it is deemed necessary to issue an Letter of Appointment.

Basis :

1. Regulation of the Minister of State Secretary of the Republic of Indonesia Number 11 of 2024 dated December 31, 2024 concerning the Organization and Work Procedures of the Ministry of State Secretariat;
2. Considerations of the Leadership and Staff of the Presidential Military Secretary.

HEREBY APPOINTS:

Name	: Billy Arman
Place/Date of Birth	: Pontianak, September 10, 1965
Address	: Pantai Mutiara Block ZH No. 7 Pluit Penjaringan, North Jakarta

To:

1. Serve as Special Staff for Special Affairs and Economic Affairs to the Presidential Military Secretary, in order to support the implementation of the duties of the Presidential Military Secretary, effective from the date of issuance of this Letter of Appointment until further instruction.
2. Report the implementation of this appointment to the Presidential Military Secretary.
3. Carry out the duties under this appointment with the utmost diligence and full sense of responsibility.

Issued in Jakarta

On October 6, 2025

PRESIDENTIAL MILITARY SECRETARY

Major General TNI Kosasih, S.E.

Copies submitted to:

1. Minister of State Secretary
2. Head of Personnel Bureau for TNI and Polri, Presidential Military Secretariat
3. Head of Security Bureau, Presidential Military Secretariat
4. Head of Bureau for Decorations, Service Medals, and Honors, Presidential Military Secretariat
5. Head of General Affairs Bureau, Presidential Military Secretariat
6. Head of General Affairs Bureau, Ministry Secretariat



INKOPONTREN

Induk Koperasi Pondok Pesantren
Central Board of Islamic Boarding School Cooperatives



**SURAT KEPUTUSAN
PENGURUS INDUK KOPERASI PONDOK PESANTREN
Nomor: 04/SKEP/INKOPONTREN/XII/2025**

**TENTANG
PENGANGKATAN KOORDINATOR PENASEHAT KETUA UMUM
INDUK KOPERASI PONDOK PESANTREN (INKOPONTREN)
PERIODE 2025 – 20230**

BISMILLAHIRRAHMAANIRRAHIM
PENGURUS INDUK KOPERASI PONDOK PESANTREN (INKOPONTREN)
SETELAH :

I. MENIMBANG :

1. Bahwa INKOPONTREN adalah badan usaha berbentuk Koperasi Skunder Nasional yang beranggotakan Pusat Koperasi Pondok Pesantren (PUSKOPONTREN) dan Koperasi Pondok Pesantren di seluruh Indonesia;
2. Bahwa dalam rangka mendukung kelancaran pelaksanaan tugas Ketua Umum Induk Koperasi Pondok Pesantren (INKOPONTREN) masa bakti 2025-2030 perlu dikeluarkan surat pengangkatan Koordinator Penasehat Ketua umum INKOPONTREN;
3. Bahwa untuk itu perlu diterbitkan surat Keputusan Pengangkatan Koordinator Penasehat Ketua umum INKOPONTREN Periode 2025 – 2030.

II. MENINGAT :

1. Undang - Undang Republik Indonesia No. 25 Tahun 1992 Tentang Perkoperasian.
2. Peraturan Menteri Koperasi dan UKM RI Nomor: 19/PER/M.KUKM/IX/2015 tentang Penyelenggaraan Rapat Anggota Koperasi.
3. Akta Pendirian Induk Koperasi Pondok Pesantren No.003/BH/M.1/XII/ 1994 tgl 07 Desember 1994 dan Akta Perubahan INKOPONTREN Terakhir Nomor : 12 Tahun 2025 Tanggal 26 September 2025 dan Pengesahan kehakiman RI Nomor : AHU-0003428.AH.01.38.tahun 2025 Tanggal 14 Oktober 2025
4. AD/ ART dan Pedoman Organisasi INKOPONTREN
5. Pertimbangan Pimpinan Induk Koperasi Pondok Pesantren (INKOPONTREN)

I. MEMPERHATIKAN :

Keputusan Rapat Pengurus INKOPONTREN tanggal 28 November 2025 tentang Pengangkatan pengangkatan sebagai Koordinator Penasehat Ketua umum INKOPONTREN Periode 2025 – 2030.

II. MEMUTUSKAN :

- PERTAMA** : Menetapkan dan mengangkat nama dibawah ini sebagai Koordinator Penasehat Ketua umum INKOPONTREN Periode 2025 – 2030
Nama : Billy Arman;
Tempat, Tanggal Lahir : Pontianak, 10-09-1965;
Alamat : Pantai Mutiara Blok ZH No. 7, Pluit,
Penjaringan Jakarta Utara
- KEDUA** : Tugas Koordinator Penasehat Ketua umum INKOPONTREN adalah sebagai koordinator seluruh pelaksanaan tugas penasehat Ketua Umum Induk Koperasi Pondok Pesantren (INKOPONTREN) Periode 2025 – 2030.
- KETIGA** : Koordinator Penasehat Ketua umum INKOPONTREN bertanggungjawab terhadap struktural dibawahnya sesuai dengan bidangnya;
- KEEMPAT** : Melaksanakan surat pengangkatan ini dengan sebaik-baiknya dan penuh rasa tanggung jawab
- KELIMA** : Surat keputusan ini berlaku sejak tanggal ditetapkan dan apabila terdapat kekeliruan dalam surat keputusan ini dan atau ada kebutuhan organisasi dikemudian hari maka akan dilakukan perbaikan seperlunya.

Ditetapkan di : Jakarta
Tanggal : 23 Desember 2025

**PENGURUS
INDUK KOPERASI PONDOK PESANTREN
(INKOPONTREN)**



Dr. KH. Marsudi Syuhud
Ketua Umum



Dr. M.I. Sofwan Yahya
Sekretaris Jenderal

**DECREE OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
OF THE INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL
COOPERATIVE CENTRAL BOARD (INKOPONTREN)**

Number: 04/SKEP/INKOPONTREN/XII/2025

CONCERNING

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE COORDINATOR OF ADVISORS TO THE
CHAIRMAN OF
THE INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL
COOPERATIVE CENTRAL BOARD (INKOPONTREN) FOR THE 2025–2030
TERM

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL
THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT OF THE INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING
SCHOOL COOPERATIVE CENTRAL BOARD (INKOPONTREN), AFTER:

I. CONSIDERING:

1. That INKOPONTREN is a business entity in the form of a National Secondary Cooperative consisting of the Central Cooperative of Islamic Boarding Schools (PUKOPONTREN) and Islamic Boarding School Cooperatives throughout Indonesia;
2. That in order to support the smooth implementation of the duties of the Chairman of the Indonesian Islamic Boarding School Cooperative Central Board (INKOPONTREN) for the 2025–2030 term, it is necessary to issue an appointment letter for the Coordinator of Advisors to the Chairman of INKOPONTREN;
3. That therefore it is necessary to issue a Decree concerning the Appointment of the Coordinator of Advisors to the Chairman of INKOPONTREN for the 2025–2030 Term.

II. IN VIEW OF:

1. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 25 of 1992 concerning Cooperatives;
2. Regulation of the Minister of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises of the Republic of Indonesia Number: 19/PER/M.KUKM/IX/2015 concerning the Organization of Cooperative Members' Meetings;
3. Deed of Establishment of the Indonesian Islamic Boarding School Cooperative Central Board (INKOPONTREN) Number 003/BH/M.1/XII/1994 dated December 7, 1994, and the latest Amendment Deed of INKOPONTREN Number 12 of 2025 dated September 26, 2025, and Approval of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Indonesia Number AHU-0003428.AH.01.38.Year 2025 dated October 14, 2025;

4. The Articles of Association/Bylaws and Organizational Guidelines of INKOPONTREN;
5. Considerations of the Leadership of the Indonesian Islamic Boarding School Cooperative Central Board (INKOPONTREN).

III. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT:

The Resolution of the INKOPONTREN Board Meeting dated November 28, 2025 concerning the appointment of the Coordinator of Advisors to the Chairman of INKOPONTREN for the 2025–2030 Term.

IV. HEREBY RESOLVES:

FIRST : To determine and appoint the following individual as Coordinator of Advisors to the Chairman of INKOPONTREN for the 2025–2030 Term:

Name : Billy Arman

Place/Date of Birth : Pontianak, September 10, 1965

Address : Pantai Mutiara Block ZH No. 7,

Pluit, Penjaringan, North Jakarta

SECOND : The duties of the Coordinator of Advisors to the Chairman of INKOPONTREN shall be to coordinate the overall implementation of advisory duties to the Chairman of the Indonesian Islamic Boarding School Cooperative Central Board (INKOPONTREN) for the 2025–2030 Term.

THIRD : The Coordinator of Advisors to the Chairman of INKOPONTREN shall be responsible for the organizational structure under his coordination in accordance with their respective fields.

FOURTH : To carry out this appointment with the utmost diligence and full sense of responsibility.

FIFTH : This Decree shall come into effect as of the date of its stipulation, and should there be any errors in this Decree and/or organizational requirements in the future, necessary amendments shall be made accordingly.

Established in : Jakarta
Date : December 23, 2025

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL
COOPERATIVE CENTRAL BOARD (INKOPONTREN)

Dr. KH. Marsudi Syuhud
Chairman

Dr. M.I. Sofwan Yahya
Secretary General

About the Author



ZULFIKAR FUAD is a writer and biographer. His expertise in life-story writing was developed through an intensive mentorship with one of the most important figures in the history of Indonesian biographical writing, Ramadhan K.H. (journalist, literary figure, novelist, and writer), during 2002–2003. He immortalized this invaluable learning experience in the book *Biography, a Lasting Legacy: The Secrets of Biography*

Maestro Ramadhan K.H. in Writing Captivating and Historic Biographies as an Eternal Legacy (PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2020).

Throughout more than 24 years of literary work, Zulfikar Fuad has written over 80 life-story and history titles. He has authored books about figures from a wide range of backgrounds, including presidents, generals, scientists, entrepreneurs, politicians, legal practitioners, governors, regents, and many others. He writes life stories for all people, viewing differences in ethnicity, nationality, religion, race, social background, or political affiliation not as barriers, but as strengths for advancing human civilization. To him, every individual is unique and extraordinary—a magnificent masterpiece of the Creator.

He chose the path of writing in order to fulfill his life mission: spreading inspiration, insight, noble values, principles of meaningful success, exemplary leadership, wisdom, and role models that can bring a more meaningful, beautiful, and extraordinary life to people around the world. In writing life stories, he combines the art of creative writing with data research, photographic and video documentation, biographical interviews, character exploration, and enrichment of information and perspectives tailored to each subject's career, business, and life journey.

In 2024, Zulfikar Fuad was honored as an Honorary Citizen of the Military Police Corps (CPM) by the Indonesian Army Military Police Headquarters (PUSPOMAD) for his contribution in writing the history of the Military Police Corps and two biographies of Military Police commanders.

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