

Dutch Colonial Rule Cost Indonesia \$31 Trillion, President Says



Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto speaks at the opening ceremony of a defense forum in Jakarta on June 11, 2025.

JAKARTA (AFP) - Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto said on Wednesday that the Netherlands extracted as much as \$31 trillion in wealth from Indonesia during more than 300 years of its colonial rule over the region.

Indonesia declared independence in 1945, following centuries of Dutch colonial exploitation that began at the end of the 16th century.

With the archipelago being its primary source of spices, the Dutch East India Co. established a virtual monopoly on the global spice trade, when nutmeg, cloves and pepper were considered the most expensive

and luxurious spices in Europe.

Its profits were so vast that they made the Netherlands one of the wealthiest European powers in the 17th century.

Prabowo highlighted the impacts of the colonization of Indonesia in a speech at the opening of a defense exhibition in Jakarta.

“There was just one research from a few weeks back, which says that during the period of Dutch colonization, the Netherlands took away \$31 trillion of our wealth,” he said, but did not reference the quoted study.

“When the Dutch occupied Indonesia, the Netherlands enjoyed having

the world’s top GDP per capita ... (History) teaches us that if we had been able to protect our wealth, maybe our GDP would have been among the highest in the world.”

Prabowo, who formerly served as Indonesia’s defense minister before assuming the country’s top office, was making a case on the importance of defense spending.

“A nation that does not want to invest in its defense usually will experience their independence being stolen away, will experience the nation being subjugated to the will of others (and witness) the wealth of the nation being stolen — this is the lesson of humankind,” he said.

The period included schemes like the “Cultivation System” — locally known as the “Forced Planting System”— in Java, under which Indonesians were forced to grow export crops like coffee and sugar cane for the Dutch at the cost of their own livelihood and staple food crops to make significant profits for the colonial power. The system led to widespread famines on the island of Java.

According to a study by British historian and economist Angus Maddison, the Forced Planting System in Indonesia significantly drove up the Dutch state income, contributing to about 31.5 percent of its gross domestic product between 1851 and 1870.

Islam is World’s Fastest-Growing Religion, New Study Finds



A Muslim pilgrim reads a copy of the Qur'an at the Grand Mosque during the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

LONODN (Middle East Eye) - **The number of Muslims grew more than all other religions combined, making Islam the fastest-growing religion over the decade between 2010 and 2020, a new study by the Pew Research Center has found.**

Pew’s Global Religious Landscape study, released, attributed the growth of Islam to natural demographic growth. It also concluded that at the global level, Muslim population change had “little to do with people converting into or out of the faith”.

“Muslims have more children and are younger, on average, than members of any other major religion,” the study said.

“Based on data for the 2015-2020 period, we estimated a Muslim woman would have 2.9 children, on average, in her lifetime, compared with 2.2 children per non-Muslim woman,” the report added.

The study, which examined how

global religious composition changed between 2010 and 2020, concluded that while Christianity remained the world’s largest religion, comprising 2.3 billion people, the gap between the proponents of Islam and Christianity continued to shrink.

According to the study, the world’s Christian population decreased by about 1.8 percent since 2010.

The increase in the number of Muslims in the world was concentrated primarily in Muslim-majority countries.

Islam saw the largest growth relative to other religions in Kazakhstan, Benin, and Lebanon, while the share of Muslims in Oman and Tanzania decreased.

The percentage of religiously unaffiliated people grew particularly steeply in the U.S., with an increase of 97 percent from 2010.

The majority of religiously unaffiliated people live in China, where 1.3 billion

people are not affiliated with any religion.

Pew’s analysis found that Christians were still a majority in 60 percent of all countries and territories surveyed. However, Christianity decreased by at least five percent in 40 countries, while only significantly increasing in one.

Pew attributed part of this decline to people leaving Christianity, by measuring the number of adults who changed their religion to one different than the one they were raised in.

Between 2010 and 2020, for every one adult that joined Christianity, three left.

For the religiously unaffiliated, the opposite was true. For every one adult who stopped being unaffiliated religiously, three more became religiously unaffiliated.

Both Buddhism and Hinduism also saw more adults leave their religion than join it.

Islam was the only religion where more adults joined than left.

Islam is the world’s second-largest religion, with around two billion people, or around a quarter of the world’s population.

It grew by nearly 350 million people since 2010, almost three times as much as Christianity and more than all other religions combined.

There are also nearly two billion religiously unaffiliated people, an increase of 270 million people since 2010.

They were the only category, along with Muslims, to grow relative to other religions as a share of the world’s population.

However, its percentage of the world’s population remained unchanged.

The number of people belonging to other religions, such as Sikhism and Baha’i, grew to around 200 million people, or 2.2 percent of the world’s population.

Police Condemn ‘Hate-Fueled Acts, Mob Rule’ in Northern Ireland Unrest

BELFAST (AFP) - **Police in Northern Ireland on Wednesday condemned “disgraceful” scenes of violence on a town’s streets after a second night of rioting targeting foreigners in which 17 officers were injured.**

The unrest was triggered following the arrest of two teenagers accused of attempting to rape a young girl. The youngsters appeared in court on Monday where they asked for a Romanian interpreter.

Six people were arrested during the second night of riots in the town of Ballymena, around 48 kilometers (30 miles) northwest of Belfast, and other places.

The mindless violence witnessed over the past two nights in Ballymena is deeply concerning and utterly unacceptable,” said Chief Constable Jon Boucher.

“Hate-fueled acts and mob rule do nothing but tear at the fabric of our society -- they resolve nothing and serve no one,” he added.

Police will not confirm the ethnicity of the two teenagers who remain in custody, but areas attacked on Monday included those where Romanian migrants live.

Four houses were damaged by fire, while rioters smashed windows and doors of homes and businesses.

“Police officers came under sustained attack over a number of hours with multiple petrol bombs, heavy masonry, bricks and fireworks in their direction,” the Police Service of Northern Ireland added in a statement.

Some of the 17 officers injured had required hospital treatment.

Five people were arrested on suspicion of riotous behavior while a sixth was detained on suspicion of disorderly behavior in Newtownabbey, 30 kilometers away, one of four other places including Belfast where protests were held.

Tensions in Ballymena, which has a large migrant population, remained high throughout the day on Tuesday.

Residents described the scenes as “terrifying” and told AFP that those involved were targeting “foreigners”.

Assistant Chief Constable Ryan Henderson said on Tuesday that the violence had been “clearly racially motivated and targeted at our minority ethnic community and police”.

China, U.S. Agree Framework to Resolve Trade Disputes



Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, right, shakes hands with U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent before their meeting to discuss China-U.S. trade, in London, Monday, June 9, 2025.

LONDON (Reuters) - **Senior U.S. and Chinese negotiators have agreed on a framework to move forward on trade talks after a series of disputes had threatened to derail them, Chinese state media said Wednesday.**

The announcement followed two days of talks in the British capital that ended late Tuesday.

The disputes had shaken a fragile truce reached in Geneva last month, leading to a phone call last week between President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping to try to calm the waters.

Li Chenggang, a vice minister of commerce and China’s international trade representative, said the two sides had agreed in principle on a framework for implementing the consensus reached between the two leaders and at the talks on Geneva, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Further details, including any plans for a potential next round of talks, were not immediately available.

Li and Wang Wentao, China’s commerce minister, were part of the delegation led by Vice Premier He Lifeng. They met with U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Trade Representative Jamieson Greer at Lancaster House, a 200-year-old mansion near Buckingham Palace.

Wendy Cutler, a former U.S. trade negotiator, said the disputes had frittered away 30 of the 90 days the two sides have to try to resolve their disputes.

They had agreed in Geneva to a 90-day suspension of most of the 100 percent-plus tariffs they had imposed

on each other in an escalating trade war that had sparked fears of recession.

“The U.S. and China lost valuable time in restoring their Geneva agreements,” said Cutler, now vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute. “Now, only sixty days remain to address issues of concern, including unfair trade practices, excess capacity, transshipment and fentanyl.”

Since the Geneva talks, the U.S. and China have exchanged angry words over advanced semiconductors that power artificial intelligence, visas for Chinese students at American universities and rare earth minerals that are vital to carmakers and other industries.

China, the world’s biggest producer of rare earths, has signaled it may ease export restrictions it placed on the elements in April. The restrictions alarmed automakers around the world who rely on them. Beijing, in turn, wants the U.S. to lift restrictions on Chinese access to the technology used to make advanced semiconductors.

Cutler said it would be unprecedented for the U.S. to negotiate on its export controls, which she described as an irritant that China has been raising for nearly 20 years.

“By doing so, the U.S. has opened a door for China to insist on adding export controls to future negotiating agendas,” she said.

Trump said earlier that he wants to “open up China,” the world’s dominant manufacturer, to U.S. products.

“If we don’t open up China, maybe we won’t do anything,” Trump said at the White House. “But we want to open up China.”

Russian Attacks Kill 3, Wound 64 as Drones Hit Ukraine



KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces launched a new drone assault across Ukraine overnight on Wednesday, killing three people and wounding 64 others, Ukrainian officials said.

One of the hardest-hit areas was the city of Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine, where 17 attack drones struck two residential districts, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said. Emergency crews, municipal workers and volunteers worked through the night to extinguish fires, rescue residents from burning homes, and restore gas, electricity and water services.

“Those are ordinary sites of peaceful life — those that should never be targeted,” Terekhov wrote on Telegram.

Three people were confirmed killed, according to Kharkiv regional head Oleh Syniehubov. In a statement, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that 64 people had been wounded and reiterated his calls for greater international pressure on Moscow.

Moscow’s forces have launched waves of drones and missiles in recent

days, with a record bombardment of almost 500 drones on Monday and a wave of 315 drones and seven missiles overnight on Tuesday.

The attacks come despite discussions of a potential ceasefire in the war. The two sides traded memorandums at direct peace talks in Istanbul on June 2 that set out conditions. However, the inclusion of clauses that both sides see as nonstarters make any quick deal unlikely.

Kharkiv has been frequently targeted in recent months as Russia launched repeated large-scale drone and missile attacks on civilian infrastructure.

Russia has received the bodies of 27 fallen soldiers as part of an exchange with Ukraine, said Vladimir Medinsky, who led Russia’s delegation at the Istanbul talks.

ICRC spokesperson Pat Griffiths said it was involved in the repatriation of remains as neutral observers, providing technical advice and monitoring the process.

News in Brief

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — At least 49 people have died in flooding in South Africa’s Eastern Cape province after an extreme cold front brought heavy rain and snow to parts of the country, officials said Wednesday. Eastern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane said police provided the death toll. The dead include six high school students who were washed away when their school bus was caught in floodwaters near a river on Tuesday, Mabuyane told journalists. He said four other students were missing. He said the death toll was likely to rise. “As we speak here, other bodies are being discovered.”

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - Argentina’s Supreme Court has upheld the six-year prison sentence for former president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner over irregularities in public works contracts during her time in office. The country’s highest court rejected an appeal filed by Fernandez’s legal team against lower-court rulings, confirming both the prison term and her lifetime ban from holding public office. The ruling stemmed from the so-called “Vialidad case”, which investigated the awarding of 51 road construction contracts in the southern province of Santa Cruz to companies owned by businessman Lazaro Baez during the administrations of Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (2007-2015), the widow of Nestor Kirchner.

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil’s former president Jair Bolsonaro appeared before the Supreme Court for the first time and denied participation in an alleged plot to remain in power and overturn the 2022 election result as he faces charges that could bring decades behind bars. Many Brazilians followed the trial, which was streamed online. The country was shaken by the January 2023 riot in which the Supreme Court, Congress and presidential palace were ransacked. Bolsonaro said in his testimony that the rioters were “crazy,” not coup mongers.

BRUSSELS (AFP) - The world experienced its second-warmest May since records began this year, a month in which climate change fuelled a record-breaking heatwave in Greenland, scientists said on Wednesday. Last month was Earth’s second-warmest May on record – exceeded only by May 2024 – rounding out the northern hemisphere’s second-hottest March-May spring on record, the EU’s Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said in a monthly bulletin. Global surface temperatures last month averaged 1.4 degrees Celsius higher than in the 1850-1900 pre-industrial period, when humans began burning fossil fuels on an industrial scale, C3S said.

COPIAPO, Chile (Reuters) - As the northern Chilean city of Copiapo was preparing last week to hold earthquake drills, it was hit by a real-life one: a 6.4-magnitude quake that cut power to thousands and caused structural damage to buildings. The drills - temporarily suspended - and last week’s tremor in the Andean nation that sits on the seismically active Pacific Ring of Fire, underscores rising concern a big quake could hit soon after the last severe one fifteen years ago. “The probability of a 7.8 magnitude earthquake or larger is around 64% this year, and those odds go up as time goes on,” said Sergio Barrientos, director of Chile’s National Seismology Center.

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea’s military said on Wednesday it had suspended loudspeaker broadcasts near the border targeting North Korea, nearly a year after resuming the propaganda and K-pop blasts during a time of growing tension with its neighbor. The step makes good on a promise by President Lee Jae-myung, who took office this month vowing to resume dialogue with the North, suspend the loudspeaker broadcasts and restore a suspended military pact with Pyongyang. Lee ordered the pre-emptive measure to ease tension, reduce military confrontation and build trust, his spokesperson, Kang Yu-jung, told a briefing, as North Korea has refrained from provocations lately.