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***Mentawai Island:  
The Ultimate Diversity of the Hidden Paradise***

Located in the middle of Indian Ocean, 150 km and takes 9 hours trip from Padang, West Sumatra-Mentawai glowing with all the nature spirits and make it an extraordinary escaping spot from a hectic life. Mentawai is the natural habitat for 16 endemic species, and some of them categorized as endangered species e.g. Simakobu monkey.

The present life of Mentawai people categorized as the legacy from Neolithic era and they have a strong believe in nature spirit, for their life strongly affected by nature. They believe that nature is the center of life. All the genuine attributes make Mentawai a perfect place to gain cultural experiences; here you will notice a very fascinating and indigenous culture, like traditional cloths, art, music and the way of life. The entire culture attributes strongly reflects their respect to nature.

*(Source: my-indonesia.info)*

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## **POLITICS**

### **PRESIDENT YUDHOYONO REMAINS SUPPORTING STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINIAN INDEPENDENCE**

Jakarta - President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said the Indonesian government is still supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people for independence.

Presidential spokesman Dino Patti Djalal made the remark after a meeting between President Yudhoyono and Nabeel Shaat, special emissary of the Palestinian president, here on Thursday (9/8).

"The President stressed that Indonesia was consistent in supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve their goal, independence," Dino said.

It was said the President had expressed hope that the establishment of a Palestinian sovereign state could materialize soon as part of efforts to build a better life for the Palestinian nation.

"The President also underlined consistent efforts to achieve Palestinian independence including intensified promotion of unity as an absolute prerequisite," he said.

According to Dino, the President also disclosed that Indonesia would provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people especially those in Gaza who are living in a deplorable condition including starvation, lack of clean water and medicines and other basic needs in the region.

"The President will ask his ministers to decide on the form of humanitarian

assistance Indonesia would send to Palestine as soon as possible," he said

In the meantime, Nabeel Shaat expressed appreciation to President Yudhoyono for his full support to the unity of the Palestinian nation and for the establishment an independent Palestinian state soon.

Nabeel also extended his heartfelt thanks Indonesia for its participation in many international fora in seeking a settlement of the Palestinian conflict.

### **ASEAN COUNTRIES AGREE TO STRENGTHEN DEFENSE COOPERATION TIES**

Manila - ASEAN's 10 member-countries have agreed to strengthen their defense cooperation ties and ratify the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism to face the threat of terrorism in the region, an Indonesian official said.

Dian Triansyah Djani, Director General of ASEAN Affairs at the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, said on the sidelines of the 40th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting/AMM here on Wednesday the agreement was contained in an ASEAN Ministers' Joint Communiqué.

The Communiqué which was signed by all the 10 ASEAN ministers said ASEAN had agreed to make every possible effort toward the ratification and speedy implementation of the ASEAN Convention on Counter-terrorism and to intensify cooperation to ensure peace and stability in the region.

The ASEAN Ministers also underscored the results of the 7th ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crimes (SOMTC) held in Laos which recommended the

institutionalization of the SOMTC's counter-terrorism working group.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato Seri Syed Hamid bin Syed Jaafar Albar told a press conference the Malaysian government which had tried to bridge the conflict between the Philippine government and the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) was hopeful the civil war would end soon.

He also said Malaysia was ready to keep contributing to the settlement of the conflict in the southern Philippines as the prevalence of security and stability in one country would also benefit the other countries in the region (ANTARA)

## ECONOMY

### RI'S INFLATION IN JULY REACHES 0.72 PCT

Jakarta - Indonesia's monthly inflation rose 0.72 percent in July, bringing the calendar inflation rate to 2.81 percent and the year-on-year inflation rate to 6.06 percent, Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) Chief Rusman Heriawan said on Wednesday (1/8).

But he added he believed the country could hit the full-year inflation target of 6 percent at the end of this year as the year-on-year inflation figure stood at 6.06 percent.

"So, we are focusing on the year-on-year inflation rate which still reaches 6.06 percent. If the patterns remain the same as in the previous years when inflationary pressures occurred in September and October, we will certainly stick to the inflation target of 6 percent," he said.

The fairly high inflation rate was caused by annual patterns like in the previous year due to the start of the academic year and a significant increase in the prices of foodstuffs, he said.

The prices of foodstuffs contributed 1.35 percent and education, recreation and sports 2.89 percent to July's inflation rate, he said.

"The annual cycle is educational costs as July is the start of academic year. The monthly inflation rates in July 2006 and July 2005 were respectively 0.46 percent and 0.78 percent," he said.

The price of purebred chicken meat rose 8.86 percent due to limited supplies, contributing 0.13 percent to the monthly inflation rate, he said. A 6.32 percent rise in the prices of egg and a 1.4 percent increase in the prices of fresh fish contributed 0.04 percent and 0.06 percent respectively to the inflation, he said.

Meanwhile, educational costs at the elementary school, junior high school and senior high school levels rose 10 percent, 8.4 percent and 4.5 percent respectively, adding another 0.07 percent, 0.05 percent and 0.04 percent to the overall rate, he said.

He predicted that educational costs would remain the source of inflation in August when the academic year for institutes of higher learning began.

July's inflation was also fueled by a 1.7 percent rise in the prices of cooking oil and a 8.5 percent increase in security costs which contributed 0.02 percent and 0.03 percent respectively to the overall rate, he said.

He said last month's core inflation rate clocked in at 0.71 percent, bringing the core calendar inflation to 2.83

percent and the core year-on-year inflation to 5.75 percent.  
(ANTARA)

#### **NUMBER OF FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS IN JUNE UP 12.33 PCT**

Jakarta - The number of foreign tourist arrivals in Indonesia in June rose 12.33 percent from the previous month's figure because of the summer holiday season in several regions in Asia, America and Europe.

"The month (of June) was indeed a peak period because many foreign people were taking their summer holidays," the head of the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Rusman Heriawan, said here Wednesday (1/8).

He said a total of 151,100 foreign tourists came to the country through Bali. The number of foreign tourists coming through 15 entry points in the first semester of this year (January-June) reached 2.14 million or rose 12.33 percent from 1.91 million recorded in the same period last year.

Rusman hoped the EU flight ban on Indonesian airlines and travel warnings from a number of countries would not significantly affect tourist arrivals in the country.

He said the number of foreign tourists from the US in the period reached around 59,000, from Australia 116,000 and from Europe 148,000. Tourists from Singapore totaled around 500,000 in the period, from Malaysia 283,000 and from Japan 215,000, he said. So, more tourists from Asia came to the country in the period than from the US, Australia and Europe, he said.

According to the BPS, the occupancy rate of star-rated hotels in 10 tourist destination regions in the country in May this year was recorded at an average

48.60 percent, up 1.87 points from April. "The tourists stayed an average of 2.22 days in May which is an increase of 0.08 days compared to April," he said.

(ANTARA)

### **SOCIETY & CULTURE**

#### **TWO GAJAH MADA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ELECTED ASEAN-INDONESIA YOUNG AMBASSADORS**

Yogyakarta - Two Yogyakarta-based Gajah Mada University students, namely Andiputra P. Sparingga (23) and Menur Adhiyasasti (22), have been elected ASEAN-Indonesia Young Ambassadors (PDMAI 2007) by the Indonesian Foreign Ministry.

"Both of us will be assigned for one year to publicize (ASEAN) and strengthen cooperation and relations among youths in the country and abroad," Andiputra P Sparingga, the favored entrant and runner-up of the PDMAI-2007 program, said here on Wednesday (8/8).

Sparingga said publicizing activities would be conducted through seminars and counseling sessions. In the meantime, the strengthening of cooperation with other countries would be done through youth exchange programs with Japan, Canada, Australia, South Korea, India and other activities in ASEAN youth meetings.

ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) groups Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Both students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of Gajah Mada University (UGM) were selected

out of some 4,000 applicants from across the country by participating in series of evaluations held from July 9-13, 2007.

In the second stage of the selection process 64 applicants took part and in the next stage their number was cut to 10 and in the final stage only two emerged as the winners of the first-ever competition.

The jury of the competition included Presidential Spokesman for Foreign Affairs Dino Pati Djalal, Guruh Soekarnoputra (one of Indonesian first president Soekarno's sons), Hermawan Kertajaya, Rozan Anwar and Hariyadi Wirayan from the University of Indonesia in Jakarta.

The quarantine evaluation was handled by the Foreign Affairs Ministry and sponsors like the Youth and Sport Affairs Ministry, the London School of Public Relations and Mustika Ratu.

Menur said the selection for ASEAN-Indonesia Young Ambassadors was aimed at choosing best-quality university students to help disseminate information on ASEAN's activities among youths.  
(ANTARA)

#### **EU AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO 44 INDONESIAN GRADUATES AND SCHOLARS**

Jakarta - The European Commission has awarded 44 European Union "Erasmus Mundus" scholarships for Indonesians to follow higher education in Europe starting September.

"The scholarships are part of efforts to enhance friendly relations between EU and Indonesia," Sheila Town, European Union's Educational Attache to Indonesia, said when presenting the

scholarships to the Indonesian graduates and scholars here Thursday (2/8).

The 44 awardees are amongst 1,826 graduates and scholars worldwide who have obtained "Erasmus Mundus" scholarships for the 2007 academic year.

The Erasmus Mundus scholarships, awarded in Euro, cover travel costs, tuition fees, monthly allowance and accommodation costs.

The awardees will leave for Europe to pursue teaching and research in at least two universities located in two different EU member states.

Funded by the European Commission, the executive body of the EU, the scholarships are open to students who have completed a bachelor's degree and are citizens of non-EU member states, including Indonesia.

Recipients of the scholarships will undertake an Erasmus Mundus Master Course (EMMC) from one up to two years.  
(ANTARA)

## **INTERNATIONAL**

#### **KL-JAKARTA TO STEP UP COOPERATION IN BROADCASTING, INFORMATION**

Kuala Lumpur - Malaysia and Indonesia on Thursday agreed to enhance cooperation in broadcasting, information and culture, and will organize news, documentary and journalist exchange programmes.

The agreement was reached at the Eighth Malaysia-Indonesia Joint Committee on Information's ministerial meeting jointly chaired by Malaysian Information Minister Zainuddin Maidin and his Indonesian counterpart, Prof Dr Mohammad Nuh, at Angkasapuri on 3 August 2007.

Zainuddin told reporters later that several of the items which had been agreed upon were new, and that the documentary exchange would involve production of tourism and business documentaries to enhance relations between the two countries.

Describing Kuala Lumpur-Jakarta relations as special, he said changes would be made to entertainment programmes by taking into account the aspirations of the younger generation and new cultural elements.

In this connection, he said the "Titian Muhibbah" song request programme broadcast over radio stations in both countries for some time would be replaced with a more suitable item.

"Apart from that, we've also agreed on news and visual exchange between RTM and TVRI involving 'breaking news' and disasters," he added. Zainuddin said Indonesian journalists would undergo attachment programmes with RTM and the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama).

He said interactions between the people would also be stepped up through the work of Special Affairs Department (Jasa) and RTM's Smart Community programme.

The minister said the "Ekspresi Gemilang" orchestra performance would this year be held in Malaysia in conjunction with Indonesian President Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's visit to the country.

He said both countries also agreed to assist the private sector involved in television and radio production to expand their contributions in the context of Indonesia-Malaysia broadcasting cooperation.

"I don't see any problem because RTM has privatized slots. We'll also provide facilities and under this agreement, Indonesia will facilitate linkages between their private sector and Malaysian partners," he added.

Zainuddin said a special team under the ministry's International Division would be set up to ensure the smooth implementation of decisions reached at today's meeting.

He further said that Bernama and ANTARA would organize discussion sessions involving Malaysian and Indonesian editors from time to time. Producers from the two countries, he said, should cooperate to enable Malaysian programmes to penetrate the Indonesian market. He noted that Malaysia had never imposed any restriction on Indonesian films to be screened in the country.

Meanwhile, Dr Mohammad Nuh believed that Malaysia and Indonesia could successfully implement matters that had been agreed upon Thursday. "We also invite journalists from Malaysia for attachment with newspaper companies and television stations in Indonesia," he added.

He said Indonesia would form a working group to crystallize the cooperation with Malaysian and monitor its progress.  
(ANTARA)

## **OTHERS**

### **PRESIDENT CALLS ON ASEAN TO UNITE IN FACING GLOBALIZATION CHALLENGES**

Jakarta - President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has called on ASEAN member countries to unite in facing the challenges of globalization by cooperating closely in various fields including security, economic and in the socio-cultural field.

The President made the call at a function marking the opening of an ASEAN Forum 2007 on "Rethinking ASEAN : Towards an ASEAN Community 2015" at the ASEAN Secretariat here on Tuesday (7/8).

Yudhoyono said to be able to face global challenges, ASEAN countries should continue to be united in their intensive cooperation in various fields such as security, economy, and the socio-cultural field.

Meanwhile, ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong said the forum was held in an effort to pursue in-depth ideas to bring ASEAN toward an even better future and to strengthen unity among its member countries.

On Keng Yong said state leaders, government officials, as well as all people of ASEAN should cooperate to maintain ASEAN unity.

On the occasion, President Yudhoyono was honored with a Philip Kotler Distinguished Country Marketing Award for his outstanding achievement in promoting his country in both regional and international trade.

The Award was presented to Yudhoyono by Philip Kotler, a marketing expert, and Hermawan

Kartajaya, of the Philip Kotler Center for ASEAN Marketing before the president opened the ASEAN Forum.

The Philip Kotler Center for ASEAN Marketing honored President Yudhoyono with the award because the Indonesian head of state had been successful in promoting the country in Southeast Asia with a global result.

The award is normally given only to a leader who has made a significant contribution in developing a nation directly and indirectly.

According to Philip Kotler, President Yudhoyono, elected directly by the people in a democratic election, had been able to speed up national economic growth, create domestic political stability and foster good international relations with other countries.

Expressing his sincere gratitude for the award, President Yudhoyono conceded on the occasion that he had learned a lot from books by Philip Kotler such as Rethinking Marketing, Think ASEAN, and other books.

The seminar was conducted in the framework of the ASEAN Forum 2007 in the run up to ASEAN's 40th anniversary on August 8, 2007.

Present on the occasion were among others ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong, Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda, Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu, Communication and Information Minister Mohammad Nuh, Presidential Advisory Council member Ali Alatas, and Cabinet Secretary Sudi Silalahi.

(ANTARA)

## EDITORIAL

### **MILITARY CONSCRIPTION COULD SAVE INDONESIAN PLURALISM**

**A.M. Hendropriyono**, Jakarta

Toward the end of the Vietnam War, the system of conscription in the U.S. Armed Forces was dropped, replaced by an all-volunteer arrangement that has persisted for more than three decades. But this past week, Lieutenant General Douglas Lute, the so-called war czar for the U.S. conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, suggested that a draft was an option to reduce war-related stresses on American forces.

Others in Washington have found merit in the idea, arguing that the U.S. should re-institute the draft as a means of curbing an overly-aggressive foreign policy. Congressmen and senators, so the argument goes, would be less inclined to support sending troops overseas if the military included drafted soldiers from their home state.

I have long advocated a system of national conscription in Indonesia, though for a far different reason. As it now stands, on a per capita basis Indonesia has a relatively small percentage of its population under arms. With an active-duty component of about 316,000 men, our armed forces are smaller even than those fielded by fellow ASEAN members Myanmar or Vietnam—both of which have populations dwarfed by Indonesia. And our military expenditure is small, too, surpassed even by neighbors Singapore and Malaysia.

That said, Indonesia hardly needs a larger military. After all, we are fortunate to be in a relatively peaceful neighborhood, and it is difficult to image

Indonesia going to war with any bordering nation any time in the foreseeable future.

But if Indonesia does not require more troops, and there has historically been no shortage of volunteers, why implement a draft? Because, the military could and should serve another purpose: that of social blender.

More specifically, boot camp can be seen as the great communal equalizer. Rich and poor, Acehnese and Javanese, Batak and Papuans, Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists: When we are sweating together in the midst of boot camp, we can come to see our similarities rather than differences. Military training, in short, can help us appreciate each other irregardless of color, creed, or clan.

This is all the more important given the growing divisions within Indonesian society. Whereas diversity and tolerance was once our strength, differences now often breed prejudices and contempt.

While conscription is hardly a cure for this, at least it could go far in promoting acceptance, understanding, and a sense of truly national armed forces that springs from the people.

At present, there are several other nations in Southeast Asia which use a draft. Their reasons for this vary. In Singapore, which has little defense in depth given its small size, an Israeli-type reserve system is used in order to theoretically mobilize the bulk of the population against foreign invasion.

Under this, all able-bodied males serve at least two years in the Defense or Home Ministry (which includes the police, civil defense, and fire and rescue units), and they remain in the reserves

through their forties.

In Thailand, which faced communist threats on its borders for decades, the armed forces were traditionally very large. Since the end of the Cold War, however, they have scaled back considerably and are also considering a system with a smaller active-duty component and a larger reserve force. As it now stands, the Thai model is somewhat complex.

During high school, many male students enter a reserve officer training program that requires them to practice a few hours a week, followed by a short boot camp after graduation. They stay in the system for another ten years, but in practice are never called to duty. For other ranks, they enter a lottery to determine who will spend two years as an enlisted man or non-commissioned officer.

In Vietnam, which spent about half of the last century at war, its bloated military was significantly scaled back after the Cold War and the loss of its Soviet patron. At one point, all Vietnamese males were required to spend several years under arms.

This has been progressively reduced to the point where, at present, the requirement stands at just one year—virtually all of that time being spent in a training camp. In reality, those attending college or those who come from families with one member already in the military, get deferments.

If Indonesia were to adopt conscription, there will be at least two major hurdles already encountered by the above countries.

First, the draft system would need to be extraordinarily transparent, especially with regard to deferments. Drafts, after

all, lend themselves to abuse by those seeking to circumvent national service.

In Indonesia, where waving the rules has become a refined art, exemptions to the draft would need to be openly scrutinized; if it appears like affluent children were finding loopholes, this could have the effect of exacerbating social divisions rather than bridging them.

Second, there will be major budgetary constraints. In both absolute terms and as a percentage of Gross National Product, the Indonesian military budget has traditionally been remarkably low. And with calls for the military to wean itself off its business ventures, the country will be hard pressed to maintain even this modest amount.

The purpose of conscription in Indonesia would be to act as a social melting pot to enhance national unity, not due to any imminent threat to national security.

To handle this influx of recruits, the military could expand existing training facilities within each regional command (KODAM). Here recruits will be put through the paces together, regardless of social standing or ethnic background.

For those young men going on to college, they should be required to enter a reserve officer training program for the duration of their schooling. As with the Thai model, this will place only a limited strain on their studying schedule. After graduation, they will enter the reserve system for a decade and be eligible to be called to active-duty in the unlikely event of a war.

For those not going on to college, they would be required to enter a lottery during which a percentage would be

selected for a year of active service.

Furthermore, I would propose that national service not be limited to males. Indonesia, after all, was a regional leader in the emancipation of women.

Even in limited fashion, implementing a draft in Indonesia will be a daunting task. But the potential resultant sense of tolerance, understanding, and camaraderie make it a challenge worth pursuing and will lend the armed forces significance just as important as its role in defense from external foes.

*The writer is the former chief of the National Intelligence Agency (BIN).*