



Indonesia

News and Views

DOMESTIC ISSUES

Political Issues

Economic Issues

Socio - Cultural Issues

ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

REGIONAL/
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

USEFUL LINKS:

Government
(www.indonesia.go.id)

Department of Foreign Affairs
(www.deplu.go.id)

Department of Cultural and
Tourism (www.budpar.go.id)

National Agency for
Export Development
(www.nafed.go.id)

Investment
Coordinating Board
(www.bkpm.go.id)

Statistics Indonesia
(www.bps.go.id)

The Jakarta Post
(www.thejakartapost.com)



Royal Cremation (Ngaben) Ceremony in Bali

Ngaben/Cremation Ceremony is one of the famous Balinese Hindu ceremonies where the dead body soul return to the heaven by processing of cremation. The Ngaben/Cremation ceremony procession where the group of local people (Banjar Society) taken the dead body and put on the 'Wadah' (the place to put the dead body which is decorated with the beautiful ornaments) and carry on the shoulder together to bring it to the funeral. The dead body will be burned or buried (depend on the local society role) to unite the soul to heaven and bring back all element of human being body to nature.

source: www.balistariland.com

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DOMESTIC ISSUES

Political Issues

President Officially Kicks Off Ministerial Conference on Palestine

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at the State Palace here on Monday officially kicked off Ministerial Conference on Capacity Building for Palestine organized under the New Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership framework.

The two-day conference (July 14 and 15) is being attended by representatives of Asian and African regions. The conference is jointly organized by Indonesia and South Africa.

"The ministerial level conference is aimed at improving the capacity building of Palestinians," Teuku Fiazasyah, a spokesman of the Indonesian foreign affairs ministry, said recently.

The conference would focus on concrete projects, he said.

The idea to hold the conference was the fact that there was still a colonized country, namely Palestine, 50 years after the Asia-African Conference organized in Bandung in 1955, he said.

The Asian African countries had experiences in development and their efforts to help Palestine would compliment other efforts by the international world, he said.

Meanwhile, Ibnu Hadi, Director for Cooperation in the Asian, Pacific and African inter-region of the Indonesian foreign affairs ministry, said most of the Asian-African countries were committed to providing technical assistance to Palestine.

The cooperation would probably involve the private sector, he said.

In addition to Asian-African countries, the conference was also attended by

representatives from Cuba, Brazil and Venezuela. (ANTARA)

RI Remains Committed to Supporting Struggles for Sovereign Palestinian State

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has asserted that Indonesia would continue to support the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state in accordance with Annapolis 2007 agreement.

President Yudhoyono made the statement when he received visiting Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad at Merdeka Palace here on Monday (14/7).

"The head of state reiterated Indonesia's commitment to supporting an independent and sovereign Palestinian state, and in accordance with the Annapolis 2007 agreement the target is expected to be reached in December 2008," presidential spokesman Dino Patti Djalal said.

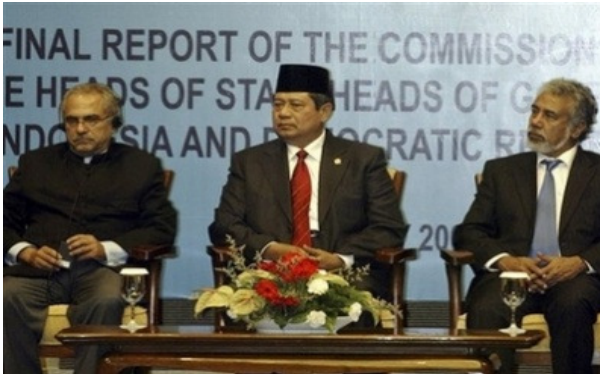
In the meeting with President Yudhoyono, Dino said Fayyad explained about the latest developments in Palestine to the president.

Fayyad explained a number of obstacles in the implementation of Annapolis agreement including the escalating Israeli settlements in Palestine, Dino said.

According to Dino, President Yudhoyono on the occasion responded Fayyad statement and said the factions in Palestine should be united.

"The president stressed on the importance of unity in Palestine," Dino said, adding that the Indonesian government was committed to educating up to 1,000 Palestinian officials and civil servants through a five-year program. (ANTARA)

RI and Timor Leste Pledge Better Relations After Report



Indonesian and Timor Leste on Wednesday (13/7) promised to follow up on recommendations proposed by a joint truth commission in a bid to foster better bilateral ties between the two nations.

The report by the Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF) found that the Indonesian government, the TNI and police committed gross rights violations in the form of crimes against humanity such as murder, rape, torture, illegal detention and forced deportation against civilian populations in East Timor in 1999.

After accepting the report President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Timor Leste President Jose Ramos-Horta signed a commitment to faithfully implement the commission's recommendations and to take other steps to further promote friendship and reconciliation between the two countries.

"This report will begin a new chapter of Timor Leste and Indonesia bilateral relations as it will enable people of both countries to face the difficult past and work together for the future," Timor Leste Foreign Minister said in a press conference after the report was submitted.

He said the commission findings would serve as the basis for both countries to strengthen already good bilateral ties

with commitments to follow up on the commission's recommendations. He said the focus would be on addressing the victims and resolving pending issues, such as borders, refugees and disappeared persons.

Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda said the two countries would focus more on enhancing bilateral ties than taking legal action against individuals allegedly perpetrating gross human rights violations in East Timor in 1999.

"We have closed the case. We have long considered that it is better for us to think about the future than get stuck in the past that can cause problems within both countries, considering the domestic condition of Indonesia and Timor Leste. Also, our bilateral relations are at stake here," he said.

The commission's recommendations included the need for both countries to undergo institutional reform in judicial bodies and military and security forces to turn them into accountable institutions without a culture of violence.

It also highlighted the need for both countries to establish training on human rights for military and police personnel.

On the border issue, the commission proposed a visa-free zone that would improve communication and cultural and economic exchange between people living along the border.

The commission also recommended that both countries establish a documentation and conflict resolution center tasked with promoting understanding of the past between people of the two nations.

The center should also be tasked with developing comprehensive and inclusive survivor healing programs, particularly for victims of sexual violence and torture, the commission proposed.

Hassan said both governments would come up with plans of action as soon as each presented the report to their parliaments. (*The Jakarta Post*)

House Speaker Favors Death Penalty for Corrupters

Jakarta - House of Representatives (DPR) Speaker Agung Laksono said he supported the idea that corrupters be given the death penalty, and hoped others, including House members, would do likewise.

Speaking at the legislative building here on Wednesday, Laksono said corruption was doing extensive harm in society. "Therefore, there must be legal punishment for corrupters so severe that it will also have a deterrent effect," he said.

He said, in other countries which were once also plagued by corruption, the introduction of severe punishment, including the death penalty, resulted in a drastic decline in the corruption rate. "This means, the death penalty is an effective means to fight corruption," he said.

Corruption had very harmful consequences for society, he said. A murder would have consequences for only one or a few persons but a corrupt act would have a harmful effect on the general public, he added.

"I hope the idea of making corruption punishable by the death sentence will be responded to favorably by House members and the government," Laskono said. (ANTARA)

Indonesia Expected to Increase Peace-Building Capacity

Jakarta - Indonesia as a member of ASEAN has to increase its capacity as a peace-builder in the Southeast Asian region, a lecturer on international relationship at Gadjah Mada University, Mohtar Mas'ood, said at the parallel discussion on "Peace and Globalization" of the 3rd International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS) here Wednesday (30/7).

Indonesia as one of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries had a great deal in peace-building in Southeast Asia in the 1990s as the country was able to mediate some conflicts among Southeast Asian countries, he said.

"Peace-builders must have capacity to make the conflicting parties come up with compromises," Mas'ood further said.

However, peace-builders must have other things than skills such as belief in peaceful resolution and leadership.

The role of ASEAN in solving the conflict among its members is also not quite direct as ASEAN is not intended to formally act as mediator unless it is asked to do so, he added.

"ASEAN only serves as a vehicle to promote better relations among members. The act is done by creating conducive conditions and setting up mechanisms to manage disputes among members," Mas'ood said.

The most recent case happened in ASEAN region was the dispute between Cambodia and Thailand over Preah Vihear Temple.

ASEAN could not facilitate the issue between the two countries since Thailand wished to have a bilateral solution. However, Cambodia has taken the issue to the UN Security Council.

"Thus, ASEAN is still unable to solve the problem within its members," Mas'ood said.

Yet, Mas'ood further called Southeast Asia as a peaceful region as no dispute has led to a militarized inter-state conflict since 1967.

The ICIS (International Conference of Islamic Scholars) III is being held from July 30 to August 1, 2008. One of the conference's objectives is to draw common perception of the anatomy of conflict.(ANTARA)

Economic Issues

RI Ranks High in Attracting Trade

Indonesia is good at attracting international trade with its relatively competitive tariff barriers, but our border controls and distribution channels create major obstacles, a report says. The Enabling Trade Index in the 2008 Global Trade Report published Wednesday by the World Economic Forum compares 118 countries' openness and international trade capabilities.

Overall, Indonesia ranked 47th among the 118 countries. Hong Kong topped the list, followed by Singapore, Sweden, Norway and Canada. Malaysia ranked 29th, China 48, Thailand 52 and Vietnam 91. The index sums up countries' market access, border administration, transport and communications infrastructure, and business environments.

Indonesia's trade has been well supported by regulatory openness and a competitive business environment, but has been stalled by poor infrastructure and difficult processes at its borders. The country's trade policies allow relatively open market access for foreign goods. Indonesia has low non-tariff barriers and moderate tariff barriers. It is cheap to import, although goods may be held up with customs and domestic transport problems, meaning there are more procedural steps to clear along the way.

In terms of trade policies, Indonesia was ranked in the top 22 countries, ahead of Britain, Australia, Italy, Singapore, and Malaysia. The index also showed a very good regulatory environment including the ease of hiring foreign labor, ease of foreign ownership, and regulations encouraging foreign investment. Indonesia was ranked 34th in this category.

On top of that, Indonesia has competitive liners connectivity, perhaps due to its location, competitive shipping costs and logistics companies. However, as soon as the goods arrive in Indonesia, they are welcomed with inefficient customs administration, irregular payments and corruption at the border. According to the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin), exporters and importers must set aside between 5 and 15 percent in additional costs to cover bureaucracy at the customs office. The challenges bubble up as distribution is held up by low quality roads, ports and airports -- all of which are ranked among the bottom 20.

As of March, Jakarta's traffic management center recorded 120 sites where roads were damaged in Jakarta, causing traffic congestion and putting road users at risk. In infrastructure, Indonesia scored much lower than Malaysia, China, Thailand and India, although it was comparable to Vietnam. Indonesia came in at 74th in transport and communications infrastructure, and 63rd in the border administration section. "Transportation costs have often been more important than trade barriers in inhibiting trade. These costs are not simply a factor of distance, but also the quality of the infrastructure," the report says. Of Indonesia's 350,000 km of roads, around 6 percent (21,000 km) are damaged, the Public Works Ministry reported last month. This was an improvement from 10 percent in 2005. (*The Jakarta Post*)

Government to Prioritize Economic Stability, Food Resilience, Energy Management in 2009

Jakarta - President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said that in 2009 the government would give priority to

economic stability, food resilience and energy management.

The president made the remark when chairing a plenary cabinet session which was attended by Vice President Jusuf Kalla, all cabinet ministers, the Indonesian Defense Forces chief, the National Police chief, the head of State Intelligence Agency and leaders of state institutions here on Tuesday (22/7).

"After I have received reports last week from the coordinating minister for economic affairs and the relevant ministers on the 2008 economic developments and the projection for 2009, I stressed several matters that became priorities, one of which is economic stability," President Yudhoyono said.

The head of state explained that the economic stability which the government particularly expected was controllable rate of inflation. "It does not mean that we ignore growth but we have to pay attention to the purchasing power of the people," he stressed.

The other priority that would gain an emphasis in the 2009 working program was food resilience which in the past one year had shown a positive trend.

"In order to maintain food resilience the fund allocation at the 2009 state budget is relatively big, namely Rp35 trillion. For me that would not matter," he said.

He also gave a special emphasis on the development of irrigation infrastructure in order to support the agricultural sector so that the availability of food would be guaranteed.

"The third priority is correct fuel oil and electricity management," Yudhoyono added.

The president said that all people should provide support for the government's 10,000 MW power projects which would immediately be carried out in two stages.

"Although there are three priorities, all government's work plans made since

the beginning must also be carried out well," the president said.

He added that the holding of the cabinet plenary meeting should remind government officials to remain consistent with the objectives that had been planned since the beginning. (ANTARA)

Bio-Fuel Capacity Only 600,000 liters per Year

The Indonesian Bio-Fuel Association secretary-general, Paulus Tjakrawan said increasing the capacity will depend on how the bio-fuel market develops. Hence, the government will start requiring industries to use 2.5 percent bio-fuel in their production process.

The producers prefer exporting bio-fuel raw material, such as crude palm oil (CPO). "The price of CPO is very attractive/interesting," said Paulus.

Bio-ethanol-based fuel also has a low production capacity, about 130.000 liters per year. Its production is managed by three producers, using molasses as their raw material. Paulus said the government's effort to push industries into using bio-fuel was a positive policy, even though it is going slowly. In other countries, governments support bio-fuel development due to the limited supply of the raw materials and their costly price.

Using bio-fuel in industries can also help economize because for the last two months their prices have been below the price of diesel fuel. Industrial diesel is Rp 12.200 per liter while bio-fuel is Rp 10.670 per liter (tax included). Accordingly, industries do not need to adjust their machines when using bio-fuel in their production.

According to Industry Department secretary-general, Agus Tjahajana, the government and related agencies are still reviewing regulations on bio-fuel usage. "We still need to stabilize supplies and create the business mechanism," he said. The regulation is

scheduled to be implemented on September 2009. (*TEMPO Interactive*)

RI Expected to Enjoy Rice Surplus of 2 Million Tons in 2008

Jakarta - The Agriculture Ministry has expressed optimism that the country will enjoy a dry unhusked rice surplus of 2 million tons this year.

Director General of Food Crops Sutarto Alimoeso said on Tuesday the optimism was based on the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS)'s forecast that the country's rice output in 2008 would increase by 4.76 percent from a year earlier.

"We hope the increase will exceed the forecast so that we will enjoy a surplus of 2 million tons and do not need to import the staple this year," he said.

The BPS has projected the country's dry unhusked rice production this year to reach 59.88 million tons, up by 2.72 million tons from 2007 due to an increase in the land area of harvested paddy field by 237,610 hectares and an increase in the productivity of paddy field by 130 kg/hectare.

Last year, Indonesia's dry unhusked rice output rose by 4.98 percent or 2.70 million tons from 2006, leaving the country to enjoy a surplus of 1.5 million tons, he said.

In 2006, the country enjoyed a dry unhusked rice surplus of 50,000 tons, he added.

Sutarto said he would ask the National Land Agency (BPN) to allow rice growers to use idle land. "We have millions of hectares of idle land. However, our farmers cannot make use of it," he said. (*ANTARA*)

Japan Needs 1,000 Indonesian Workers

Japan is in need of 1,000 Indonesian workers, comprising 600 nurses and 400 people taking care of elderly people on contract basis for 3 and 4 years.

"This is the first time that the Japanese government made a formal request for Indonesian workers," President Director of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in Jakarta Kusaoke Sadanobu said at a seminar on Indonesia-Japan bilateral trade opportunities, in Manado last Wednesday.

Potential nurses and caregivers, Kusaoke said, before leaving for Japan for employment, would first have to undergo a series of tests and interviews. "And upon arrival in Japan, they will have to follow special trainings to be obtain a Japanese national certificate with the expenses borne by the Japanese government," Kusaoke said. Deputy for coordination of economic cooperation and international funding at the Ministry of Economic Affairs Mahendra Siregar said according to the manpower ministry, 300 people were already set to leave for Japan to take up the two jobs.

"The Indonesian government will try until the end of 2009 to meet the Japanese request for 1,000 Indonesian workers for employment in Japan," Mahendra said. He added that the project was part of the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJ-EPA). It was also revealed in the seminar that 1,000 Japanese companies are operating in Indonesia with 280,000 local employees. In the meantime, head of the North Sulawesi Industry and Trade Agency Gemmy Kawatu revealed that Japan is the seventh biggest country of destination of North Sulawesi's exports, with the balance of trade between the province and Japan still in favor of the Indonesian province in the last three years.

In 2005 exports to Japan reached 13.46 million US dollars, and imports 613.3 thousand US dollars, leaving 12.03 million US dollars in the balance of trade

in favour of Indonesia, and in 2006 the exports increased to 27.03 million US dollars and imports 5.6 million dollars leaving the balance of trade a surplus of 11.5 million dollars, and in 2007 the exports reached 19.27 million dollars, and imports 2.6 million dollars still leaving a surplus of 15.6 million dollars for Indonesia. (ANTARA)

Six Singapore Firms Invest in South Kalimantan

Banjarmasin, S Kalimantan - Six Singaporean companies have invested in South Kalimantan, bringing to 16 the number of foreign investment projects in the province in the first half of this year.

The high inflow of foreign capital into the province was inseparable from the conducive investment climate, Head of the Investment Development Section at the South Kalimantan Provincial Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) Tholib said on Monday (21/7).

The current fuel shortage and power crisis that affected parts of Indonesia had no significant impact on the inflow of foreign capital into the natural resource-rich province, he said.

The Singaporean investors would be engaged among others in the mining and service sectors.

He said the investors had 12-24 months since the issuance of their investment permits to realize their projects.

In the first half of 2008, the local investment authorities approved investment proposals worth US\$102.8 million.

Meanwhile, investment proposals approved in July 2008 reached US\$37.5 million. (ANTARA)

EU Not Consistent with Its Flight Ban: Transportation Ministry

The Indonesian Transportation Ministry said the European Union (EU)

is not consistent in imposing a flight ban on all Indonesian airlines.

"Why did it impose a flight ban on all Indonesian airlines? Not all the Indonesian airlines are willing to fly to Europe. In fact, not all airlines from other countries are also banned from flying to the continent. So, the ban is not consistent from the standpoint of its target," the head of the ministry's public communications center, Bambang S Ervan, said here Friday (25/7).

Citing an example, he said, only one airline from war-torn Afghanistan was banned from flying to European destinations, he said.

"That is strange," he said.

The same was also true with a Kalita Air plane which had a serious accident while taking off from Brussels airport in Belgium on May 25, 2008. But EU did not impose any sanction on the American cargo plane, he said.

EU imposed the flight ban on the Indonesian airlines in July 2007, citing unsafe flights as a reason.

On Thursday (24/7), EU representative Pierre Phillipe said the EU could not yet lift its flight ban on all the Indonesian airlines which it said still fell short of the flight safety standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Indonesia is an ICAO member. (ANTARA)

RI Welcomes OECD's Closer Cooperation Offer: President

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said Indonesia welcomed the offer of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to expand its cooperation with the reputed world body.

"I welcome the offer of the OECD for Indonesia to be included in its Enhanced Engagement scheme together with China, India, Brazil and South Africa," the president said after receiving OECD

Secretary General Angel Gurria at his office here on Friday (25/7).

Yudhoyono said closer cooperation with the OECD would benefit Indonesia because the organization had complete statistical data on the world economy and analyzes of the policies of countries in the world.

"Cooperation with other countries and international institutions such as the OECD is useful for Indonesia to develop its regulatory policies," the president said.

He said the offer proved that Indonesia had begun to be taken into account in international affairs.

The president also said his presence early this month at the summit of G8 in Hokkaido, Japan, was proof Indonesia's image in the world had improved.

"We have to be thankful for the fact that Indonesia now gets invited to respectable forums. Indonesia has been included at least as a partner in forums that discuss world economic problems," Yudhoyono said.

The OECD secretary general is visiting Indonesia at President Yudhoyono's invitation conveyed to her when they met in Hokkaido.

At the meeting at the presidential office on Friday (25/7), Gurria also handed a report on Indonesia's economy to Yudhoyono.

"I admit that although Indonesia has made concrete and significant progress, it still has a lot of homework to do like reducing the poverty and unemployment rates and enhancing investment," the president said.

In the meantime, Angel Gurria said Indonesia was still facing many challenges amid the gloomy conditions of the world economy and increasing inflation. (ANTARA)

Socio - Cultural Issues

RI Students Grab 5 Gold Medals in HK International Math Contest

Jakarta - Eight elementary school students representing Indonesia in "The 12th Po Leng Kuk Elementary International Contest for Math" held in Hong Kong July 12-15, 2008 grabbed 5 gold medals.

"It is an outstanding achievement because almost all elementary school students representing Indonesia in the international contest were able to do their best," the director for kindergarten and elementary school management at the National Education Ministry, Mudjito Ak, said here on Thursday (17/7).

Mudjit said the Indonesian team at a similar contest in 2007 won only one gold medal but taking a good lesson from that failure, the participating students this year were trained and prepared intensively and were able to perform much better in the event in Hong Kong.

Indonesia was this year allowed to send two of its 43 teams because the country's participation in such a contest was relatively new, while other countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan, China, and the United States sent more than two teams.

"The Philippines sent six teams and Indonesia only two teams but they succeeded in grabbing five gold medals and a silver medal," Mudjito said.

The five Indonesian students who won the gold medals were Richard Akira Heru of Bernadus elementary school in Semarang, Peter Young of Santa Maria elementary school in Surabaya, Stefano Chiesa of Theresia elementary school in Jakarta, Chrrista L Susanto of Tirta Marta Penabur elementary school in Jakarta, Fransisca Susan of Santa Ursula elementary school in Jakarta, and the silver medal was won by

Reynaldi of Kemang Pratama Al Azhar elementary school in Bekasi, West Java. (The Jakarta Post)

UNESCO Names Indonesia's "Kris" World Heritage

Denpasar - UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has named Indonesia's "kris", a wavy-bladed ceremonial dagger, as a world heritage, Neka Ubud Museum director Pande Wayan Suteja Neka said here on Thursday (17/7).

"The world has acknowledged the existence of Indonesia's kris since November 25, 2005," Suteja Neka said, adding that similar daggers from countries such as Singapore, Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines were not as well-known world-wide.

He said daggers from Indonesia, especially from Bali, had been recognized by UNESCO as a world heritage and therefore they would be added the collection of the museum he had established 26 years ago.

"I have been collecting such daggers and some 413 paintings and statues since 1970," Suteja Neka said.

He added that so far he had collected 218 daggers which were tightly selected by kris experts Haryono Haryoguritno and Sukoyo Hadi Nagoro.

According to Neka, the daggers had been used as traditional weapons of Indonesian people, especially the Hindu community in Bali, from generation to generation.

"I have collected hundreds of crises in the museum because of their beauty and artistic design, and not because of their alleged magic powers," Suteja Neka said. (ANTARA)

ITS Team Set to Take Part in Maritime Challenge in Finland

The Maritime Challenge team of the the November Ten Surabaya Institute of Technology (ITS) is ready to take part in

the Atlantic Challenge 2008 competition in Finland, from July 27 to August 3, 2008.

The team consisting of 17 ITS students before leaving for Europe next week had been received in audience by Secretary General of the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Widi Agus Pratikto at the ministry in Jakarta on Thursday (17/7).

The ITS team has several times taken part in the competition for sailing on old sailboats held once in every two years in Atlantic countries.

Spokesman for the ITS team Ridhlo Achmad Ali said the event covered 11 competitions in controlling sailboats in the ocean. "To master the skill of controlling a sailboat we have followed special training for six months at the Kenjeran coastal waters," the shipping engineering system students said.

In the meantime Daniel Mohamad Rosyid, patron of the ITS team said that Atlantic Challenge is also known as Seamanship Contest.

The competition is followed by 13 countries in the Atlantic Ocean region including Russia, the United States, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark and Germany using sailboats entirely designed by the organizing committee.

"The boats used in the event is a replica of Napoleon's La Fayette. The organizers took care of the design, but production is by the individual participating countries and cost Rp 250 million each," he said.

Through this event, the participants will learn much and increase their navigational skills and seamanship, especially that engine-driven boats will be hard hit when fuel prices are high.

As coordinator of the ITS team, Fadil Mukti Wibowo said the ITS team is not only trying to win the competition, but more importantly to carry out a national cultural mission.

The sixth semester ITS student also said that the students have also

received dancing lessons, because they will also entertain the participants of the other countries in dancing performances.

The event in 2004 was held in France, in 2006 in Genoa, Italy, in which an ITS team also took part, but never won the competitions. (ANTARA)

ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

SBY Told to Push G8 on Climate

With climate change high on the agenda at the G8 summit in Japan this week, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono should use the opportunity to push forward the Bali road map on climate change, experts say.

They suggested Yudhoyono urge leaders of the world's richest countries to fulfill their commitments to helping developing nations, including Indonesia, tackle the impacts of global climate change.

"The summit in Hokkaido is an acid test of Yudhoyono's leadership in the climate change forum. He must convince G8 leaders about the progress made by Indonesia on climate change issues, including the Bali road map," Armi Susandi from the Bandung Institute of Technology said.

"The president should also outline Indonesia's achievements following the Bali meeting last December and the country's plans to cut emissions from energy and deforestation. These are some of the major steps we've taken that world leaders should be aware of."

Indonesia, which is not bound by the emissions reduction target of the Kyoto Protocol, plans to reduce emissions in the energy sector by 17 percent.

Armi said with such milestones, Yudhoyono had the right to press developed nations on financial assistance or technology transfers to

help Indonesia deal with global warming.

Leaders of G8 nations -- the United States, Japan, Russia, Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Canada -- will meet in Hokkaido on Monday. The countries are among the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, widely blamed for causing global warming.

President Yudhoyono will deliver a speech at the summit on Wednesday. Leaders from developing nations such as India, China, Mexico and South Africa have also been invited to the summit.

Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda said Yudhoyono would present the new Indonesia-Japan carbon partnership at the summit.

Indonesia and Japan recently launched the world's first new carbon partnership, aimed at cutting emissions from deforestation.

Armi called on Yudhoyono to urge G8 leaders to expedite discussions on the reduction emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD), which was adopted at the Bali meeting.

An amendment to the Bali road map called for the Kyoto Protocol's emissions reduction target, which expires in 2012, to be renewed at the 2009 Copenhagen meeting.

However, a series of formal and informal meetings following the Bali conference failed to reach a consensus on the emissions target in the short and medium terms. They instead focused on long-term emissions reductions for 2050.

Many observers are looking for the G8 summit to spark wider international talks on global warming.

The U.S., which agreed to take the lead in emissions reductions in the Bali conference, insists emerging economic powers such as China and India should be bound by the emissions reduction target. Both China and India have opposed the idea.

Noted environmental law expert Mas Achmad Santosa said it was unlikely the current state of impasse over reductions would be resolved at the G8 summit.

"The President must push G8 leaders to stick to the Bali road map. But I am still pessimist the U.S. or China and India will change their position at the summit," he said.

Climate change expert Daniel Murdiyarto of Bogor Institute of Agriculture expressed similar doubts. (The Jakarta Post)

President to Launch Tree-Planting Month Campaign

Lebak - President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is scheduled to launch a tree-planting month campaign in Lebak district, Banten province, in November.

The campaign was one of the efforts to make the people more aware of the need to conserve the environment, Head of the Forestry Section at the Lebak District Forestry and Plantation Office Asep Mauladi said on Sunday (20/7).

Asep said a lack of environmental awareness and a rise in illegal logging practices were responsible for the current deforestation in the country.

The campaign was also part of the efforts to prevent global warming which had of late been under the international spotlight, he said.

He said President Yudhoyono would launch the campaign in Sajira subdistrict, Lebak district, in November. "We, along with local people support the campaign to conserve the environment," he said.(ANTARA)

Surabaya Mangrove Forests Home to 140 Species of Java's Biggest Birds

Surabaya, E Java - The mangrove forest conservation area in Wonorejo on Surabaya's east coast has 140 species of Java island's biggest birds.

Bambang DH, mayor of Surabaya, said here Saturday (27/7) of the 140 bird species, about 84 are categorized as sedentary , 12 species as protected and 44 as migrant species.

"We should thank God that we have a good environment here. We hope the bird diversity can be maintained," he said after launching a drive to plant 15,000 mangrove trees on Surabaya's east coast.

Surabaya's east coast also constitutes a mangrove conservation center area and a buffer zone in the seaside ecosystem which is protected by the provincial government.

"Initially we issued a provincial administration regulation to protect the mangrove conservation center to avoid misuse of the conservation area," he said.

Thus, he asked all members of the local community to continue protecting the area.

If the mangrove conservation center area can be maintained well, there will be an added value, for instance, as a tourist object, he said, adding his office was preparing to implement the so called family tourism concept in the area.(ANTARA)

REGIONAL/INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Foreign Minister: IMIC is Second Track Diplomacy to Promote Islam

Jakarta - Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda said that the third International Moslem Intellectuals Conference (IMIC) to be held in Indonesia in 2009 to bridge difference in perception on Islam conducted through second track diplomacy of non-governmental channel.

"This is actually a second track diplomacy to provide the first tract by the

government," the minister said in a press conference together with General Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama Organization KH Hasyim Muzadi here on Friday (25/7).

According to him, the conference is not only attended by moslem intellectuals but also by experts on Islam, so that the dialogue was open.

"Such matters need to be discussed due to misperception of outsiders in seeing Islam who often associated it (Islam) with violence. There are some groups with their own ways to resort to violence on behalf of Islam," he said.

Considering that Indonesia rejected violence against religion, he added, the government was active in promoting joint efforts to disseminate the correct understanding about Islam.

The minister admitted that even various dialogues had been conducted to familiarize the perception on Islam, there were still some individuals found to have understood Islam.

"Perhaps a success has been achieved at the government level, but among individuals it is not an easy work because there are about 6.3 billion of people in the world," he said.

It was also possible that some individuals had no better understanding of Islam. For example, such a journalist in Denmark who created a caricature on Prophet Muhammad had really caused the death of tens of protesters in a clash with the security personnel as well as the impact triggered by a Dutch parliamentarian who made a blasphemous 'Fitna' film, he said.

However, he added, the effort to promote Islam as a peaceful belief could be done once, it should be done continuously.

The minister also said in the conference, a plan on ulemas without borders will be discussed as they are expected to bridge difference happening in Islamic world.

To be held at Borobodur Hotel in Jakarta from July 29 to August 1, 2009,

the conference will be opened by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and closed by Vice President Yusuf Kalla.(ANTARA)

Palestine Conference Ends With Commitments

The Ministerial Conference on Capacity Building for Palestine ended here Monday with nearly 60 countries committing to providing technical assistance to development projects expected to benefit more than 10,000 Palestinians.

Some 90 projects were tabled during the one-day conference, which was opened by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and implementation will be ensured with the establishment of a five-yearly review under the ambitious New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) framework.

Indonesian and South Africa, as the current NAASP co-chairs until 2009, will coordinate the monitoring mechanism with the Palestinian authority until 2013.

"As a co-host, Indonesia has pledged to undertake training programs for 1,000 Palestinians over the next five years in partnership with governmental departments and the private sector," said Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda, who closed the conference.

Indonesia will likely be involved in diplomat training, water management, small and medium enterprise development, aquaculture, scholarship provision, fire brigade training and others.

"This list isn't a closed one because countries will continue to add to it," Hassan said.

The projects had been drawn up by Palestine, whose ministers presented them.

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said he looked at the

conference as the beginning of a long process that had started with the cohesive relations of countries at the conference.

"Our need for this capacity building assistance will remain there as we continue to seek freedom. Even after we gain independence, we'll still need assistance from Asian and African countries.

"These countries have had similar experiences as ours, so the advice and the assistance have more advantages as they are better-tailored to our needs, unlike what we get from donor countries," he said.

Almost 220 participants from 56 countries took part in the conference in what the Palestinian authority called a show of solidarity like the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, West Java.

More than 50 years later, Palestine is the only remaining occupied territory.

The conference comes on the wave of previous conferences in the U.S. city of Annapolis that politically revived peace talks between Palestine and Israel, and in Paris where donors pledged some US\$7.7 billion for Palestinian development projects.

Indonesia has been a staunch supporter of a Palestinian state, and does not have diplomatic relations with Israel. (The Jakarta Post)

RI to Fight for Developing Countries in Doha Talks

Jakarta - Indonesia will next week represent the interests of developing nations in negotiations on the Doha Development Round framework during the upcoming World Trade Organization's (WTO) ministerial meeting.

"The purpose of the meeting is to reach a base for further negotiations on agriculture and non-agriculture market

access (NAMA)," Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu said Tuesday.

The initial base would have no legal grounding, but would be an important milestone in the negotiations, which have been delayed since 2001, Mari said.

During the meeting scheduled to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on July 21, Indonesia is set to represent the G33; a group of 44 developing countries collaborating on economic and social issues at the international forum. The group formally had 33 members.

The group will meet on July 20 to finalize its stance before the WTO meeting.

The G33's main demand will be for the U.S. to reduce its agricultural subsidy to \$8 billion. The U.S. has already agreed to negotiate a reduction in the range of between \$13 billion and \$16.4 billion.

"With the booming prices of agriculture products at the moment, an \$8 billion subsidy is deemed sufficient," said Mari.

The developing countries will also demand a 54 percent reduction in import tariff currently imposed by the European Union and the U.S., and that some of their agricultural products be exempt from a mandatory tariff cut. (*The Jakarta Post*)

RI Condemns Deadly Bombings in India and Turkey

Jakarta - The Indonesian government strongly condemns the weekend bombings which claimed 45 lives in the Indian city of Ahmedabad, and 17 in Istanbul, Turkey, Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman Kristianrto Soeryo Legowo said here on Monday (28/7).

"The deadly bombings in India and Turkey indicate that terrorist attacks can happen anywhere and anytime," Kristianrto Legowo said, adding that the international community should continue to cooperate in dealing with the criminal activity.

He said the Indonesian government hoped that the perpetrators of the bombings could be arrested soon and processed in accordance with the existing legal rules.

"The Indonesian government offers its deepest sympathy to the governments of India and Turkey, and the families of the victims," the spokesman said.

Asked if there were Indonesians among the bombing fatalities, Kristiarto said the ministry was coordinating with the Indonesian embassies in New Delhi and in Ankara to find out.

"But according to preliminary information there are no Indonesian nationals among the fatalities," he said.

Meanwhile, AFP reported that the weekend bombings killed 45 people in Ahmedabad, a city rocked by deadly Hindu-Muslim riots six years ago.

AFP quoted Indian television channels as saying that a little-known Islamist group calling itself "Indian Mujahedeen" had claimed responsibility for the attacks.

And according to a Reuters report, shocked and angry residents in a conservative Istanbul neighborhood blamed separatist Kurdish guerrillas on Monday for two bomb explosions which killed 17 people and injured more than 150 others.

It said a loud blast on Sunday (27/7) evening lured people onto a pedestrian street of a busy shopping and eating area in Gungoren, a stronghold of the ruling AK Party on the European side of Turkey's biggest city.

Minutes later a second bigger bomb in a nearby trash can exploded, ripping

through the crowd, no one had claimed responsibility for the bomb attacks, the deadliest in Turkey since 2003.(ANTARA)

Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Agree on Transportation Cooperation

Medan - Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand agreed to establish cooperation in the transportation sector, partnership and international relations division chairman of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin), Medan chapter, Khairul Mahalli said in Medan on Tuesday (15/7).

The keen wish for cooperation in the transportation sector, he said, was marked with the signing of an agreement at the 25th joint business council meeting of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) in Banda Aceh recently.

Besides coordinating flights from and to cities in the IMT-GT, it was also agreed to increase exports and imports through Belawan Port, evaluate and formulate a work program on the operation of Ro Ro (roll in roll out) vessels plying the Belawan-Penang-Belawan route.

The agreement also covered a recommendation to reach a common tariff for sea/air ports in the IMT-GT region, Mahalli said.

"The agreement was accommodated by the infrastructure and transportation division of the IMT-GT as the cooperation deals were believed to be effective to boost trade between the three countries," he said. (ANTARA)