



Indonesia

News and Views

DOMESTIC ISSUES

Political Issues

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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)



The large house or Rumah Gadang from Minangkabau in West Sumatra is a stage house with a towering roof shaped like water buffalo horns. The front of the house is very beautifully carved and painted in a bright color and is customarily used as to receive guests, to lounge with family or to weave cloth. The back of the house is the living quarters for married daughters, while unmarried sons stay at a small mosque. The Minangkabau community is the only matrilineal society in Indonesia that bequeaths family wealth to a daughter.

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DOMESTIC ISSUES

Political Issues

Yudhoyono to visit Malaysia and Japan for D-8 and G-8 summits

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is scheduled to visit Malaysia to attend the 6th Developing Eight (D-8) Summit July 6-8, and a Group of Eight (G8+8) in Toyako, Hokkaido, in Japan, on July 8-10, 2008.

"President Yudhoyono by the end of this week will be leaving for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Hokkaido, Japan," Presidential spokesman Dino Patti Djalal at the Presidential Office in Jakarta.

Dino said that at the D-8 meeting President Yudhoyono will hand over the D-8 chairmanship to Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi.

"We have just received confirmation that most of the leaders of those countries will attend the 6th D-8 Summit," he said. D-8 was established in June 1997 by eight Organisation of Islamic Conferent (OKI) member countries sharing development and population characteristics, namely Bangladesh, RI, Iran, Malaysia, Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey, to promote economic cooperation and development especially in agriculture, industry, energy, and trade.

The Indonesian government held the D-8 chairmanship since May 2006 at the 5th summit in Bali, while the D-8 secretary general was Dr. Dipo Alam.

"Under Indonesia`s chairmanship, 31 activities had been carried out, including 15 by Indonesia covering cooperation in trade, micro-finance, energy, tourism, civil aviation, and healthcare," he said.

Dino also said that during the Indonesian chairmansip, agreement was reached on rules of origin as a precondition for the realization of a D-8

preferential trade agreement as the result of the Bali summit.

"Discussions will also cover a roadmap of D-8 for the next ten years -- economic cooperation roadmap in the second decade of cooperation (2008-2012)," he said.

President Yudhoyono is also slated to have a bilateral meeting with PM Badawi and Malaysian business community.

Later the President is also scheduled to attend a summit of G-8 Outreach Countries at Windsor Hotel in Toyako, Hokkaido.

"This forum had been proposed by France and the United Kindgom," he said..

Dino explained that as host of G-8, Japan decided to invite eight other countries who are members of D-8 (Canada, France, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States) namely Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, Indonesia, Australia and South Korea.

"Actually in 2007 at the G-8 summit in Helligendamm, Germany, they held a meeting with five countries, but this year host Japan invited three additional countries Indonesia , Australia, and South Korea, so that its name changed from G8+5 into G8+8," he said.

The meeting, he added, will discuss several important world issues, namely climate change, food security, and global economic development and growth.

At the summit, President Yudhoyono is also slated to become a key speaker dealing with issues on food security and meet Japanese businessmen. (ANTARA)

Yudhoyono spreads anti-violence message

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on Tuesday opened a three-day World Peace Forum in Jakarta that will bring together hundreds of world leaders to discuss the issue of religious violence.

The event is being co-hosted by Muhammadiyah (Indonesia's second largest Islamic organization), the Center for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilizations and the Cheng Ho Multi-Culture Trust.

Some 200 prominent figures from religious, political, business and media backgrounds are attending the event.

"There is always hope for peace no matter how difficult the situation is," Yudhoyono said, citing examples of conflicts in Southeast Asia, including the decades-long domestic conflict in Aceh. He said many religious-based conflicts had been triggered by political, economic and social issues.

"Therefore, we should foster a culture of peace especially among the youth, and teachers should instruct on the instruments of peace, including dialogue, negotiation and confidence building."

After Yudhoyono delivered his speech, anti-violence messages by a host of former and current world leaders were read aloud or conveyed via video.

They included former Soviet Union president Mikhail Gorbachev, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark and Dutch Prime Minister Jan Balkenende.

"We should focus on what joins us rather than what separates us," Rudd said.

Political leaders who have confirmed their attendance at the event include Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, Timor Leste President Xanana Gusmao, former Tunis prime minister Hedi Baccaoché and Amina Rasul-Bernardo, the lead convener of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy.

The participants will discuss how politicians and religious and civil society groups can work together to prevent violence.

Vice President Jusuf Kalla will close the forum on Thursday.

Muhammadiyah also gathered more than 100 political figures in 2006 to discuss world issues.

However, this week's gathering has been overshadowed by the Indonesian government's decision to issue a decree banning Islamic minority sect Jamaah Ahmadiyah from all religious activities after a government panel deemed the group "heretical".

The decree came after a brutal attack by an Islamic radical group on pro-pluralism activists who rallied in support of Ahmadiyah.

Australia to support RI's bid for IPU Presidency

Jakarta - Australia's parliament will support Indonesia's bid to get elected as Interparliamentary Union (IPU) president at the union's congress in Geneva next October, sources at Indonesia's House of Representatives (DPR) said.

The Australian backing was expressed by an Australian parliamentary delegation led by Senator Michael Foreshaw at a meeting with the DPR leadership.

Other members of the Australian parliamentary delegation were David Hawker, Arch Bevis, Michael Danby, Andrew Robb and Phillip Ruddock.

At the meeting, DPR Speaker Agung Laksono was accompanied by the chairman of the DPR's Inter-parliamentary Cooperation Board (BKSAP), Abdillah Toha, and the chairman of the DPR's Commission I, Theo Sambuaga.

The Australian delegation had come to Jakarta for a dialogue with Indonesian parliamentarians organized by the DPR in cooperation with the Australian parliament and themed "Parliament and Its Role in Promoting Regional Cooperation."

The forum was meant as an opportunity for the two parliaments to become more familiar with each other's work mechanisms.

Other issues taken up in the dialogue were the political situation in Indonesia ahead of its 2009 general elections, common borders security, the legal, political and economic aspects of the presence of migrant workers, and a number of Indonesia - Australia agreements, especially the Lombok Treaty signed in November 20 and effective since last February 7. (ANTARA)

Economic Issues

Saudis plan Rp 600b rice estate investment

Jakarta - A consortium of 15 Saudi Arabian investors is ready to take part in the Merauke Integrated Rice Estate (MIRE), injecting at least Rp 600 billion (US\$65.04 million) into the region, an official says.

The Agriculture Ministry's secretary-general, Hasanuddin Ibrahim, said Wednesday each investor wanted to open about 5,000 to 10,000 hectares of land in Merauke, Papua.

"To open the land, investors need about Rp 8 million to Rp 10 million per hectare. So an investor needs to invest Rp 40 billion for every 5,000 hectares of land they want to open," he said after the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the State Logistics Agency (Bulog).

Merauke Integrated Rice Estate is a program designed to make the Merauke regency in Papua province an integrated rice production complex for supplying the staple food to eastern areas of the archipelago. The government has provided 1.6 million hectares of land for the program.

The ministry earlier said the investment would also be channeled for the construction of 700 kilometers of roads in the regency, 1,500 kilometers of connecting road to West Papua province, three ports and irrigation

systems. The projects are expected to start by the end of this year.

The Central Statistic Agency says total harvest area last year in Papua was 20,788 hectares, up from 19,898 hectares a year earlier. The total harvest area in Indonesia was 12.16 million hectares, most located outside Java.

The ministry said the investors from the world's largest oil producer chose Indonesia for the agribusiness venture due to its decent water provision and supporting climate. In addition, Indonesia has adequate paddy conservation technology, including seedbeds, cultivation and reliable human resources.

Hasanuddin said there were also several local firms interested in joining the MIRE program, including Medco E&P Indonesia and PT Bangun Cipta Kontraktor.

According to the Investment Coordinating Board, Saudi realized investment in Indonesia reached \$1.3 million last year from zero in 2006.

In addition to investment in the agriculture sector, investors from Saudi Arabia are also interested in investing in Indonesia's tourism, food-processing and energy sectors.

The government has taken considerable measures to attract investment from Middle Eastern countries, such as the introduction of the country's first law on sharia banking and the president's visit to Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan in early 2006

Other Middle Eastern investors who have expressed investment plans in Indonesia this year include Dubai-based real estate giant Emaar Properties, which says it wants to build the tallest skyscraper in Southeast Asia in the country, and Ras Al-Khaimah of the UAE, which is interested in developing the Tanjung Api-Api Port and a connecting railway to Palembang, South Sumatra. (Novia D.Rulistia, *The Jakarta Post*)

RI – Japan economic partnership agreement takes effect July 1

Tokyo - The day on which the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) takes effect, Tuesday, July 1, was marked here by a meeting between Indonesian and Japanese officials at the Japanese foreign affairs ministry.

The Indonesian delegation at the meeting comprised, among others, Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu as head of the delegation, the industry ministry's secretary general, Agus Tjahjana, Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) Chairman M Lutfi, and Indonesian Ambassador to Japan Jusuf Anwar as members.

The Japanese delegation consisted, among others, of Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Masahiro Komura, Finance Minister Fukushior Nukaga, and the deputies minister of agriculture, trade, and forestry.

The two delegations were expected to sign a standard operating procedure for the implementation of EPA at the meeting.

The standard operating procedure concerned issues such as on the flow of goods and services, the origins of goods, and other procedures for bilateral cooperation in the industrial, fisheries, forestry, and agricultural fields.

"These are of course based on the principle of mutual benefit," Indonesian Trade Minister Elka Pangestu said prior to attending the meeting.

The joint meeting would confirm that the Economic Partnership Agreement between the two countries would be effective immediately, including on the standard of operating procedures to be implemented by both states, Pangestu said .

The Indonesian-Japan EPA has as main objective the strengthening bilateral and regional economic relations not only as contained in the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) but also a wide-ranging

cooperation in investment and movements of individuals.

Indonesia and Japan are crucial economic partners in East Asia. To Indonesia, Japan is a significant trade partner receiving more than 20 percents of Indonesia's exports, and it is also the biggest foreign investor. To Japan, Indonesia is a major energy supplier and a basis for its manufacturing sector. As a major trade partner, the value of Indonesian exports to Japan reached 23.6 billion US dollars, while Japanese imports from Indonesia was valued at 6.5 billion US dollars.

The total value of the two countries' bilateral trade in 2007 was recorded at 30.1 billion US dollars and the trade value was reported to have increased in the past four years.

More than 1,000 Japanese companies are operating in Indonesia absorbing 400,000 workers.

EPA, Indonesia's first bilateral free-trade deal, will exempt Indonesian products from 90 percent of Japan's 9,275 import duties, amounting to 99 percent of its export value.

Japan will be exempted from 93 percent of Indonesia's 11,163 import duties, 92 percent of its export value, while being ensured of a steady supply of energy and raw materials from Indonesia.

The EPA discussion was initiated in 2005 during the administrations of former President Megawati Soekarnoputri and former Premier Koizumi. The signing of EPA was conducted by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Jakarta, on August 20, 2007. (ANTARA)

RI - JAPAN EPA can be model for world economy : envoy

Jakarta - Japanese Ambassador to Indonesia Kojiro Shiojiri said the Japan-Indonesia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) could be a model for world economic cooperation, as the two countries have actually built continuous,

profound and close relations and improved a mutually beneficial economic scheme.

"I am sure EPA can serve as an example for world economy cooperation as the two countries have built diplomatic relations for over 50 years," Shiojiri told the press here on Monday.

Japan and Indonesia recently signed EPA which will take effect on July 1, 2008 and have objective of strengthening bilateral and regional economic relations not only as contained in the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) but also a wide-ranging cooperation in investment and movements of individuals.

Indonesia and Japan are crucial economic partners in East Asia. To Indonesia, Japan is a trade partner and its biggest foreign investor. To Japan, Indonesia is a major energy supplier and a basis for its manufacturing sector. As major trade partner, the value of Indonesian exports to Japan reached 23.6 billion US dollars, while Japanese imports from Indonesia was valued at 6.5 billion US dollars.

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"The most important aspect of the EPA is partnership. Under the partnership scheme and serious business activities, we are convinced that what has already been agreed on in EPA will be able to run smoothly and to achieve meaningful success," he said.

The signing of EPA was conducted by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe here on August 20, 2007. (ANTARA)

RI - China to sign agreements on food quality standardization

Beijing - The governments of Indonesia and China are expected to sign a number of food product standardization agreements in an effort to avoid situations where one country rejects food products from the other because of differences in quality criteria, an Indonesian diplomat said.

"The two countries will sign a number of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) on food quality standardization," the head of Economic Function Affairs at the Indonesian Embassy (KBRI) Iwan S. Amri said.

According to Iwan S. Amri, a number of officials from China's General Administration for Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) were initially scheduled to visit Indonesia on July 2-6, 2008 for talks on the standardization plan.

However, the plan to sign the MoUs in Indonesia was temporarily postponed due to the preoccupation of the Chinese government with Olympic Games which will be held in Beijing on August 8-24, 2008.

"We have received notification on the postponement of the plan because the Chinese government is concentrating on the holding of the Olympic Games," he said.

He said that the MoUs would be signed after the Olympic Games had finished.

The two countries will establish cooperation on the standardization of export-import product quality. It would be carried out between the AQSIQ and Indonesia's Ministry of Maritime and Fisheries. (ANTARA)

Australia, Japan assist NTB's animal husbandry development

Mataram, NTB - Australia and Japan have greatest interest in assisting the development of animal husbandry in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) province,

Head of NTB's Animal Husbandry Service H Abdul Mutalib said.

"The two countries consider that NTB is a hub of animal farming, both for slaughter and for breeding," he told reporters.

He said that Australia provided 149,326 Australian dollars in grant to help finance avian influenza control in Lombok and Bali. Besides it also assisted the development of farmer's groups in Lombok Island with training, workshops for local officials and animal farming management.

The Japanese government in the meantime provided a grant of Rp30 billion for the development of husbandry in this province.

The Japanese assistance was given to finance technological cooperation between the two countries in the development of slaughter cows.

He said that for the 2008 fiscal year, Japan had provided 38 motor vehicles and 25 head of goats to 18 animal breeder groups in West Lombok district.

Besides, Japan also assisted the construction of a main cow pen for slaughter cows in Central Lombok district.

The slaughter cow development is carried out in the breeding centers in almost all districts in NTB. "NTB's slaughter cow production reaches 55,000 while buffaloes reach 15,400. The number of cow offspring reaches 10,000," he said. (ANTARA)

RI hopes ban on GARUDA from flying over Europe be lifted : Spokesman

Jakarta - Indonesia hopes that during the French presidency of the European Union, the ban on the national flag carrier Garuda Indonesia from flying in EU air space will be lifted, a spokesman has said.

"We're hoping that during the French presidency, this bilateral problem will be totally resolved," Benny Bahanadewa, secretary of the the Directorate General

of America-Europe at the Indonesian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, said here.

He made the remarks during a lecture "France in the European Union Today" delivered by Prof. Nicolas Jabko from Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris.

French Ambassador to Indonesia Mme Catherine Boiveneau opened the lecture.

Benny further said that as of now EU-Indonesia agreements mainly covered economic issues.

"We have been addressing political and security issues mostly in interregional and multilateral forums. With the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in place, we will be more deeply engaged in the politico-security field," he said.

It was unfortunate, though, that in the midst of negotiations toward the PCA and without prior notification to the Indonesian Government, Garuda had been banned from flying over EU territory, he said.

"Although the ban is not directly relevant to the envisioned PCA, it has contributed to the slowing down of the negotiations," he said.

In spite of that, there is still a great deal of good will on the part of EU in Indonesia."

"We are sustaining the spirit of partnership with the EU. Moreover, we welcome EU's efforts to resolve the issue, including the use of the Hewa Bora mechanism, on-site visits to various airports in Indonesia, Air Safety Committee meetings, and the recent Bandung Training Conference," Benny added.

According to him, the aviation sector in Indonesia had vastly improved in the last several months, with great emphasis on safety issues.

"And we look forward to a very successful French presidency of the European Union, during which relations between the EU and Indonesia will grow stronger and stronger. I have no doubt about this," he said. (ANTARA)

Socio-Cultural Issues

Islamic relief donates 150 houses for Tsunami victims in Aceh

Banda Aceh - Britain-based Islamic Relief has donated 150 houses to victims of the 2004 tsunami in Aceh Besar, Aceh Jaya Districts, and Banda Aceh city, Aceh Province.

The houses were officially presented according to acting Communication Director of the Aceh-Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) Ridwan Mughtar here.

The Islamic Relief, Qatar's Red Crescent, AmeriCares, Disaster Emergency Committee and BRR also officially handed a unit of clean water supply facility at Beuromae village.

Director of Islamic Relief Indonesia Ahmed Tosson said that the 150 houses were part of 1,100 houses which had been constructed by the humanitarian institution since January 2005 for tsunami victims.

"It's recorded that 850 of the 1,100 houses which we have constructed, have been handed to tsunami victims in Aceh," Tosson said.

Deputy Governor of Aceh Muhammad Nazar expressed gratitude for the assistance and said that the provincial administration was committed to improving the economic condition of the local people.

A deadly tsunami devastated Aceh on December 26, 2004, killing more than 150,000 people and leaving around one million others homeless. (ANTARA)

Indonesia now safe for foreign visitors, U.S. envoy says

Nusa Dua, Bali - Indonesia is now safe for foreign visitors, U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Cameron Hume said here.

"We believe the threat of terrorism in Indonesia has in the past few years been reduced and the country is now safe," the U.S. envoy said.

He said the improved security condition in Indonesia had been reported to the American people, and the U.S. government itself had lifted its travel warning on Indonesia.

"But the arrest of several terror suspects in Palembang, South Sumatra, recently proves the threat of terrorism still exists in Indonesia," he said.

Hume said the police's ability in breaking up the terror network in Palembang had earned the Indonesian police a positive assessment. (ANTARA)

ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

US Consortium to turn Lapindo Mudflow into Power Plant

Jakarta - The consortium consists of Houston-based company Vlociti Holding Inc, Sirex PHS, Preston US and Turbo Jacks, the Berlin, Germany-based company which owns the relevant technology. PT Jatayu Sarana Investasi is the project owner/coordinator, as well as acting as their consultant and sub-contractor in Indonesia.

Vlociti Holding Inc President Director, Taswin Tarib, presented the proposal to the office of Vice President Jusuf Kalla. Representing the Vice President was special staff coordinator, Alwi Hamu, who studied the proposal.

Taswin said his company is not a newcomer in the geothermal business, having carried out explorations on geothermal sites in the US and Germany, each with more than 300 megawatt source of power.

Today, the Lapindo mudflow has covered some 80.000 cubic meters of land daily, while the temperature around it has gone as high as 40-60 degrees Celcius. Taswin said the electricity generated from geothermal heat in Sidoarjo can be sold to state-owned electricity company PLN for 2-3 Euro cents per kWh, and can contribute towards solving the electricity crisis in Indonesia.

“We are not asking for any collateral from the government or the PLN, nor will we use Indonesian government funds. The funds will come from our group,” he said at the Vice President’s office yesterday.

According to Taswin, Lapindo was chosen as a pilot project because of its high geothermal content. At the same time, they plan to build two 2.000 megawatt power plants elsewhere in Java, and a 2.000 megawatt each in Sumatera, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua.

“On August 14, our team will present the technicalities and methods in more detail.” If the government agrees, a memorandum of agreement will be signed immediately. Taswin went on to say that the construction of Lapindo’s geothermal power plant -- from installing the vertical channel to producing electricity -- will take 3-4 years, with an investment of US \$ 5.2 billion. “This project can employ 2000 to 2500 workers.”

Alwi said the consortium, facilitated by the Agency for the Assessment & Application of Technology (BPPT), presented their proposal to the Vice President. “The Vice President responded promptly and has asked the plan to be further evaluated.”

According to Alwi, the proposed project can provide a solution to Indonesia’s electricity crisis and contribute to solving the Lapindo mudflow catastrophe. *(Anton Aprianto, TEMPO Interactive)*

REGIONAL / INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

President Yudhoyono arrives in Kuala Lumpur for D – 8 Summit

Kuala Lumpur - President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono arrived here on Sunday evening for a D-8 (group of eight developing countries) summit.

The president arrived here by a presidential plane from a visit to East

Kalimantan where he opened the 17th National Sports Week (PON).

Indonesian Ambassador to Malaysia Dai Bachtiar and Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar greeted the Indonesian leader and entourage upon arrival.

The president's entourage includes Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu, Environment Minister Rahmat Witoelar, Chief of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin) MS. Hidayat and Chief of the Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) M. Luthfi.

D-8 is a group of developing countries that have formed an economic development alliance. The group was established after an announcement in Istanbul, Turkey, on June 15, 1997. It consists of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey. The main areas of D-8 cooperation include finance, banking, rural development, science and technology, humanitarian development, agriculture, energy, environment, and health.

During his stay in Kuala Lumpur, President Yudhoyono and his Malaysian counterpart are expected to inaugurate an Indonesia-Malaysia expert group aimed at enhancing bilateral ties between the two neighboring states. The Indonesian side in the group will be represented by Try Sutrisno, Ali Alatas, Quraish Syihab, Des Alwi, Musni Umar, Maria Purenti and Wahyu Bahar.

From Malaysia, President Yudhoyono will continue his trip to Japan to attend a group of eight industrialized nations (G-8) summit. *(ANTARA)*

International Youth Forum Agrees Joint Action Agenda

Bandung - The International Youth Forum (IYF) 2008 that has been held for a week in Bandung was closed yesterday (30/6). The 200 young people from 38 countries attending the forum agreed to carry joint actions in their own countries.

“All participants agree to establish a council and all countries represented in the forum agreed to be members,” said the IYF Chairman Apep Fajar Kurniawan, in Bandung.

According to Apep, seven points were approved by the forum.

“We want the equal completion of Millenium Development Goals, with no domination by any country,” he said.

Other points related poverty eradication, education for all, gender equality, empowerment—specifically about global warming, HIV issues, and to reducing the death rate of mothers and children.

The agenda will be followed up in the IYF's second meeting in 2010 in Sudan.

(Ahmad Fikri, TEMPO Interactive)