

Indonesia independence day

Indonesia's strength lies in its diversity

Dr. Jusuf Anwar
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC
OF INDONESIA FOR JAPAN

Greetings and salutations to readers of The Japan Times. On this, the 64th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, it gives me great pleasure to be able to address you today, and to invite you all to join Indonesian citizens in Japan and throughout the world in celebration of our national day.



Many readers will no doubt have visited Indonesia in the past and I would like to take this opportunity to outline some of the changes we have seen in recent months, and for those who have yet to visit us in Indonesia, I would like to tell you why you really should come and see a little piece of paradise in the very

near future.

First and foremost, as you may know, Indonesia has just completed legislative and presidential elections. Since transitioning to democracy, the Indonesian people have passionately embraced the electoral process, and these recent elections saw an excellent voter turnout, and peaceful and orderly campaigning, voting and vote count. This proves that in Indonesia ethnic, cultural and religious diversity is no barrier to a fully functioning democracy, and that ordinary Indonesians have genuine faith in the political and economic reforms of recent years, and are more than willing to play their part in the political system.

In regard to the financial crisis that is on all our minds, thanks to determined and carefully implemented micro- and macroeconomic policies over the past four years, Indonesia has been well

placed to weather the recent economic turmoil that has seen some far larger economies falter and fail. A proactive government response to the economic crisis has also seen the financial sector in Indonesia stabilized, and real sector growth stimulated through job creation and the promotion of small-scale businesses, and entrepreneurship in general. All of this has, in turn, helped boost purchasing power for the average Indonesian and maintained strong private consumption that has kept the economy turning.

As a result of the steps taken by the Indonesian government, the country's economy has proven its resilience by posting 6.1 percent growth in 2008 and 4.2 percent growth in the first semester of 2009. In 2008, Indonesia attracted \$14.87 billion in foreign investment — a clear indication of the international community's faith in its economic

course — and exports grew to \$139 billion as earlier infrastructure and human resource investments began to pay dividends. Indonesia's debt to gross domestic product ratio dropped from 89 percent in 2000 to 33 percent in 2008, showing that the country's dependence on loans for driving the economy has been reduced, and the broadest measure of the impact of debt — the ratio of total government debt to total economic output or GDP — has fallen from 100 percent in 1999 to 40.8 percent in 2006 and is expected to decline further to 30 percent to 35 percent by 2009.

In addition, Indonesia's competitiveness ranking improved nine places, according to the International Institute for Management Development's World Competitiveness Yearbook, showing that it is well placed to continue to ride out the global economic storm and play an important role in the recovery of the re-

gion's economy.

At the same time, unfortunately, recent events have shown us that Indonesia — like all other countries in this modern world of ours — is not immune to the threat of terrorism. The bombings of the Ritz Carlton and JW Marriot hotels in Jakarta will not deter democracy in Indonesia, and recent actions by the government in response to those attacks have shown us that Indonesia will use the full power of the law and its security forces to counter such threats. There were no political ties to the result of the election in regard to these acts and the widespread public support for antiterror measures shows the marginalization of these terrorist elements. In addition, overseas tourists continue to choose Indonesia and there is no indication that foreign business confidence has been affected in any way.

Regular readers will no doubt be aware that the past 18 months have been an eventful time for Indonesia and Japan relations. Last year, we celebrated 50 years of warm and friendly diplomatic relations with a variety of events in Japan and Indonesia, and we look forward to many, many more years of close relations and cooperation. The various activities, held at governmental, as well as at public and people-to-people levels, demonstrate that our close, and mutually beneficial trade and economic ties are complemented by a long history of social and cultural interaction. Examples of the latter include the "Javarism" cultural festival held by the Indonesian community in Japan in 2008, and the Festival of Life created by noted Japanese designer Kansai Yamamoto in Denpasar, Indonesia, this May. An even better example of the linking of economic and social ties can be seen in the recent arrival in Japan of Indonesian nurses and caregivers to assist in Japanese hospitals and institutions, and of the increasingly broad and two-way traffic in tourism between Japan and Indonesia.

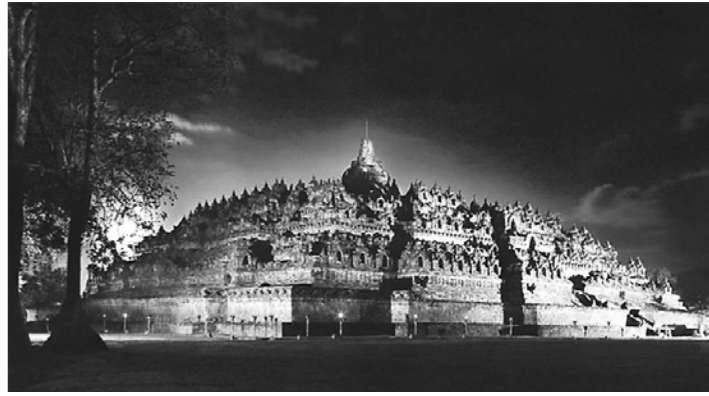
This brings me neatly to a topic about which I — and I believe all Indonesians — are



Housewarming: Rambu Tuka, a ceremony to express gratitude to God, is held in Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, as a blessing for the rehabilitation of Tongkonan, the traditional houses of Toraja.

justifiably proud. Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,500 islands scattered across both sides of the equator, is one of the most biodiverse countries on Earth. The government and people of Indonesia consider the rich flora and fauna of this ecosystem to be a national treasure, and a paradise for all the people of the world to enjoy, and we look forward to welcoming visitors from Japan and around the world to come and experience Indonesian hospitality and the wonders of these islands for themselves.

For those of us living in a major metropolis like Tokyo, the lure of the sunsets and beaches of Bali is hard to resist, particularly in the hot summer months we are experiencing. But I truly feel that it is no exaggeration to say that Indonesia offers something for everyone: from the world-renowned diving of Sulawesi to the hustle and bustle of cities like Jakarta and Yogyakarta; from the ancient mystery of Borobudur to the contemporary arts scene of Ubud or the fearsome "dragons" of Komodo island (recently chosen as a finalist for one of the new seven wonders of the natural world), everyone can find their personal Shangri-La in Indonesia.



World Heritage site: Borobudur, a Mahayana Buddhist temple in Central Java, dates back to the eighth and ninth centuries. Its nine-terrace structure is a schematized representation of the transition toward nirvana.

In addition, the various cultural influences that have shaped Indonesia over the centuries, together with the great variety of produce and spices for which Indonesia is world renowned, provide Indonesian chefs with a fantastic palette of flavors from which to work. And just like Japan, each and every region of Indonesia has its specialties and popular favorites, so just as there are new sights and sounds to be found in each new destination you visit, so too are there delicious and unique new tastes and aromas for you to sample everywhere you go.

One tourism event in particular that I would like to mention is the Second Jogja International Heritage Walk to be held Nov. 14-15 to promote awareness of the importance of greener environments, healthy lifestyles and historical sites. The two-day walk will incorporate nature walks, conservation activities and explanations of Ja-

vanese culture, including the well-known temples of Borobudur and Prambanan.

Given the geography of the Indonesian archipelago, it is only natural that the vast majority of Indonesians live in close contact with the natural environment and are only too aware of its great beauty and fearsome power, but also its incredible fragility. As the increasing pace of industrial development takes an even greater toll on our planet, we in Indonesia can clearly see that now is the time for drastic action to halt and reverse the adverse effects of humankind's modern lifestyles.

Pollution, deforestation, erosion and illegal logging all endanger the biodiversity of Indonesia, and the government of H.E. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is determined to confront and resolve these threats in a manner that will provide long-term solutions rather than short-term, stopgap mea-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Natural spectacle: The Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park covers some 800 sq. km in the center of East Java. It is the largest volcanic region in the province and home to 3,676-meter Mount Semeru. MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

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Indonesia independence day

Nationwide campaign to protect ecosystem, biodiversity treasures

At its 83rd plenary meeting, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2010 the "International Year of Biodiversity (IYB)," and encouraged member states to use it to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity and environmental issues in general. The General Assembly's drive to draw attention to the planet's biodiversity comes at a time when as individual societies and members of the global community we are becoming more and more aware of the alarming threats to the world's delicate ecosystems, and also the need to value and protect the biodiversity that we have for so long taken for granted.

Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,500 islands scattered across both sides of the equator, is one of the most biodiverse countries on Earth. Although it covers only 1.3 percent of the world's total area, it is home to 10 percent of the planet's flowering plant species, 12 percent of its mammal species, 16 percent of its reptile and amphibian species, 17 percent of its bird species and 25 percent of its marine life species.

The government and people of Indonesia consider this ecosystem to be a national treasure, and a paradise for all the people of the world to enjoy, but as the increasing pace of industrial development takes an even greater toll, we recognize that now is the time for drastic action. Pollution, deforestation, erosion and illegal logging all endanger the biodiversity of Indonesia, and the government of H.E. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is determined to confront and resolve these threats in a manner that will provide long-term solutions.

One of the most threatened of Indonesia's ecosystems is its forests, and in the past 10 years considerable challenges have demanded that Indonesia refocus and reorient its forestry policies. In this regard, the forestry sector has determined five priorities: (1) combating illegal logging and the associated illegal timber trade; (2) forestry sector restructuring via timber plantation and industry reorganization; (3) forest rehabilitation and conservation; (4) strengthening the economies of local communities; and (5)

protecting forest areas.

Forestry issues cannot be separated from the larger issue of national development, however, and forestry is not independent from other development sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure (including settlement and public works) and industry. The needs of local communities and national development must be incorporated into all planning if truly long-term solutions are to be achieved.

At the forefront of this is a major reforestation and forest management program. Data published using satellite imagery gathered by Wageningen University in the Netherlands and digital analysis of forest cover by South Dakota State University in the United States shows that since 2000 the level of deforestation has been reduced dramatically thanks to the rapid incorporation of the above priorities in government policy.

In addition to halting the degradation of forests, the government has embarked on several nationwide tree-planting programs. The first of these marked the convening of the U.N. Climate Change Con-

A 'Little Indonesia in Japan'

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia is proud to invite you to the second "Little Indonesia in Japan" festival from Aug. 25 to 27.

Come and join us for a taste of Indonesia right here in Japan, with crafts, recitals, performances, batik painting and "tenun" weaving demonstrations, jewelry exhibitions and shadow plays, and of course traditional Indonesian foods for you to sample.

The festival will be held at The ASEAN-Nihon Centre in Onarimon (take Exit A4 from the Mita Line's Onarimon Station); doors are open from 10 a.m. through 7 p.m. Come and join us, we look forward to seeing you.

For more information, please e-mail fitratokyo@yahoo.com or call (03) 3441-4201, Ext. 322 or 336.



Party time: Last year's "Little Indonesia in Japan" at Shinjuku Park Tower in Tokyo

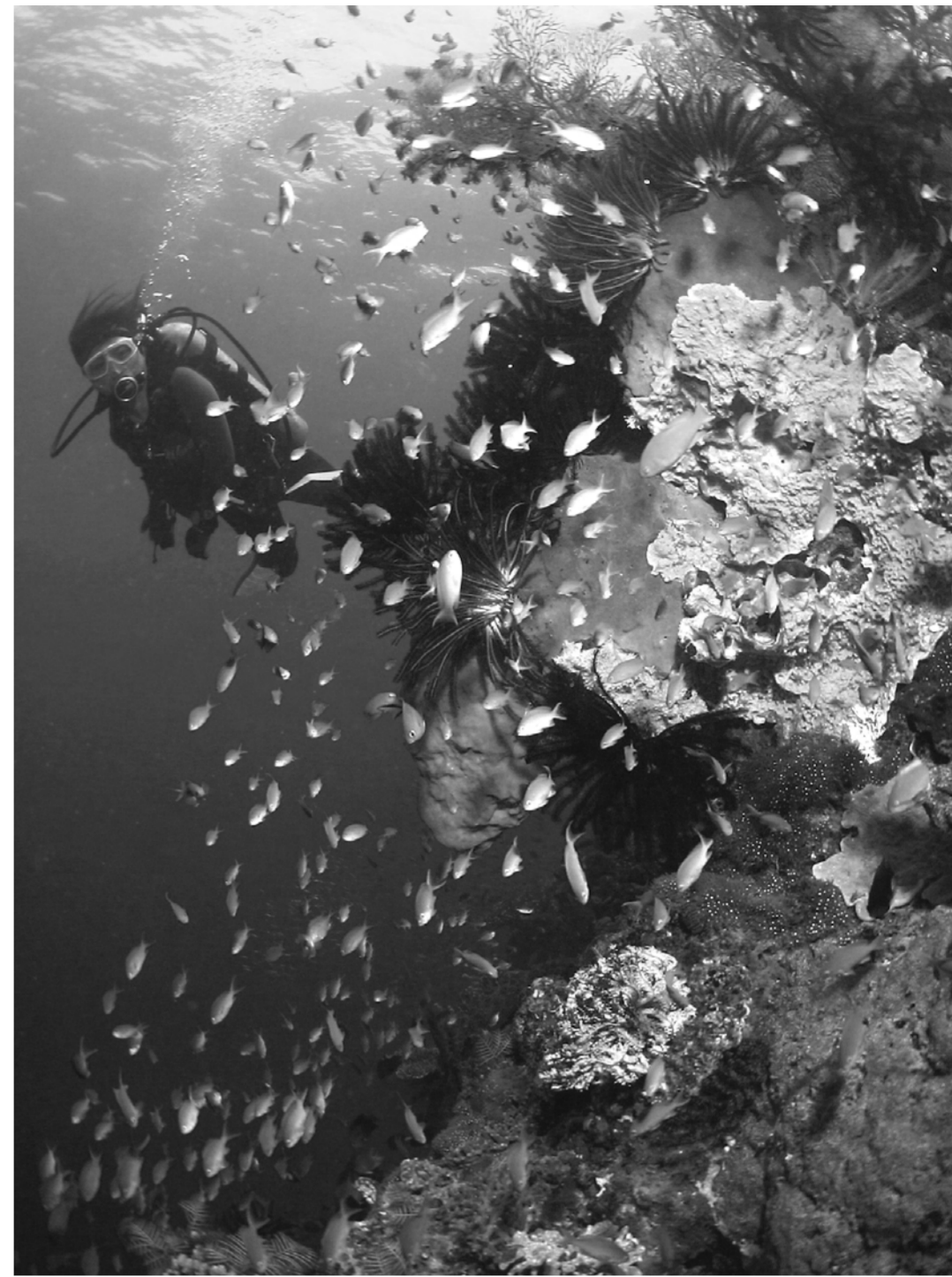
ference 2007 in Bali and was launched by President Yudhoyono. The program aimed to plant 79 million trees in one day, but the organizers were happy to report that this figure was surpassed by nearly 10 million. A similar program in 2008 was equally successful, with 109 million new trees planted.

Indonesia's first lady, Ani Yudhoyono, has also been at the forefront of the reforestation drive, and in recognition of this won an award from the U.N. Environment Program for her efforts in encouraging Indonesian women to plant trees. A planting program in 2008 aiming to plant 10 million trees exceeded its goal by 4 million and this year another drive was launched to plant fruit trees. At the same time, in order to broaden and popularize the planting programs, Nov. 28 was declared "National Planting Day" by the president and a "One Person, One Tree" program, in which all of Indonesia's 230 million citizens are encouraged to plant a tree, was established.

Another major concern for Indonesia as an archipelago is

the protection of its vast ocean resources and coastline. The Indonesian government hosted the World Ocean Conference in Manado on May 11-15, and the conference adopted the Manado Ocean Declaration in which participants agreed to strive to achieve long-term conservation, management and sustainable use of marine life resources, and coastal habitats through the application of precautionary and ecosystem approaches. The conference stressed the need for national strategies for sustainable management of coastal and marine ecosystems as protective and productive buffer zones that have significant potential to address the adverse effects of climate change.

Indonesia was proud to host the U.N. Climate Conference and the World Ocean Conference, and hopes to play a leading role in finding viable solutions to environmental threats in the region and globally. In an island nation that spans two hemispheres, the fragility of biodiversity — and the threats to it — are glaringly obvious, and the government and people of Indonesia are only too aware of the great responsibility they have to pass on this paradise to future generations.



Fragile ecosystem: Indonesia is home to one-third of the world's corals, or some 85,000 sq. km. Shown here are coral reefs on Ambon Island (above) and Sangalaki Island, East Kalimantan (below). MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA



For the future: Children of Ungasan Elementary School and members of the Tamioka Kabura Rotary Club from Gunma Prefecture take part in a program to plant 300 mangrove *rhizophora apiculata* trees at Tengkulung Beach, Tanjung Benoa, Bali.

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Strength in diversity

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sures. This thinking is being incorporated into policy regarding numerous sectors and industries in Indonesia, from forestry and energy exploration to tourism and infrastructure development, and I am pleased to note that, in addition to utilizing overseas technological expertise, a great deal of homegrown Indonesian know-how and inventiveness is being applied in this regard.

To be sure, there are challenges ahead for Indonesia and for us all. But the great biodiversity of Indonesia is matched by great ethnic diversity, with some 30 distinct

ethnic groups speaking more than 300 different languages all calling it home, and in this diversity lies our greatest strength. Each and every different group brings unique skills, perspectives and understanding to the greater whole, and as we stand at the dawn of a new century, I am confident that we are well placed to overcome all obstacles and seize all opportunities to achieve our ultimate goals.

Why not come and see this great diversity for yourself, experience the hospitality and breathtaking scenery that so many people are talking about, and get a taste of Indonesia in 2009.

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