

# Indonesia Independence Day Special

## Working together to chart the shared future of our nations

**HERI AKHMADI**  
AMBASSADOR OF INDONESIA



The global economic outlook is not yet promising in the eyes of analysts. The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic and negative spillover from the war in Ukraine have made it even harder

for a turnaround of the world's economy. The International Monetary Fund has projected global gross domestic product will continue its slowdown from 6.1% last year to 3.2% this year. It would be incomprehensible for any single country to deal with the current socioeconomic and geopolitical challenges alone. There has to be a common and collective solution during these tough times.

As the world's premier organization for international economic cooperation con-

necting the major developed and emerging economies, the Group of 20 is perhaps the most strategic platform for securing future global growth and prosperity. Under Indonesia's presidency, the theme "Recover Together, Recover Stronger" focuses on three priorities. These are global health architecture, sustainable energy transition and digital transformation. This underscores the importance of collaboration and concerted effort in overcoming the pandemic and accelerating global economic recovery.

Since the beginning of the outbreak, Indonesia and Japan have been strenuously working hand in hand in coping with the dire situation. To say the least, the Japanese people and government have been supportive. With respect to the prolonged and multifaceted crises sparked by the pandemic, it is worth noting our bilateral achievements, from concluding vaccine-sharing arrangements to pushing forward priority infrastructure projects. More so, the Indonesia-Japan win-win strategic

partnership provides balanced execution between health and economic interests, complementing the collective efforts taken at the multilateral level.

Nevertheless, for a harmonious and prosperous future, in my humble opinion, the Indonesia-Japan strategic partnership should also focus on ensuring more resilient global health, building a more sustainable environment and promoting a circular economy. More importantly, this not only reflects the interests of both nations, but also the manifestation of our efforts to accelerate the global economic recovery, while at the same time remaining consistent with the three priorities of the Indonesian G20 presidency.

First of all, regarding global health architecture, we must remain vigilant as new strains of COVID-19 may still pose a threat to our society. Equitable access and affordable vaccines and medicines are prerequisites. But so is making health systems stronger and more resilient, including through effective investment and partnerships between pharmaceutical industries to support the global health care supply chain.

In addition, we must also foster an inclusive approach that brings together governments and society to respond to future crises more effectively. On this note, we welcome the partnership between Osaka

University's Center for Infectious Disease Education and Research and the Institute of Tropical Disease at Universitas Airlangga on collaborative research regarding emerging and reemerging infectious disease.

Second, on sustainable energy transition cooperation, Indonesia and Japan have shared a mutual vision and commitment on achieving low carbon growth and a climate-resilient world. However, the discussions have yet to go beyond net zero emissions through reducing emissions. I fervently believe that we must also talk about emissions absorption. To this end, Indonesia has an advantage that not all countries have, which is the capacity to absorb large amounts of emissions through both tropical and mangrove forests that will continue to be rehabilitated. In this regard, the Indonesian government has initiated a rehabilitation program for over 640,000 hectares of mangrove forests — as well as coral reefs — as another important step to ensuring sustainable forestry.

As part of our commitment to achieve the target of net-zero emissions by 2060 or sooner, Indonesia is on a pathway to gradually replace more than 200 coal-fired power plants with a cofiring biomass program. I am optimistic that our energy transition road map will open up many opportunities for collaboration and invest-



The Raja Ampat archipelago is a popular dive site in West Papua province. WONDERFUL INDONESIA



The Buddhist Borobudur Temple dates from the ninth century. WONDERFUL INDONESIA



Dancers perform the Sendratari Ramayana ballet at the Hindu Prambanan Temple in central Java. EMBASSY OF INDONESIA

ment. Therefore, Indonesia is inviting partner countries, in particular Japan, to invest more in the development of affordable green technology.

Last, in terms of promoting a circular economy, the pandemic has taught us to be adaptive, anticipative and agile. There have been many developments in such a short time, including digitalization. In Indonesia, the pandemic has led to a drastic increase in economic digitalization. More than 202 million Indonesians are active users of the internet, contributing \$70 billion to Indonesia's economy.

The digital economy has indeed become one of the leading engines of growth, and we need to further encourage the use of this new source of growth to speed up the post-COVID-19 economic recovery. We must ensure that digital technology helps transform our economies and empower the people. Participation in the digital economy is the key to greater resiliency and creating a circular economy. As strate-

gic partners, Indonesia and Japan can capitalize on growing digital economic sectors through the creation of an ecosystem based on a sharing economy, stronger innovation, workforce digitalization and financial inclusion.

I have every confidence that the long-standing Indonesia-Japan partnership will continue to flourish and chart a more sustainable future. I remember a speech by the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2016 that started with the Japanese proverb "Ishi no ue ni mo san nen," which translates as "Even the coldest rock will warm up if sat upon for three years." Perseverance will indeed bring success. Let us work closely, hand in hand, to attain the shared future of the Indonesia-Japan strategic partnership.

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*

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# Indonesia Independence Day Special



**Balinese people perform the Hindu melasti purification ritual.**  
AGATHA ANN  
BUNANTA

## An island nation of beauty and culture

The Republic of Indonesia, stretching across more than 17,000 islands, is the largest archipelago in the world. From Aceh on the western edge of Sumatra to Western New Guinea, the 37 provinces of Indonesia extend over 5,000 kilometers. This vast nation is home to over 1,300 ethnic groups and 730 languages, with Indonesian being the official language spoken. The majority of people are Muslim, with significant minorities of Christians, Hindus and Buddhists. Straddling the equator, the tropical climate allows rainforest and coral reef ecosystems to thrive, while the seismic Ring of Fire that the islands of Sumatra, Java, Celebes and Lesser Sunda sit upon has created over 400 volcanoes — over 100 of them still active.

Indonesia's Independence Day commemorates the 1945 declaration signed by Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, with a public holiday formalized the following year. This started the Indonesian National Revolution, which saw brutal fighting against Dutch colonial forces in a four-year conflict that ultimately ended in freedom for Indonesia, one of the most significant moments in the decolonization of Asia. Sukarno would go on to serve as president until 1967, with Hatta as vice president until 1956.

Java is the most populous island and home to capital city Jakarta. Java's population of 148 million accounts for approximately 55% of the country's people but only 7% of its land mass. The densely populated island is characterized by large, energetic cities. Among these urban areas

there can be found cultural sites, such as the Hindu temples of Borobudur and Prambanan, and the melting pot of Semarang with influences and buildings from Chinese, Dutch and Indian Arab visitors.

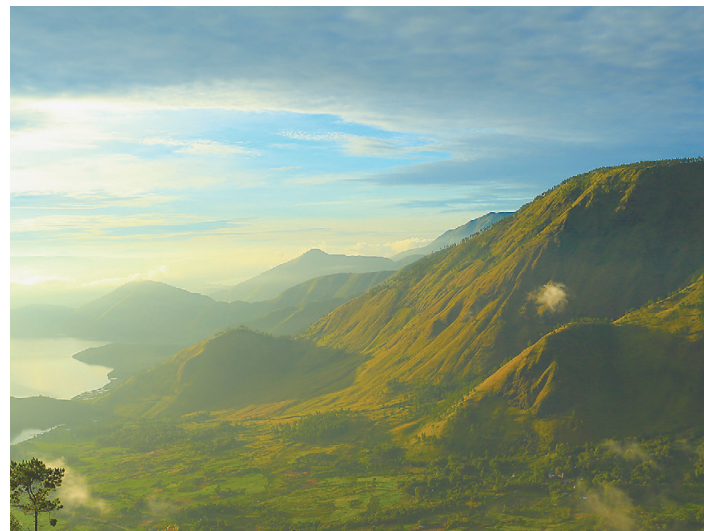
There are also plenty of opportunities to see Indonesia's world-renowned natural beauty on Java. Popular attractions include the Kepulauan Seribu (Thousand Islands) Marine National Park not far from the north coast of the bustling metropolis of Jakarta, the active volcano of Merapi and the colored lakes on Dieng Plateau. Java's sprawling cities have their share of attractions, with Yogyakarta being well known as a cultural center and the cradle of Javanese civilization. Jakarta boasts many national institutional buildings and monuments, as well as a handful of remaining colonial-era buildings and the ever-popular air-conditioned shopping malls.

Bali, the "Land of the Gods," is the crown of Indonesian tourism. The world-famous destination's Kuta Beach attracts visitors year-round to enjoy the surf break, nightclubs and markets. The majority-Hindu island has a different cultural feel, and the Balinese people remain proud of their own culture and handcrafted goods. Away from the bustling tourist areas there are plenty of quiet, secluded locations, including the spiritual Ubud, luxurious Seminyak and laid-back salt farming village of Amed, where divers can visit the shipwreck of the USS Liberty.

The rugged cousin to Java's urbanized sprawl, Sumatra has volcanoes to hike, coral reefs and legendary isolated

surf spots. Padang is the birthplace of the eponymous cuisine that is now renowned worldwide, including spicy favorites like *nasi goreng*, *rendang* and *sate padang*. As the gateway to the nearby Minang Highlands and Mentawai Islands, both hikers and surfers may find themselves in this merchant town. Centrally located is Lake Toba, a huge crater lake that is the remains of an ancient volcanic eruption. The largest lake in Southeast Asia and one of the deepest in the world, Samosir Island sits in the middle and is the heart of the local Batak culture, known for its festive way of life and distinctive saddle-shaped wooden houses.

The nature preserve of Bukit Lawang hosts an orangutan sanctuary, as well as a flourishing ecotourism scene, a leading example of sustainable tourism development. Visitors can experience jungle hikes where wildlife sightings are possible, as well as encounters with semi-wild orangutans in the rehabilitation center that was set up in 1973. The western-most province in Indonesia is autonomous Aceh, a deeply spiritual part of the country where the spread of Islam began. The home of the Acehese people, the region's recent history is dominated by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The city of Banda Aceh is home to the Tsunami Museum, which is built in the style of traditional Aceh raised architecture and records the experiences of that devastating tragedy. The Grand Mosque of Baiturrahman survived the tsunami and provided shelter to hundreds of residents, while most of the surrounding city was flattened.



Left: Thousand Islands Marine Park; Above: Lake Toba is home to the festive Batak people. WONDERFUL INDONESIA

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