

supposed to make sure the dead are buried before their bodies deteriorate. People go to the house of the deceased as soon as they hear the news, even when it is in the middle of the night. The visit is intended not only to pay respect, but more importantly, to give moral support to the grieving family and to assist with the funeral preparations. This custom applies to the family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues of the deceased. The closer one's relationship, the more support one is expected to provide. Canadians will save themselves a lot of frustration if they are aware that work is frequently interrupted for funerals.

The example above also describes the Indonesian concept of *gotong royong*, mutual cooperation. Community members cooperate in almost every aspect of life. Naturally, the degree to which they cooperate varies from one location to another. *Gotong royong* is often stronger in the rural areas where, for example, people take turns harvesting their paddy fields and share the work to build a *balai desa*, a village community centre or a mosque. In big cities, *gotong royong* exists, but often to a lesser degree.

**Consensus decision-making** is integral to Indonesian culture. Its purpose is to create harmony. Indonesian people believe that the majority

must accommodate the minority. Through consensus everyone can voice his or her opinion, eventually reaching a conclusion that all parties can live with. The country's long tradition of consensus decision-making prevents the majority Muslim population from turning Indonesia into an Islamic state. Consensus makes it possible for majority and minority religious groups to live together in an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding and tolerance. This approach is prevalent throughout Indonesian organizations and institutions.

### **Harmony**

Indonesians tend to conform in order to preserve harmony. This is very different to what westerners, including Canadians, see as desirable. Most westerners tend to applaud individual achievement and support people who struggle against the system. Indonesians also believe that individual achievement is important, but think people should be humble, too, and should strive to achieve something only when they have the support of others. Indonesians frown on people who act superior. To say "I did it!" may be interpreted as a sign of pomposity because it goes against Indonesian collectivistic values. As the Indonesian proverb states, "Like the principle of the rice paddy, the more its grains weigh, the lower it bows."