

### **Manners and hospitality**

are very important to Indonesians. For example, respect can be demonstrated through physical gestures. When sitting in the presence of an older or respected person, evaluating your feet conveys disrespect. Using the left hand is improper, as is pointing with the foot. Shaking hands is a common ritual when two people meet, but some women prefer not to shake hands with men. Instead, they clasp their hands and bow a little as a sign of respect.

When addressing people, the word *Bapak* is used for male and *Ibu* for female. *Bapak* literally means father, and *Ibu* means mother. However, the two words are widely used to show respect for people who are older, respected or superior. The word *saudara*, which literally means brother or sister, is used to imply a more familial relationship.

### **Face and indirectness**

Indonesians are sensitive people. Having been subjected to Dutch colonialism for three and a half centuries and Japanese occupation for three years, Indonesians value their personal pride, one of the few things the Dutch and Japanese could not cart away. "Destroy the face," said an Indonesian manager, "and they will have nothing left." Because saving face is so important, people rarely ask

for things directly, preferring instead to skirt the subject at hand, revealing their intentions gradually.

The Indonesian style of negotiating is indirect. Indonesians avoid embarrassing the other party by having to say "no." By exposing a request gradually until they have a fairly good chance of getting a "yes" response, Indonesians avoid the embarrassment of being turned down directly.

Be tactful when negotiating. If you must say "no," it is advisable to say "I wish I could, but..." so as to save face for everyone. This tendency to be indirect cannot be generalized. The closer the relationship, the more straightforward the communication. The more business-like the situation, the shorter the indirect conversation. In many cases, the poorer someone is, the more sensitive he or she becomes.

Avoid confrontation. Indonesians consider it bad form to vent one's anger and frustration in public. It is particularly important not to criticize or express dissatisfaction publicly, as this may cause the person being criticized to lose face. Most Canadians tend to "call a spade a spade." Indonesians attach far more importance to the maintenance of harmony than the pursuit of what one would consider to be the truth. The truth can