

ABOUT INDONESIA

This vast archipelago is a diverse, culturally rich nation. Situated on the equator on a cross between the Pacific and Indian oceans, Indonesia bridges two continents, Asia and Australia. Its strategic position has always influenced the cultural, social, political and economic life of the country. Stretching from the region of Irian Jaya in the east to the island of Sumatra in the west, Indonesia encompasses about 17,000 islands, a land area of 1.91 million square kilometres and 7.9 million square kilometres of territorial waters.

Like Canadians, Indonesians are familiar with the concepts of diversity and multiculturalism and thus enjoy the contributions of a multitude of cultures and traditions, including more than 580 languages and dialects. As in Canada, Indonesians welcome and celebrate diversity. This is reflected in the country's motto, Unity in Diversity or *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*.

Indonesia's national language, *Bahasa Indonesia*, is an important unifying factor. It developed from a Malay dialect that once dominated the language of trade throughout the country. Canadians are often surprised by Indonesians' unquestioned use of *Bahasa Indonesia*, when most people speak a different language in the

home. *Bahasa Indonesia* emerged out of the country's struggle for independence. In 1928, in the so-called *Sumpah Pemuda*, Indonesian youth from many regions of the country met in Jakarta and pledged allegiance to one country, one nation and one language.

During more than three centuries of Dutch colonialism, many local kingdoms fought unsuccessfully to attain sovereignty. Indonesia proclaimed its independence on August 17, 1945 after the Japanese departed toward the end of World War II. Nationalism is deep-rooted. Foreigners might find one Indonesian critical of another, but will face resentment if they, themselves, criticize Indonesia. Indonesians cherish their country's independence. It is, for them, a source of great pride.

Pancasila, the Five Principles, were set forth as Indonesia's state philosophy in the 1945 Constitution. The principles are:

1. belief in God;
2. just and civilized humanity;
3. the unity of Indonesia;
4. democracy guided by inner wisdom and unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives; and
5. social justice for all.