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1. RI FULLY SUPPORTS PALESTINE'S INDEPENDENCE IN 2011, AMBASSADOR

Jakarta - Indonesia fully supports Palestine's move to declare its independence in 2011, Indonesian Ambassador to Jordan and Palestine Zainulbahar Noor said.

The ambassador was responding to the Palestinian government's plan to declare the country's independence in Summer 2011.

"As stated in our constitution, independence is the right of every nation. Indonesia fully supports Palestine's plan to soon declare its freedom from Israel,".

He said the independence of Palestine should be made as every nation's interest as it is an important move towards a more peaceful world.

Last year, several countries in Latin America namely Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay had acknowledged Palestine as a state. Other Latin American nations that have already taken the step are Costa Rica, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

A senior Palestinian official said that he had received a promise from France that it will in September recognize a Palestinian state on the territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath, who wrapped up a visit to Paris on Saturday, told Xinhua that France has reiterated that it will recognize the Palestinian state in September.

"France postponed its recognition of a Palestinian state because it is making efforts to convince all entire European countries to recognize the state," Shaath said.

He noted that France is leading an initiative in the European Union (EU) which aims at activating the EU in sponsoring the peace process and adopting an initiative based on recognizing the state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"The initiative also aims at requesting from Israel to be committed to the international peace reference," Shaath said, adding

that there are positive British signal to promote the office on the Palestinian territories to a higher diplomatic office.

Some 104 countries now recognized a Palestinian state, according to the Palestinian diplomatic mission at the United Nations. In all, 150 countries have some form of diplomatic relations with the Palestinians, said the mission, which has observer status at the United Nations.

Earlier US President Barack Obama hoped the Palestinian mission would become a full UN member in 2011, alongside other nations.

2. RI, CYPRUS DISCUSS EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP

Jakarta - Indonesia and Cyprus discussed efforts to strengthen their partnership during Cypriot Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou's meeting with his Indonesian counterpart Marty Natalegawa in Jakarta.

Marty told the press after the meeting, Kyprianou's working visit to Indonesia showed his country's eagerness to develop its partnership with Indonesia.

"We discussed efforts to improve our bilateral relationship between, especially to strengthen our partnership in trade, tourism and investment," Marty said.

Cyprus's seriousness in wishing to have closer relationship with Indonesia was proven by the fact that Cyprus had posted an ambassador in Jakarta since January 2010.

"I told Mr Kyprianou about our domestic conditions in relation with our position as the chair of ASEAN, and he also briefed me about his country's involvement in the European Union," .

At their meeting, the two foreign ministers also agreed that their two countries should conclude Merchant Shipping and Double Taxation Avoidance agreements that would open wider opportunities for bilateral economic cooperation and trade.

The two foreign ministers then signed a

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on bilateral consultations which would be the basis for the implementation of regular bilateral consultations.

The Cypriot foreign minister on the occasion presented via Marty a post-disaster donation of 50,000 US dollars to Indonesia.

At the meantime, Kyprianou said he appreciated Indonesia's positive response to his country's wish to strengthen its bilateral partnership with Indonesia.

"I hope this partnership will work well, so that both countries can cooperate fruitfully in various sectors," Kyprianou said.

3. RI, PHILIPPINES TO EXCHANGE DATA TO FIGHT TERRORISM

Jakarta - The Indonesian and Philippine governments have agreed to exchange data to fight and eliminate certain groups linked to terrorism.

According to a presidential statement, the agreement was reached by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his Philippine counterpart Benigno S Aquino III.

The two leaders agreed to exchange intelligence data and information to fight and root out the activities of certain quarters related to terrorist networks.

"Both countries, Indonesia and Philippines, are facing the threat of terrorism," President said.

The Indonesian President said there were certain connections about the terrorist network in Indonesia and those in the Philippines as well as the in other countries.

In fact, in some cases, some foreign nationals were found as terrorists in Indonesia. The terrorists in the South East Asia region have high mobility," Yudhoyono said.

Therefore, President Yudhoyono called on the leaders of South Asian countries to unite to fight terrorism.

Meanwhile, President Benigno S. Aquino

III said Indonesia and the Philippines had many things in common but both were also facing the threat of terrorism.

President Aquino also wanted to improve the cooperation in the maritime border sector to halt the mobility of terrorists.

The maritime border cooperation between the two countries would be intensified as there was a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two.

In addition, the two presidents also signed an MoU on cooperation to reinforce their national police forces to fight trans-border crime.

President Benigno S Aquino III was visiting Indonesia for the first time.

4. RI, AUSTRALIA BOUND BY COMMON STRATEGIC INTERESTS

Jakarta - In spite of the disputes that occasionally arise between Indonesia and Australia, the two neighbor countries in reality share many strategic interests that call for continuing cooperation for mutual benefit and support.

Since the two Pacific neighbors are bound together by a wealth of common interests and need, Indonesian Vice President Boediono said in Perth, Western Australian that the two countries relations should be more advanced in the future.

At a business gathering in Perth, organized by Western Australian Territorial Government in cooperation with the Australia Indonesia Business Council (AIBC), the Indonesian vice president said the two countries had numerous opportunities that could be developed in various fields.

Boediono made the statement when speaking on

Indonesian-Australian cooperation opportunities before tens of Australian business makers at the gathering in Perth.

"The cooperation between the two countries should advance further in the future be-

cause we have strategic interests with mutual benefit and support," Boediono told the members of AIBC.

AIBC is the peak, non-profit business association involved with the promotion and facilitation of trade and investment between Australia and Indonesia.

Besides Vice President Boediono, the gathering was also attended by Indonesian National Education Minister M Nuh, State Minister for Administrative Reforms EE Mangindaan, and Australian Agriculture and Forestry Minister Garry Redmen.

Referring Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's trip to Indonesia in November 2010, Vice President Boediono said it was of a great significance to the relations between the two countries that have to be stepped up further in the future.

"There are still many untapped opportunities that have to be improved optimally by the business makers and the people of the two countries," Boediono said.

He pointed out that economic relations between the two countries have been running well so far with the presence of Australian investors at mining sectors in Indonesia.

Therefore the vice president said the two countries cooperation in economy and commercial should be stepped up even further.

"Such cooperations should be improved because we want to move forward together," the vice president said.

Boediono said the reason why the relations between the countries should be improved was that Australia is an agricultural economic state with unique commodities.

In addition, Boediono said there was an opportunity to develop agribusiness with Australia and to increase the supply network for agricultural products.

Another reason to advance the two countries cooperation, according to the vice president, was that Australia at present is the main destination of Indonesian students to gain higher education there.

"There are at least 18,400 Indonesian stu-

dents studying at various leading universities in Australia at present," Boediono said.

In the visit to Perth, the vice president also encouraged more Indonesian students in Australia, especially those who were studying at the University of Western Australia (UWA) to conduct research on food.

"Many students from Malaysia have conducted research on food at the University of Western Australia (UWA), and therefore I encourage more Indonesian students in Australia to do the same thing," Boediono said.

Boediono made the statement on Wednesday after a meeting with Western Australian Deputy Premier Kim Hames and UWA Vice-Chancellor Prof Alan Robson.

After the meeting with Alan Robson, the vice president discovered that UWA was reliable in developing agriculture and that he hoped more Indonesian students could conduct research on food at the university.

"According to Alan Robson, an expert in agriculture, many students from Malaysia have conducted research on food at the university," Boediono said.

At the meeting with Robson, the vice president told him that the number of Indonesian students of various fields of study at UWA would probably be increased.

"There are special efforts to increase the number of Indonesian students completing their study at the University of Western Australia," said Boediono, who gained his bachelor degree at the same university under a scholarship from Colombo Plan.

While at the meeting with Western Australian Deputy Premier Kim Hames, the vice president discussed and exchanged view with the former on food issue and economic development between the two countries.

"In essence Hames is interested in establishing closer relations with Indonesia," said the vice president who was in Perth to receive an honorary doctorate from the UWA.

Vice presidential spokesman Yopie Hidayat said Boediono would receive the honorary doctorate for his meritorious services to the people during his career in the govern-

ment so far.

On March 11 the vice president and his entourage would go to Canberra to meet with Australian Deputy Prime Minister Wayne Swan and to attend a gathering with Indonesian community there.

After spending one day in Canberra, Boediono would go to Sydney to meet with Australian business community to talk on Indonesia's economic progress and business opportunities Australian businessmen could avail of in Indonesia.

"The core of the visit is in a effort to step up the already good relation between Indonesia and Australia and continue to be strengthened in the future," Yopie Hidayat said.

5. UN WANTS RI POLICE WOMEN IN PEACE-KEEPING MISSIONS

Jakarta - UN Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) Alain Le Roy praised Indonesian peacekeepers' performance and urged Indonesia to involve police women in future UN missions.

Speaking to ANTARA at the Jakarta-based UN Information Center, he said women peacekeepers' presence was needed because there were always women among displaced people in the UN mission areas.

Indonesia could possibly involve its well-trained police women into the UN peacekeeping operations in the future due to the country's excellent performance in various UN missions.

Indonesia was currently taking part in three UN peacekeeping missions, namely the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Congo, and Darfur in Sudan, he said.

The Indonesian battalion in UNIFIL consisted of around 1,400 personnel while, for the Darfur mission, it deployed a dozen of police officers to help protect displaced civilians there. "They are very professional policemen," Le Roy said.

Regarding the increasing demand of

women peacekeepers in the UN missions, the UN highlighted such roles that they could play during the peacekeeping operations, such as "interviewing victims of sexual and gender-based violence, working in women prisons, assisting female ex-combatants during the process of mobilizing and reintegration into civilian life and mentoring female cadets at police academies".

By deploying 1,795 personnel, Indonesia is one of 20 top contributors of uninformed personnel to the UN-PKO.

Nineteen other contributing countries are Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Egypt, Nepal, Jordan, Rwanda, Ghana, Uruguay, Senegal, Ethiopia, Brazil, South Africa, China, Italy, Morocco, France, and Sri Lanka.

Alain Le Roy has been in Jakarta since Tuesday to participate in the Jakarta International Defense Dialogue (JIDD) and meet with a number of top government officials and chiefs of the Indonesian military and police.

The JIDD itself was officially opened by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Le Roy said he would speak at the forum, attended by representatives from 34 countries involving defense ministers and military commanders.



ASEAN



views the APRIS cooperation as a success and has invited the EU to continue helping in realising its single market, a cornerstone of the ASEAN vision,"

1. EU PROVIDES 15-MILLION-EURO GRANT TO SUPPORT ASEAN SINGLE MARKET

Jakarta - The European Union (EU) is to provide a 15 million Euro grant to ASEAN to support its members efforts to form a single market by 2015.

The newly established cooperation called ASEAN-EU Economic Integration Support Programme (AEISP) was announced in Jakarta during a seminar themed "ASEAN and the EU : Twenty Years from Now, Two Integrated Markets". The seminar actually marked the conclusion of the ASEAN-EU Programme for Regional Integration Support (APRIS) Phase II which had been operating in Indonesia since 2006.

"Over the last eight years, the APRIS support from the EU has been successful and helpful to ASEAN. The new phase of support opens a new and exciting chapter for economic cooperation with the EU. I look forward to work in closer partnership with the EU in advancing economic integration," ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan said in his opening speech at the seminar.

Surin said the regional economic integration would bring multi-fold gains for the citizens of ASEAN, namely the realization of cheaper goods, better job prospects, better living standards and improve businesses from lower taxes and create a more competitive environment.

The EU's experiences in integrating their economies were good pointers for ASEAN and expected to help the latter in realizing the integration faster.

Meanwhile, EU's Representative to ASEAN Ambassador Julian Wilson said his region had enjoyed the benefit of cooperation with ASEAN during the past years. "Economic and people to people contact between the EU and ASEAN have been increasing during the past years and I think this two cooperation will be our roots of relation in future years," he said.

In his speech, Wilson expressed hope that ASEAN would soon realize a full market integration adding that "EU is honoured that ASEAN

APRIS phase II have been operating in Indonesia for the last eight years with EU grant support of 10 million Euro. During its operation, the program had focused its support to ASEAN on developing key agreements and implementation mechanisms leading to trade facilitation and removal of non-tariff barriers between the ASEAN members.

The program was said to have led to tangible successes including the simplification of customs procedures across borders, harmonization of administrative documents, standardization of technical requirements and the transition from governmental pre-approval system to a post-market surveillance system for cosmetic products.

The APRIS program also strengthened ASEAN Secretariat's institutional capacity in particular by helping ASEAN with the Enhanced Dispute Settlement Mechanism. Through financing policy dialogues and study visits to Europe, the program also contributed to the creation of ASEAN-EU networks of policy-makers and practitioners.



Asia-Europe Meeting

2. ASEAN TO FOCUS ON EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Jakarta - ASEAN's focus will be on equitable economic development as the community moves closer to realizing its single market and production base under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to be established in 2015.

According to the ASEAN Secretariat's press release received, ASEAN aims to ensure no segment of the society is left out of the opportunity to benefit from ASEAN's economic integration.

"ASEAN needs to address seriously the development gap so everyone can benefit from the integration," said the Secretary-General of ASEAN Surin Pitsuwan.

The renewed commitment was reaffirmed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers, who gathered in Vientiane last week for the 17th AEM Retreat.

Recognizing the development gap within some ASEAN Member States and within individual Member States, the Ministers also agreed to develop a framework.

With this framework, a set of guiding principles on narrowing these gaps premised on achieving the AEC by 2015 will be identified, taking into account specific and targeted technical assistance and capacity-building needs of ASEAN Member States, especially Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam.

The Meeting recognized that small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for more than 96 percent of all enterprises in ASEAN.

"A strong, dynamic and efficient SME sector will ensure not only the success of economic integration, but also social development for all," Surin said.

These SMEs are considered to provide 50-95 percent of the region's employment, contribute 30-53 percent to the gross domestic product and account for 19-31 percent of all exports.

The Ministers also agreed to intensify engagement with the private sector, including business councils and industry associations, especially in the Priority Integration Sectors and SMEs.

Officials are now looking into more structured mechanisms for more effective private sector engagement.

"Private sector support in ASEAN community building process is key in ensuring that our business environment is conducive for them to oper-

ate and thrive and can bring in more trade and development within the region," said Surin.

The Ministers, furthermore, discussed the impediments of realizing the AEC and ways of addressing them, in addition to exchanging views on the AEC beyond 2015.

The Ministers also talked about developments on economic integration taking place in East Asia and agreed to ensure that ASEAN remains the driving force in the dynamic and evolving regional architecture.

The 17th AEM Retreat was chaired by Indonesian Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu.

3. ASEAN RECOGNIZES SMEs' ROLE IN CREATING PROSPERITY

Jakarta - ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member countries have acknowledged the significant role of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in creating prosperity for their 500 million people.

The role of SMEs in ASEAN was among the topics discussed by ASEAN economic ministers (AEM) who gathered last week for their 17th retreat in the Laotian capital of Vientiane, according to information from the ASEAN secretariat in Jakarta on Wednesday.

"ASEAN needs to address seriously the development gap so everyone can benefit from the integration," said ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan of the retreat which was chaired by Mari Elka Pangestu, Indonesian Minister of Trade.

"A strong, dynamic and efficient SME sector will ensure not only the success of economic integration, but also social development for all," he added.

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"Private sector support in ASEAN community building process is key in ensuring that our business environment is conducive for them to operate and thrive and can bring in more trade and development within the region," said the Secretary-General.

As ASEAN moves closer to realizing its single market and production base under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to be established in 2015, more focus will be placed on equitable economic development, he said.

ASEAN aims to ensure no segment of the society is left out of the opportunity to benefit from ASEAN's economic integration. The renewed commitment was reaffirmed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers, who gathered in Vientiane last week for the 17th AEM Retreat.

Recognising the development gap within some ASEAN Member States and within individual Member States, the Ministers also agreed to develop a framework.

With this framework, a set of guiding principles on narrowing these gaps premised on achieving the AEC by 2015 will be identified, taking into account specific and targeted technical assistance and capacity-building needs of the member States, especially Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

The ministers discussed the impediments of realizing the AEC and ways of addressing them, in addition to exchanging views on the AEC beyond 2015.

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4. YOGYAKARTA TO HOST ASEAN HIGH OFFICIALS MEETINGS

Yogyakarta - Yogyakarta is to host ASEAN high officials meetings to prepare a summit in Jakarta on May 7 and 8.

"Yogyakarta is seen as already set to host the meeting, to promote tourism in Yogyakarta," ASEAN cooperation director general of the Foreign Ministry Djauhari Oratmangun said.

The Yogyakarta meeting is part of Indonesia's position as ASEAN 2011 chairman and there are actually still more than 100 ASEAN heads of state

and government, ministerial, senior officials, and working group meetings.

The meetings to prepare the 18th ASEAN Summit will be attended by all the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM), and Senior Officials Committee for the ASCC Council (SOCA) Meetings, and the Deputy Secretary General and ASEAN permanent representatives in Jakarta.

"Three main pillars will be taken up in the Yogyakarta meeting, namely politics and security, economy and social cultural sectors,"

The heads of SOM, SEOM, and SOCA, Djauhari said, will later discuss matters related to substantial preparations relating to the final documents of the 18th ASEAN Summit and the relevant logistic technical preparations.

"In the meetings the delegations are expected to give significant inputs to the ministers of the three pillars as the major purpose is to realize an ASEAN Community in 2015,"

For instance, the blue print of commitment of each of the three countries relating to the three pillars that had been discussed.

Djauhari hoped the meeting will run smoothly until the implementation of the ASEAN Summit and the heads of state from each of the ASEAN member countries could concentrate better on strategic issues in the next Summit.

On the sidelines of the various meetings an outreach programme will also be carried out in the form of the planing of trees by the senior officials and a general lecture at the University of Gadjah Mada (UGM) by the SOM leaders of Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam.

5. RI RECEIVES UNESCO REPORT ON DAMAGE OF PREAH VIHEAR TEMPLE

The U.N., New York - The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has sent a report on the damage of Preah Vihear temple to Indonesia, as the current chair of ASEAN.

"They have submitted the information because they know very well that Indonesia, which is the present chairman of ASEAN, is playing the role as a mediator of the two disputing countries (Cambodia and Thailand), especially following the February 22 agreement (the ASEAN meeting in Jakarta)," Indonesian Permanent Representatives

to the United Nations (UN) Ambassador Hasan Kleib said the the UN Headquarters, New York.

UNESCO Special Envoy Koichiro Matsuura gave the information on the damage of the Hindu temple directly to Ambassador Hasan Kleib at the UN Headquarters. Kleib also had a phone conversation with UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova about the disputed temple located in the border between Thailand and Cambodia.

Matsuura recently visited Thailand and Cambodia to discuss about efforts to protect the ancient temple.

The UNESCO special envoy underlined that the purpose of his visit to Thailand and Cambodia was to hear the reports from both sides and he had not expressed his position whether he was for or against any side.

In the meeting with Ambassador Kleib, Matsuura expressed his hope that the temple, which was declared by UNESCO as a site of the World Heritage, be protected.

Kleib responded that ASEAN was very much aware of the importance of maintaining peace in the border area between Cambodia and Thailand so that the two countries could discuss about peaceful solution to problems concerning the disputed border line and the management of Preah Vihear temple.

"However, we told them (UNESCO), that we will not take a position regarding the protection, maintenance, and moreover management of the temple, because it's fully the affairs of UNESCO and the two countries (Cambodia and Thailand)," Ambassador Hasan Kleib said.

On February 22, 2011, ASEAN foreign ministers held an informal meeting in Jakarta to discuss the armed clash between Cambodia and neighboring Thailand.

In the urgent meeting of ASEAN ministers, Indonesia was requested to send observers to monitor a ceasefire in the affected areas of both sides` border.

6. ASEAN CHIEF EXPRESSES SYMPATHY OVER DISASTER IN JAPAN

Jakarta - ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan has expressed sincere sympathy to the Japanese government and people following the 8.9 earthquake and subsequent tsunami there

that have already killed 40 people and caused 39 others to go missing.

"Japan has been one of our oldest and most generous Dialogue Partners and closest friends since 1977. My colleagues and I share your sadness and concern," said Surin Pitsuwan in an ASEAN Secretariat press release received.

"I wish to express my sincere sympathy to the Government and people of Japan, one of our oldest, most generous Dialogue Partners and closest friend of ASEAN since 1977. My colleagues and I share your sadness and concern," .

Japan has been quick to support ASEAN in managing our own challenges, natural disasters, pandemics and economic recovery since the Asian financial crisis in 1997 as well as other, non-traditional, threats.

ASEAN Member States are grateful and want to assist and accommodate Japan as it embarks upon its own recovery and reconstruction after this natural disaster affecting a major part of the country.

"In fact, several colleagues and I were scheduled to be in Japan this weekend to take part in the JICA-ASEAN Connectivity Symposium and other activities,".

"I understand that 20 countries in the region have issued tsunami warnings as a matter of precaution. These are countries with coastlines in and around the Pacific Ocean,".

Surin expects that communities in high-risk areas in the eastern part of Indonesia and the eastern seaboard of the Philippines will exercise full precaution and seek guidance from local authorities on steps to be taken.

According to Surin, this is a clear reminder that natural disasters can occur anywhere, anytime. ASEAN will have to expedite its own mechanisms to be prepared for such calamities.

"Our procedures and tools under the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre), must be in place and ready for these kinds of eventualities,".

The ASEAN Secretariat stands ready to coordinate any support, assistance and cooperation as well as private sector contributions for the victims of this unfortunate situation.



7. RI READY TO RAISE ASEAN MEMBER STATES' ASSISTANCE FOR JAPAN

Jakarta - The RI government is ready to raise assistance from ASEAN member states for post-disaster reconstruction for Japan due to the Indonesian chairmanship of ASEAN this year, said Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa.

"One of RI's concerns as ASEAN chair this year is about how to raise support from the member states in relation to the disasters that hit Japan," said Marty at his office.

He said Indonesia, as ASEAN chairman in 2011, was responsible to encourage other member countries to help Japan not only in an emergency, but also to assist in restructuring the country after the 9-magnitude earthquake and subsequent tsunami that hit Japan on March 11.

"Now is the time for Indonesia to show its capacity as ASEAN chair to collect assistance from the member states and also to encourage them to be proactive in helping Japan for its reconstruction,".

In relation to the disaster that hit Japan, the government of Indonesia had sent teams to Japan involving rapid reaction teams comprising 60 people. The team would be sent to Japan in stages, he added.

"The first team of 15 people had arrived in Tokyo and we got information that they are now in Miyagi to help the Indonesians there,".

He also said that the focus of the team was to relocate the Indonesians as priority and also the peoples of the other ASEAN member states. Moreover, RI would send 1.700 blankets to Japan tonight and another 10.000 blankets had already been sent.

Marty also urged the Indonesians who wanted

to deliver relieve aid for Japanese to contact the Foreign Ministry for the sake of efficiency.

"I hope the people who want to send humanitarian and relief aid will contact our ministry because the Japanese government needs assistance in many forms," he added.

8. ASEAN TO FORGE COMMON POSITION ON HELPING JAPAN

Jakarta - The governments of Indonesia and other ASEAN member countries are to formulate a common position on how to help Japan deal with its post-disaster problems, Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa said.

Speaking to reporters at the Presidential Palace on Monday, he said ASEAN would adopt a common position on how to help Japan recover from the recent earthquake and tsunami disasters.

"What we will discuss is the possibility of having a joint ASEAN position to support Japan in tackling its post-disaster problems," he said.

But Marty could not yet foresee what ASEAN's position would be and the kind of assistance ASEAN member countries could give.

Regarding the most recent developments in Japan, Marty said currently the country was busy handling the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami disaster and mitigate the impact of the Fukushima nuclear power plant disruption.

"The evacuation and relocation process continues. Yesterday 33 Indonesians were repatriated if I am not mistaken. The nuclear radiation problem will be continuously monitored, on previous occasions I had to say there is a contingency plan for a necessary nuclear radiation radius expansion," he said.

Marty also said that this prepared contingency plan does not need to be implemented due to the more stable situation in Japan.

"Evacuation radius in the country is still remaining 50 km, and we're ready with any contingency plans to evacuate our citizens if necessary. I think Japan has been quite stable now," he said.

9. ASEAN TO HAVE DISASTER MITIGATION CENTER

Jakarta - ASEAN will have a natural disaster mitigation center in Jakarta called ASEAN Human Assistance Center slated to be operational beginning in June 2011, according to the Vice-President's spokesperson.

"The presence of the center is aimed at mitigating the impacts of disasters and it is expected to be commissioned at the time when an ASEAN summit is held here," the Vice-President's spokesperson, Yopie Hidayat, told newsmen.

Hidayat briefed the media after he accompanied Vice-President Boediono in receiving ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan who conveyed a report on some important events in 2011 connected to ASEAN when Indonesia is the chair this year.

According to Hidayat, the mitigation center will analyze the many forms of natural disaster within ASEAN, something to be done by adopting the model for such mitigation center as developed in Japan.

In the meeting, Secretary General Surin reported the planned holding of ASEAN Global Dialogue which is to be organized in Bali to bring together the representatives of the World Bank and the business sectors.

The event is scheduled for October or November in which some leaders of major countries, including the United States, are expected to attend. Indonesia and ASEAN as a whole will be able to take a lesson from the experiences of those developed countries.

Other important events will also include the Conference of ASEAN Connectivity where investors from many countries are to be invited so that they may explore the potentials within ASEAN.

This particular conference will discuss the various ASEAN connectivity projects whose master plans have been agreed on in the national levels of each ASEAN member states, he said.



ECONOMY

1. RI, SERBIA COOPERATE IN AVOIDING DOUBLE TAXATION

Jakarta - Indonesia and Serbia have agreed to step up cooperation in avoiding double taxation between the two countries.

"We are happy to receive Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic to discuss various bilateral issues related to political, economic, social, and cultural cooperation," Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Marty Natalegawa said here on Monday.

In addition, Marty said the two countries also discussed global and regional issues in Central Europe and Southeast Asia.

Marty said Indonesia and Serbia had a long lasting cooperation especially in the Non-Aligned Movement.

On the occasion Marty also invited his Serbian counterpart to participate as observer in the upcoming Non-Aligned meeting in the island resort of Bali from May 25-27, 2011.

In a joint press conference, the Serbian foreign minister said it was his second visit to Indonesia.

"It is my second visit to Indonesian and I will come here again this year to attend the Non-Aligned meeting in Bali. Concerning Serbia and Indonesian relations, we have had mutual need for a long time," Jeremic said.

The Serbian foreign minister pointed out that the future of bilateral relation and cooperation between his country and Indonesia would be brighter.

"We have discussed bilateral cooperation in education, economy, and social, and we also invited Indonesia to visit Serbia to discuss further cooperation," Jeremic said.

2. JAMBI'S EXPORTS OF INDUSTRIAL COMMODITIES 150 MILLION US DOLLARS

Jambi - Jambi's exports of industrial commodities in January 2011 reached 50.08 million US dollars, a 2.29 pct increase.

Head of the Jambi statistics agency Dyan Pramono Effendi said while Jambi's exports in January were generally declining by 19.24 pct, its export of industrial commodities had increased by 2.29 pct, with the highest rate in processed rubber increasing by 9.72 pct, and the others declining including vegetable oils, plywood, paper and pulp.

Jambi's processed rubber exports in January reached 86.15 million US dollars, vegetable oil, paper and pulp respectively 52.82 million US dollars and 9.08 million US dollars.

"Other exports of commodities including charcoal, meat, fish and shrimps as well as processed food in January had not been registered in January," Dyan Pramono Effendi.

In the meantime, the exports of farm products in January 2011 reached only 3.25 million US dollars, a drop of 8.50 pct compared to a month earlier. The drop was particularly due to the export of areca nut from 3.54 million US dollars in December 2010 to 3.22 million US dollars in January 2011.

Jambi's exports of mining products in January comprised only nonoil/gas commodities which dropped 82.35 pct to 8.94 million US dollars with a volume of 205.24 thousand tons.

In general, Jambi's exports in January 2011 dropped 19.24 pct from 200.92 million US dollars in December to 162.27 million US dollars in January 2011.

3. CHINA BUYS 653 INDONESIAN NATIONAL STANDARD RIGHTS

Kuta, Bali - China has bought as many as 653 user rights on Indonesia's National Standard (SNI) system in anticipation of the implementation of standards for foreign industrial products intended for the Indonesian market, an government official said.

"It seems that China has been preparing itself to get into a wider Indonesian market so that it wants its products to comply with our SNI," said head of the National Standardization Board (BSN) Bambang Setiadi.

China bought the user rights on the SNI in November 2010, said Setiadi on the sidelines of an Asian CEO-International Standard Organization (ISO) forum held in Bali on March 1-3 and attended by 26 delegates from 18 countries, including ASEAN member states, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Papua New Guinea.

The bulk of the user rights bought by China were for electrical and electronic goods, machineries, agricultural tools and consumer goods, Setiadi added.

Setiadi regretted the fact that China had bought the user rights on SNI while the Indonesian industrial community had not fully realized the importance of SNI.

The lack of awareness of SNI's functions in Indonesia, due to the voluntary nature of its implementation on the largest sectors of the products totaling 6,800. Only some 250 are of mandatory nature, among others on tire, gas tube, hose, valve and stoves.

Business in Indonesia uses only up to 30 percent of the SNI, a situation is also normally found in other developing nations.

In effort to encourage the implementation of the SNI by the industries, the Indonesian government has since early this year made it an obligation that goods and services for government use must be in accordance with the SNI.

The consequence of the obligation on the SNI implementation for goods and services intended for government use has been seen

would bring about big impact on the industries as the government spends some 500 trillion rupiahs per year on goods and services.

4. RI NOT TO RUSH TO SIGN FTA WITH EU

Jakarta - Indonesia will not rush to sign a free trade agreement (FTE) with the European Union, Deputy Trade Minister Mahendra Siregar said.

"Indonesia will not make the agreement just because others have done it. We must assess and evaluate the conditions first," he said at the ASEAN-EU Program for Regional Integration Support II.

EU has been holding negotiations with Singapore as of March 2010 and with Malaysia as of October 2010 to make an FTA and will also conduct negotiations with Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines.

"We have not done such a negotiation yet," he said adding that Indonesia has a vision group that would analyze and evaluate future economic steps for Indonesia."

"I will feel more comfortable if we have had preparations and new capabilities for making agreement but certainly economic meetings with the EU would continue to be done such as for example the ministerial-level ASEAN-EU Summit Meeting," .

Mahendra said since the financial crisis in Europe and North America in 2008-2009 there had been a shift in the global economic orientation to emerging markets such as China, India and Indonesia.

"Global industries can no longer force consumers in the region to consume the same products sold in the US or Europe. There must be adaptations with the market," he said.

In view of that, the ASEAN-EU FTA required adjustments and flexibilities because what was done right now was more of a form of temporary mechanism of interactions.

"The Asia-Europe Meeting right now is still a mere good concept and in practice it is still minimum and needs to be stepped up,".

The Asia-Europe Meeting is a forum of friends established in 1996 consisting of EU and ASEAN member countries, India, Mongolia and Pakistan.

Regarding the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) Mahendra said it would bring benefits to small and medium businesses referring to the Rule of Origin which shows that products are made in the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Mahendra said 70 percent of Indonesian companies have met the agreement and half of them are small and medium businesses.

This means that small and medium businesses get a benefit from AFTA.

Regarding the assessment of a researcher from the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Ponciano S. Intal that Indonesia is still below the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore, Mahendra said Indonesia is facing two problems.

"Indeed there are still challenges to be faced in Indonesia namely infrastructure and corporate governance. The rankings for India, Russia and China are actually not too well but investors keep coming there,".

He said it was not about how many FTAs to be made but how good they would be for integrating the existing agreements into ASEAN.

"Do not rush to make an FTA but evaluation must first be made on the existing agreements," he said.

Indonesia has so far made a free trade agreement with 10 countries in ASEAN and bilateral FTA with China, Australia and New Zealand.

5. TRADE MINISTER LAUNCHES NATIONAL SHOES DAY

Jakarta - Trade Minister Marie Elka Pangestu has launched a National Shoes Day to encourage the Indonesian people to wear Indonesia-made shoes especially on every Friday.

On the occasion, Minister Pangestu wore brown snake-leather shoes, while football player Bambang Pamungkas (31) wore black leather shoes.

"Hopefully this movement could be followed by other ministries and institutions, rolling like a snow ball," she said.

The trade ministry's cooperative is holding a domestic-made shoes exhibition from March 9 to 15, 2011, and plans to open several Indonesian shoes shops to promote the Indonesian-made products.

Minister Pangestu believed that Indonesian shoes were quite competitive, including those produced by Yongki Komaladi, Gino Mariani, Sledger, Andre Valentino, Andre Convert, Studio Nine, Elle Paris, Absolut, Kenny, Piero, Tomkins and Specs.

Deputy Trade Minister Mahendra Siregar urged domestic shoes producers to improve their products' quality, design and promotion.

"We choose Bambang Pamungkas to become an icon of quality symbol for victory,".

The Indonesia-made Shoes Day is launched to follow the step of the National



Batik Day declared few years ago, to win the public heart, according to Siregar.

Chairman of the Indonesian Shoes Producer Association (Aprisindo) Eddy Widjanarko appreciated the government for initiating the launching of the Indonesia Shoes Day.

"The exports have been tremendous. In 2009, it reached 1.7 billion US dollars, and in 2010 up to November 2.4 billion US dollar. Our shoes quality is good, we have exported shoes to 148 countries," he said.

Widjanarko also called on the Indonesian people to love domestic-made shoes in order to increase the production.

The domestic shoes products currently dominate around 70 percent of shoes market for the middle and up markets, and 50 percent of the lower and middle markets.

"We should be able to dominate the lower and middle markets," Eddy Widjanarko said.

6. RI SETS FOOTWEAR EXPORT TARGET AT US\$3.2 BLN

Jakarta The government has set itself a target of exporting US\$3.2 billion worth of footwear in 2011, Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu said.

The exports are expected to increase by US\$6 million from that in the previous year which stood at US\$2.6 billion.

"The increase is high because investment over the past two years also increased significantly, so that we set a target of US\$3.2 billion this year and US\$5 billion next year,".

Chairman of the Indonesian Shoe-makers Association (Aprisindo) Eddy Widjanarko also has set a target of increasing the values of the association's exports to US\$1 billion per annum, hoping that the government would provide its support.

Mari E Pangestu said that the government would continue to encourage and facilitate shoe-making industries to increase the qual-

ity of their products, designs and promotions so that Indonesia's market shares overseas would also increase.

"Quality must be maintained. We have to fight with a good quality and reasonable prices. Therefore, it must be facilitated to improve and make its quality and standards good," Mari E Pangestu said.

The minister said that the main competitors of Indonesian shoes were those of China and Vietnam.

According to Eddy, the government's support was needed by small and medium scale shoe maker industries because in general the quality and design of domestically produce shoes had been improved, thus they were able to compete in the world market.

"Indonesia's shoe products have been exported to 148 countries. The quality and design of domestic shoes are already good. For sport shoes, we are the third best after China and Vietnam and for rubber shoes we are the forth best after China, Vietnam and India," he said.



7. INDONESIA HAS GREAT POTENTIAL IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY : OBSERVER

Jakarta - Indonesia has a great potential in the hospitality industry as the contribution of the world's travel and tourism economy is expected to rise in 2020, an observer said.

"According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTCC), the contribution of the travel and tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 6.3 percent of 6,766,000 jobs, or one in every 15.8 jobs in 2010 to 6.5 percent of total 8,457,000 jobs, or one in every 15.5 jobs by 2020," Julie Kathleen Orton, Regional Admission Director for the Asian Region of Laureate International Universities Inc. said here on a media briefing of Laureate Hospitality Education, Thursday.

According to her, travel, tourism and leisure are among the fastest-growing sectors in the global economy and the trend is may to continue.

As the industry expands, hospitality graduates are working in a wider spectrum of positions than ever before, she said, adding that, these are the sectors that have great impact in the economy development in Indonesia.

"Hospitality is a business to host, it is not a matter of hotel and tourism business. And it has great development in Indonesia," Orton said.

Laureate Hospitality Education (LHE) is a global group of institutions that provides hospitality, tourism, event, sport, and entertainment management education to students from over 100 countries.

"What Laureate Hospitality Education offers through our international universities network are International Hospitality Business degrees with specializations in Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Event Management, Finance and many more," Orton said.

According to her, numerous choices of international business career such as hotels, resorts, amusement or theme parks, tourism offices, cruise ships, luxury brand managements to real estate await the skills from the graduated LHE students.

"Every year, there are over 100 international companies which come to recruit our students,"

LHE comprises of 8 premium and leading institutions in five countries and four continents.

The schools under the LHE management

are among others Glion Institute of Higher Education, Les Roches International School of Hotel Management in Switzerland, Les Roches International School of Hotel Management in Spain, Les Roches Gruyere University of Applied Sciences , in Switzerland, Les Roches Jin Jiang International Hotel Management College in Shanghai China, Kendall College in Chicago USA, Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School and Australian International Hotel School in Australia.

According to NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) Glion and Les Roches have been the only 3 University level accredited institutions for Hospitality Management in Switzerland.

Meanwhile, according to Taylor Nelson Sofres Global Survey in 2010, the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (Australia), located not far from Indonesia, has been ranked number 1 Hospitality Management School in Australia and Asia.

Some International Companies which have cooperation with LHE among others are Accor, Four Seasons, Grand Hyatt, Hilton, Kempinski, Mandarin Oriental, Marriot, Starwood, The Ritz Carlton, Toga Hospitality, and Louis Vuitton

Meanwhile, Erika Clark, Regional Admission manager for Indonesia and Malaysia of Laureate International Universities.Inc said Indonesia was really promoting its tourism industry.

"The Indonesian government is really promoting with its Wonderful Indonesia Campaign on the CCN all the time. I think they are definitely working on creating the awareness to come to Indonesia as a beautiful country," Erika said.

The graduated students from LHE were branching out to work into many different companies such as banks, finance, hotels, retails, etc., she said, adding that Indonesia has so many beautiful things to be able to see such as beautiful cities, seas, beaches, forests, and many natural resource to be developed and harnessed in the hospitality industry and one of the parts of the hospitality is the costumer service focus.

Some Indonesians alumnus from LHE institutions were also present on the occasions, among others, Natasha Kowara, CEO of Convivium Restaurant Jakarta, Budi Cahyadi, Operational Manager of Mandarin Oriental Hotel Jakarta, and Ariadny Reshijaya, Director of Business Development of Buzz Allianz.

2009 from 11.24 percent in 2005.

The poverty rate also fell to 14.15 percent in 2009 from 15.97 percent in 2005.

"We must always be optimistic about the prospect of the national economy. We have set the target of the economic growth rate for 2014 at a range of 7.0- 7.7 percent,".

Likewise, the unemployment rate was expected to fall to 6.0-6.6 percent and poverty rate 8-10 percent in 2014, he said.

8. GOVT PROJECTS ANNUAL GROWTH OF 7 PCT UNTIL 2014

Mamuju, W Sulawesi - The government has projected the domestic economy to expand by an average of 7 percent annually in the 2010-2014 period as envisaged in the second phase of medium-term development plan, an official said.

"The government will always make an effort to raise the national economic growth. In the 2005-2009 period or the first phase of medium-term development plan the economy expanded convincingly by an average of above 5 percent per year. Only in 2009 the economy grew 4.5 percent because of the global economic crisis," Dida Heryadi Salya, assistant for institutional affairs to the chief of the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) said.

With the economy growing at a promising pace, the government managed to keep down unemployment rate to 7.87 percent in

9. GOVT CUTS CPO EXPORT TAX TO 22.5% FOR APRIL SHIPMENT

The government has cut export tax on crude palm oil for April shipment by 2.5 percent to 22.5 percent from 25 percent in the previous two months.

As such, exporters must pay export tax as much as 22.5 percent of the government-set export reference price.

Director General of Foreign Trade at the Trade Ministry Deddy Saleh said on Tuesday the reference price of CPO exports for April shipment was US\$1,135 per ton.

Meanwhile, the export reference prices of CPO derivatives in the form of crude olein for April shipment are US\$1,196 per ton, refine bleach deodorized (RBD) palm olein US\$1,203 per ton, and crude kernel olein US\$2,096 per ton, crude stearin US\$1,165 per ton, crude kernel stearin US\$2,096 per ton, RBD palm stearin US\$1,176 per ton, RBD palm kernel stearin US\$2,243 per ton and biodiesel US\$1,255 per ton.

The government has imposed progressive export tax on CPO and its derivatives since the issuance of the finance minister's regulation number 67 of 2010 on goods subject to export tax.

The export tax is set by referring to CPO prices at the international commodity exchange in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

LAST CHANGE	STOCK	BY-SL	INV-S	INV-SL	PRICE	LOT	TIME
2150	MEHA	BC-FZ	0	0	150	4	113640
183	MEHA	BC-FZ	0	0	150	4	113642
225	FTBA	BH-CP	1	0	13650	1	113642
245	INAF	YR-ZR	0	0	85	189	113642
2735	BUMI	YF-NI	0	0	2250	10	113646
139	BUMI	YF-NI	0	0	2250	10	113646
2250	LSIP	CS-YJ	1	0	6550	10	113647
91	LSIP	IN-YJ	0	0	6550	20	113647
475	LSIP	YF-YJ	0	0	6550	5	113647
1280	LSIP	LG-YJ	0	0	6550	5	113647
345	DEWA	CP-GR	0	0	230	40	113648
4325	CNKO	PP-DH	0	0	85	214	113648
160	CNKO	PP-DH	0	0	85	214	113648
1750	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2735	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
144	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
6250	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
18500	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

However, some CPO exporters who have an objection to the progressive export tax scheme have proposed that the government impose a flat CPO export tax scheme.

The Association of Indonesian Oil Palm Producers (GAPKI) have suggested that the government set CPO export tax at 3 percent when the global price is equal to or higher than US\$700 per ton and exempt CPO derivatives from export tax to encourage the development of domestic downstream palm oil industry.

The government said it was still studying the proposal.

But Deddy said earlier it was difficult to apply a flat export tax of 3 percent under the current circumstances.

10. GOVT RAISES COCOA BEAN EXPORT TAX TO 15 PCT

Jakarta - The government has raised export tax on cocoa beans for April 2011 shipment to 15 percent from 10 percent previously.

The export reference price of the farm commodity for April shipment was US\$3,203 per ton compared to US\$3,021 per ton a month earlier, Director General of Foreign Trade at the Trade Ministry Deddy Saleh said.

Since April last year, the government has applied progressive export tax on cocoa beans by referring to the global cocoa prices.

Under the finance minister's regulation number 67 of 2010, export tax on cocoa beans uses the reference price based on the average CIF price of New York Board of Trade in the previous month.

The global price of cocoa beans continued to increase in the past couple of months, hitting a record high of US\$3,500 per ton after Ivory Coast, one of the world's biggest cocoa bean producers, suspended its cocoa bean exports because of political turmoil engulfing the African country.

Indonesia is also one of the world's biggest cocoa bean producers.

Data from the Trade Ministry show Indonesia's cocoa bean exports in the January-November 2010 period rose to US\$1.38 billion compared with US\$1.17 billion in the same period a year earlier.

11. RI'S FORESTRY EXPORTS TO REACH US\$9 BLN

Jakarta - Indonesia's forestry exports are estimated to reach US\$9 billion this year, up 30 percent from last year's US\$ 7 billion.

The new foreign exchange earning would be achieved if the forestry ministry could optimize the existing opportunities and potentials as well as intensify coordination with the related institutions, Agung Nugraha, chairman of the Indonesian Forestry Community (MPI) said here Friday.

"The potential is huge because our products have applied the legal wood standard through the mechanism of Timber Legality Verification System (SVLK) which has been internationally recognized,".

Indonesia's forestry exports include plywood, pulp and paper, furniture and sawn timber.

"I think the demand for timber will increase in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and strong subsequent tsunami in Japan. We must be able to meet the potential demands,".





1. BALI'S BENOA PORT WINS "BEST PORT WELCOME" AWARD

Denpasar, Bali - PT Pelabuhan Indonesia III, Benoa branch, Bali, has received a "Best Port Welcome 2010" award from "Dream World Cruise Destination" magazine which is based in London, a spokesman said.

The magazine had presented the award to a representative of Indonesia's tourism and culture ministry, Sapta Nirwandar, at the Seatrade Cruise Shipping Convention 2011 that was held at the Miami Beach Convention Center, Florida, on March 16, 2011, said Iwan Sabatini, general manager of PT Pelabuhan Indonesia III's Benoa branch said .

"We are grateful we have received the award as the best port. the award will be a motivation to further improve services at the largest sea port on the island , " .

He added, the awards was evidence that Benoa port had already gained international trust and met world standards as port of call for cruise ships.

"We always provide international standard services to cruise ships which anchor at Benoa port,".

to increase tourist visits to Bali by cruise ships, the company was continuing to improve the facilities and infrastructures at the port.

"We are gradually improving the facilities and infrastructure supporting the pier, so the service will be better in welcoming the cruise ships` arrivals in Bali,".

According to a schedule obtained from the various cruise ship companies abroad, at least 140 cruise ships in 2011 will visit Indonesia.

"We are targeting 40 units of the number of cruise ship visits to Indonesia will stop in Benoa port,".



2. KERINCI SEBLAT POTENTIAL WORLD BIRDWATCHING DESTINATION : OBSERVER

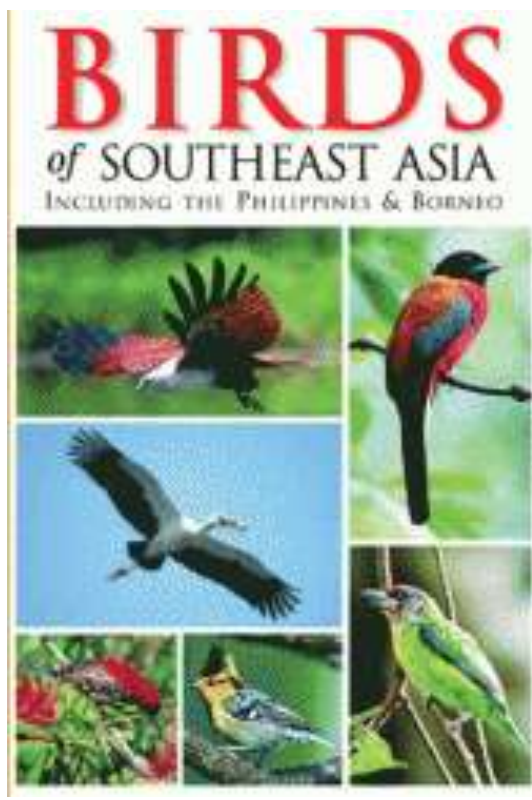
Jambi, Sumatra - The Kerinci Seblat National Park (TNKS) hosts a wide range of bird species making the park a potential world birdwatching tourism destination, an observer said.

"Based on my research since 1994, Kerinci National Park has around 300 bird species that live either inside the protected forests or in secondary forests," an ornithologist of Andalas University, Padang, Dr. Wilson Nofarino said.

According to Nofarino, the TNKS was known as the habitat for some rare birds and, therefore, it became the main destination for the foreign tourists to conduct bird observations or bird watching.

Birdwatching is an expensive tourism activity that could attract many tourists, Nofarino said, adding that if the authority could manage it well, the birdwatching potentials could bring great income for the local authority and the people.

The Nofarino's research identifies at least three endemic and rare bird species that only can be found in Kerinci Seblat National Park. They are Paok Schneider, Cucak Kerinci and Celepuk Gunung (Mountain Owl).



"In Europe, the birdwatching tourism is very popular. Tourists could spend much time and money just to hear and see birds twittering in the forest,".

This has become a new trend in tourism that the government should harness the potentials of the Kerinci Seblat National Park as one of the world's destinations for bird observation.

However, the existence of the birds in the national park was under threats of illegal hunting, Nofarino said, adding that there should be any preservation efforts from the local people and the government.

3. NORTH MALUKU GOVERNOR TO PROMOTE SAIL MOROTAI 2012 IN TAIWAN

Ternate, N.Maluku - North Maluku Governor Thaib Armaiyn was to promote the planned Sail Morotai 2012 in Taiwan when visiting that country with Marine Resources and Fisheries Minister Fadel Muhammad in the near future, a local official said,

"The governor will ask the Taiwanese government, investors and public to attend Sail Morotai in 2012," Secretary of North Maluku province, Muhadjir Albar, said.

Previously, the governor had also promoted Sail Morotai 2012 in South Korea where he attended an Indonesian investment promotion event with other provincial governors.

Muhadjir said the North Maluku governor had been actively promoting Sail Morotai 2012 as an international event of great benefit to the province.

Sail Morotai 2012 would be a very good

momentum for North Maluku to introduce its tourism potentials and investment opportunities.

The North Maluku provincial administration was hoping that after the implementation of Sail Morotai 2012, many tourists and investors would come to North Maluku.

According to Muhadjir, the minister of marine and fisheries affairs and North Maluku governor's visit to Taiwan would also be utilized to promote North Maluku's investment potentials, especially in fisheries.

Taiwan investors would be invited to take part in Morotai island's development programs as the center of tuna industry in Indonesia. This program is an idea from the ministry of marine and fisheries affairs.

"The ministry choose Morotai island as the center of tuna industry in Indonesia as the waters has a great potential for tuna, particularly the yellow fin tuna which is in great demand in export markets," Muhadjir noted.

The investors, both domestic and foreign, are interested to invest in fisheries sector in North Maluku, but to realize its investment there are a number of obstacles, including limited capacity of electricity.

Therefore, the North Maluku provincial administration continues to pursue the investor to invest to the electricity supply in the province, especially by using the alternative energy such as geothermal and hydro powers.

4. INDONESIA, RUSSIA RENEW AIR SERVICE AGREEMENT

Jakarta - Indonesia and Russia have renewed their air service agreement to enable the two countries to conduct direct flights

from and to each other.

"The new agreement is made to replace the old one made in 1990 and provides an important step for development of bilateral cooperation," the director general of air transportation, Herry Bakti S Gumay, told newsmen on the sidelines of a meeting with House Commission V.

Herry said the new agreement states airlines from Indonesia and Russia could now conduct regular commercial direct flights between the two countries.

"It is not that no Indonesian airlines have so far conducted direct flights to Russia. With the new agreement we can now do it,"

He said the two parties had also agreed to appoint four airports in Indonesia and Russia as destinations for regular direct flights between the two countries.

He said flights to Russia from Indonesia may be carried out from Jakarta, Manado (North Sulawesi), Solo (Central Java) and Denpasar (Bali) while flights from Russia may be done from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladivostok and Novosibirsk.

The head of public communications of the ministry of transportation, Bambang S Ervan, meanwhile said so far Indonesia-Russia flights were served by Russian chartered airlines Transaero from Russia flying from Denpasar (Bali) to Moscow vice versa five times a week.

"With the new air service agreement Indonesian as well as Russian airline companies could now conduct regular direct flights between the two countries,"

According to data at the ministry of transportation air passenger traffic between Indonesia and Russia has so far been served by more than eight chartered planes from Tran-



saero while two flights a week serve cargo transportation between Indonesia and Russia.

Herry said Russian Aeroflot had also written to the Indonesian government to apply for a regular direct flight service from Russia to Indonesia.

Before Aeroflot could fly directly to Indonesia the Indonesian government had asked the Russian company to acquire an operator certificate for foreign carriers.

"In principle it is okay. What they need to do is just informing when they will start flying and which routes they would take. That is a business-to-business deal. On the other hand the government meanwhile will just arrange the license," .

Herry admitted that until now no national airline company had expressed its interest to conduct direct flights to Russia. "However we believe Garuda Indonesia has already met all the requirements for it," he said.

He said he believed the new agreement would increase flows of tourists between the two countries and increase economic, trade and investment cooperation.

According to the ministry of tourism more than 80,000 Russian tourists visited Indonesia in 2010.



DIVERSE

1. FOUR GOVT AGENCIES TO SUPERVISE FOOD, DRUGS

Jakarta - Four government institutions have agreed to cooperate in the supervision of food, traditional medicines, and cosmetic products.

The cooperation agreement between the four institutions, namely the State Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Health Ministry, State Ministry for Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises, and Drugs and Food Supervisory Agency (BPOM) was formalized in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed at the People's Welfare Coordinating Ministry in Jakarta.

Present at the MoU signing ceremony were Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare Agung Laksono, State Minister for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Linda Amalia Sari Gumelar, Health Minister Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih, and BPOM chief Kustantinah.

The signing of the MoU was a follow-up of the launching of a movement to promote healthful and safe food and snacks for school children, and the cooperatives empowerment effort in the small and medium enterprises for food, traditional medicine and cosmetic products.

BPOM chief Kustantinah said efforts to improve the management of food and snacks for school children should be made in structural, measurable, and integrated manner.

"In the supervision of food, traditional medicine, and cosmetic products, BPOM cannot be a lone player. It needs the assistance and support from all stakeholders among others the State Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Health Ministry, and State Ministry for Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises," Kustantinah said.

Meanwhile, Women's Empowerment Minister Linda Amalia Sari Gumelar said the co-

operation was a manifestation of the government's concern for the food management problem.

She said her office would coordinate with women's empowerment and child protection offices across the country to familiarize the public with the cooperation to supervise food, traditional medicine, and cosmetic products.

"With a good familiarization, the cooperation program is expected to run properly," Linda Amalia Sari said.

2. UGM STUDENT DISCOVERS AI VACCINE

Yogyakarta - Gadjah Mada University (UGM) Veterinary Medicine student Artina Prastiwi discovered an Avian Influenza (AI) H5N1 virus vaccine by using the extract of Phaleria Macrocarpa (Mahkota Dewa) fruit.

"The vaccine had been proven to inhibit the development and growth of the virus to 87 percent. It also has been tested in a laboratory, the production of the vaccine is less costly than other chemical vaccines offered on the market," Artina said.

Artina added that the regular AI vaccines are priced at around Rp200,000 per 100 doses, but her vaccine is offered at Rp75,000 per 100 doses.

"Despite its relatively lower price but effective, the vaccine is yet to be mass produced because it still needs further research to produce more outcome,"

The vaccine is using the Mahkota Dewa fruit as Indonesian local potentials that is scientifically proven to increase body vitality as the AI antivirus with its Saponin compound that act as an antibacterial and antiviral.

To get the Saponin compound, the fruit must be first distilled to get the extract, and then preceded by weighting according to the required dosage.

"For a 10 Milliliter dosage required some 100 grams of dried Mahkota Dewa per 100 milliliters of water, or the multiplication of 100

grams per 1,000 milliliters. Then to get the extract all the ingredients need to be refined,".

The extract must consist of 10 percent Saponin compound which tested at the University's Integrated Research and Testing Laboratory (LPPT).

"The Saponin results obtained is the used as a raw material for the AI virus antigen solvent suspense and some 0.2 milliliters of Mahkota Dewa's extract is the used as the vaccine,".

On its initial test which was conducted on 30 embryonated chicken eggs, The result showed that from several eggs injected by AI virus, were given the 0.2 percent of the fruit's extract and additional 10 percent of Saponin, the embryo did not die after 35 incubation days.

However, a number of eggs injected with the higher dose up to 15 to 20 percent, turned out all of the embryos died with whole body bleeding, dwarfism, and alantois turbid fluid.

Artina said that ten percent is the best result to prevent AI virus. The test proven that Saponin concentration used should be at its appropriate dosage, or it will turn out to be a lethal poison.

"Once proven safe for the eggs, the vaccine testing was also carried out to chickens aged less than 21 days and the results are quite encouraging, all vaccinated chickens survived,".

The vaccine testing results will be presented at an international seminar held in Japan Amstecs on March 19 and 20, 2011.

3. USAID HELPING BOROBUDUR'S REHABILITATION WITH \$100,000

Jakarta - US international aid agency USAID is providing 100,000 US dollars to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) to rehabilitate the Borobudur temple compound in the aftermath of the recent Mount Merapi erup-

tions.

According to a US embassy's press release in March , the aid was given under the US-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership.

USAID would provide support for the emergency cleanup, including retention of a large local workforce and purchase of equipment for the cleaning operation.

The Comprehensive Partnership is critical to the bilateral relationship and is founded on the shared values of freedom, pluralism, tolerance, democracy and respect for human rights.

Borobudur temple was temporarily closed to visitors late last year when concern about the longer-term effects of ash on the monument emerged.

Indonesia's Ministry of Culture and Tourism along with the compound's Site Authority had initiated emergency cleanup measures. Significant work needs to be done in order to reinvigorate tourism - a critical economic resource for the region.

"The support we are providing will help build the livelihoods of affected local communities through their involvement in the rehabilitation of the cultural tourism sector, which is critical to the area's economy," said USAID Mission Director Walter North.

One of the most active volcanoes in the world, Mount Merapi is located less than 35 kilometers from Borobudur. A series of eruptions in October and November 2010 resulted in the deaths of 322 people and the displacement of more than 135,000 people. The Mount Merapi eruptions covered the Borobudur compound in 4.5 centimeters of volcanic ash.

The Borobudur compound was built between the eighth and ninth centuries using 57,000 cubic meters of volcanic stone. The monument is decorated with 2,672 relief panels and 504 statues. In 1991 it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Indonesia and a critical economic resource for the local government.

4. MINISTRY OPTIMISTIC POVERTY RATE TO DROP TO MDG-SANCTIONED LEVEL

Jakarta - The Social Affairs Ministry is optimistic Indonesia will be able to cut its poverty rate to 7.5 percent by 2015 in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a spokesman said.

"We believe the target is achievable given that according to Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) data the poverty rate today is around 13 percent," Rusli Wahid, the ministry's social empowerment and poverty eradication director general, said.

The ministry would intensify the implementation of the poverty eradication programs among other things through the Family of Hope Program (PKH) and the Common Business Group Program (Kube).

The social affairs ministry had carried out the two programs for the past several years, including in a number of regions.

"The poverty eradication program that we are implementing will last for six years and it has produced encouraging results,".

The ministry has allocated funds amounting Rp1.6 trillion for addressing the poverty problem during 2011, by helping around 1,116 very poor households in around 20 provinces.

The money will also be used to help poor pregnant women and school-aged children.

The six-year program is expected to cut off the poverty chains so that parents would not pass down their poor condition to their children, according to Rusli Wahid.

The Kube program for poor families provides Rp20 million for each group consisting of 10 people. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) comprise eight goals that emerged from the 2000 Millennium Summit of world leaders in New York.

Indonesia is one of countries which have committed to meeting the MDGs.

The MDGs provide a set of time-bound and measurable targets for combating poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, discrimina-

tion against women, and environmental degradation.

5. RI TO CUT TRAIN ACCIDENTS BY 50 PERCENT

Jakarta - The Ministry of Transportation has set itself the target of reducing the number of train accidents by 50 percent in the 2010 - 2014 period, a transportation ministry official said.

"We are drafting a proposal on a national railway system which will adopt the Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system," Director for Railway Safety Affairs of the Ministry of Transportation Hermanto Dwiatmoko said.

He said that the ATP technology had been commonly used by advanced countries in Europe and Japan.

"This technology will enable the train to avoid an accident because with the device the train will automatically stop if the machinist violates the speed limit or signals," Hermanto said.

Hermanto said that the investment needed for the system, whose installation is expected to start next year, reached Rp1 trillion. "The budget for it will be proposed next year while the proposal for its draft and studies will be submitted this year," he added.

The total budget for directorate general of railways this year amounted to Rp4 trillion which did not include the budget for the ATP system.

The devices will be installed in all railway stations and train locomotives operated by state-owned railway firm PT Kereta Api which is responsible for the infrastructure and facilities.

"Priorities will be given to the railways in Jakarta and its buffer towns of Bogor, Tangerang, Bekasi and the Jakarta-Surabaya tracks," Hermanto said.

He said that the number of train accidents in 2010 was recorded at 68 cases.

Hermanto said that the causes of train

accidents over the past two years were dominated by human factor, where in 2009 accounted for 27 percent and in 2010 21 percent.

Train accidents which were caused by facility factor in 2009 accounted for 24 percent and 16 percent in 2010 while those which were caused by infrastructure accounted for 13 in 2009 and nine percent in 2010.

6. BIO-DIVERSITY KEY TO MANKIND'S SURVIVAL : MINISTER

Nusa Dua, Bali - Environment Minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta said that the availability of food for people will depend on the availability of biodiversity from plants, animals and microbes, hinting that it is the key to man's survival.

"Indonesia, as one of the mega-biodiversity countries, realizes the crucial role of biodiversity, especially genetic resources as raw materials for food, medicines and industrial materials," Minister Muhammad Hatta said in remarks opening a Ministerial Conference on Biodiversity, Food Security and Climate Change.

As many as 30 countries attended the one-day conference which is a joint program between the Indonesian government and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Three major issues were raised at the conference, New Tools for Agro-biodiversity and Food Security in The Era of Climate Change, Capitalizing the ITPGRFA Benefit-Sharing Fund (BSF) and Nagoya Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Representing the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Minister Hatta added, the issue of biodiversity, food security and climate change were three important inter-related issues. Many of the natural disasters such as floods, droughts and hurricanes are the impacts of climate change that should be anticipated.

The agricultural sector is the most vulnerable sector due to climate change impacts.

Thus, the availability of food for people will depend on the availability of biodiversity from plants, animals and microbes.

"Protecting its biodiversity assets means that Indonesia has played a global role to bring about food security, welfare and sustainable development," he emphasized.

As the host of the 2nd Convention on Biological Diversity in 1995, the Climate Change Convention in 2007 and the meeting of the Basel Convention, Rotterdam and Stockholm in 2010, Indonesia is committed to preserving the environment through cooperation at the global level.

In 2020, Indonesia's targets a reduction in climate change impact through the lowering by 26 percent in greenhouse gas emissions in business as usual (BAU) and 41 percent with international aid.

Through its Environment Ministry, Indonesia has a major role in Ministerial Dialogue 3, considering its position as a focal point in negotiations at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP X- CBD) on October 29, 2010 in Nagoya Japan.

The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the CBD recognizes that every country has right to use natural resources in a sustainable manner and equitable sharing of benefits and equitable utilization of the results of genetic resources.

As an international instrument, the Protocol could prevent bio-piracy of Genetic Resources.

Indonesia is currently preparing the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol and the Act of Genetic Resources Management (PSDG Law). Both are complementary, the elements of the Nagoya Protocol will be incorporated in the law, while the UUPSDG is an implementation of the Nagoya Protocol which will strengthen national legislation.

The issues which will be raised in the draft PSDG Law constitute institutional body, the concept of its ownership and intellectual property rights. By ratifying the Nagoya Protocol and the enactment of the Law, it is ex-

pected that biodiversity conservation and food security will make a valuable contribution to the world.

7. US FINANCES PROJECT TO SUPPORT RI CLEAN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Jakarta - The US is financing a project supporting the Government of Indonesia's efforts to address the primary barriers to clean energy development, the US embassy said in its website.

It said that the 37-month, \$16.2 million project called the Indonesia Clean Energy Development (ICED) Program will partner with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources to improve energy sector policy and coordination. It will also work with three provinces to increase the development of clean energy projects.

"The ICED project will help reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the transport and energy sectors by 4 million tons and increase access to clean energy for 1.2 million people," explained United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director Walter North.

The ICED project is an integral part of the U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership, by which the two nations are working closely on clean energy activities and other key global challenges.

The Partnership advances cooperation on a wide range of issues such as environment, health, education, science and technology, human rights, and entrepreneurship.

8. RI READY TO SEND HUMANITARIAN TEAM TO JAPAN

Makassar, South Sulawesi - The Indonesian government is ready to send a humanitarian team to Japan to help the latter authorities in the aftermath of the magnitude 8.9 earthquake and subsequent tsunami in

March 11.

"Indonesia has expressed condolences to the earthquake and tsunami victims in Japan. Our team is ready to depart," said Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare Agung Laksono in Makassar, South Sulawesi.

The minister said Indonesian volunteers and medical personnel were ready to depart at any time, and it's just the time for the mechanism administration to be completed

At the moment, the Indonesian government has held a talk consisting of the Japanese Ambassador to Indonesia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the humanitarian teams sending.

"We must make sure what is needed in the disaster area, before we send anything,".

Agung Laksono also stated that Indonesia is obliged to help the Japanese because, they have done similar thing when Indonesia various natural disasters such as the Aceh tsunami, Eruption of Mount Merapi volcano, major earthquake in Yogyakarta, and the flash floods in Wasior Papua.

The minister also praised the handling and management of disaster in Japan.

"Yesterday, Japan was rocked by 8.9 magnitude earthquake followed by tsunami. I have not heard the latest news, how many casualties. But the country's ability to handle the impact is extraordinary,".

Recently, Indonesia has sent a humanitarian team to assist victims of flash floods in Australia and Pakistan earlier.

9. PRESIDENT OPENS IACA CONFERENCE

Jakarta - President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono opened the International Association for Court Administrator (IACA) Asia-Pacific Regional Conference at Bogor Palace on Monday.

Present at the conference which is to last

until March 16, are more than 200 participants from 19 Asia-Pacific countries, representing 40 jurisdictions, to exchange information and experience to achieve public access to the court.

Various topics to be discussed in the IACA Conference 2011 are among others, facilities access to justice for marginalized groups, circumference trial and access to justice for the poor people living in remote areas, access to justice for children, judicial cooperation with non-governmental organizations, post legal assistance and advocate picket in court, and court administration training.

Besides, problem of providing information to court users, communication with stakeholders court, and monitoring and evaluation of access to court will also be discussed at the conference.

IACA was established in 2004 as an international organization with the purpose of facilitating networks of court administration-related professionals with a goal of the achievement of more global harmonization of standards for the administration of justice.

In the course of its six-year history, IACA has administered four international conferences, with the most recent one being in Istanbul, Turkey.

Court professionals from 47 countries participated there in considering worldwide court administration models.

IACA has also established the International Journal for Court Administration, having just published its third edition available online.

Indonesia became IACA member in 2009, and the conference at Bogor Palace from March 13-16, 2011 is the first in Asia-Pacific region.

The conference is made up of three main agenda, namely ceremonial session, conference session, and social agenda session.

IACA membership will help enable the organization to reach world goals and to help create an environment for the universal desire to achieve equal justice under law.-14 march2011-

10. RI TO IMPLEMENT UN RESOLUTION ON WOMEN

Jakarta - The Indonesian government through the ministry of women's empowerment and child protection will soon implement UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.

Speaking after opening a seminar themed "Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security" at Balai Kartini, Women's Empowerment Minister Linda Amalia Sari Gumelar said her office was drafting a national action plan on the implementation of the resolution.

The seminar was also attended by former Finnish Defense Minister Madame Elisabeth Rehn.

Linda said the national action plan was made up of integrating gender issues into policy, programs and activities, data collecting mechanism, and reporting system at each ministry and related institution.

"It will start from prevention to conflict termination phase, and recovery of social conflict both at central and regional levels," Linda said.

She added that the national action plan would be completed this year. Linda also explained that the United Nations Security Council Resolution gave an important emphasis on four issues namely the increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making and participation in peace development and conflict prevention, integration of a gender perspective in post conflict process and gender perspective improvement training, main concern for the special protection of women including action against sexual violence, and the integration of gender perspective in the program activity and UN peace operations report.

11. VP : SOUND COOPERATION IN DISASTER RESPONSES NEEDED IN ASPAC

Manado, N Sulawesi - Sound regional cooperation in natural disaster responses among Asia Pacific rim countries is highly needed, Indonesian Vice President Boediono said.

"We have not forgotten the 2004 tsunami that struck from the Indian Ocean. It killed hundreds of thousands of people in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand a day after Christmas in 2004,".

"This time, a huge natural disaster has again occurred in Japan. This again shows that having sound regional cooperation and excellent disaster response management is highly needed," .

Speaking at the 2011 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Disaster Relief Exercise (Direx) in Manado, Boediono said almost all members of the ARF were located in the Pacific "ring of fire".

These countries were vulnerable to such natural disasters as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, flooding, and landslides, Vice President Boediono said.

Due to the fact that a series of tremendous natural disasters had frequently happened in the Asia Pacific region over the past years, Boediono said this great challenge needs to be responded together.

"This has become a common problem that demands international community's attention,".

In connection with this, Boediono said the joint-exercises in this ARF Direx was a good effort to improve the capability of building cooperation and managing disaster responses of all related stakeholders in the region.

"We must have closer and more integrated cooperation in responding and managing the impacts of natural disasters. Our target is having ability to quickly respond to any natural disaster,".

The opening session of the ARF Direx in

Manado was attended by representatives of 20 countries and a number of Indonesian ministers, including Defense Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro.

Purnomo said the ARF Direx was expected to improve the military and civilian capability of responding to the impacts of natural disasters.

Japanese Deputy Ministry for Foreign Affairs Makiko Kikuta was present at the ARF Direx though Japan did not participate in the joint-exercise due to a recent tsunami that struck it.

The current participants in the ARF are Indonesia, Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, Democratic Peoples` Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States, and Vietnam.

12. ELEPHANT POPULATION IN BENGKULU INCREASES

Bengkulu, Sumatra- The population of wild elephants at the Elephant Training Center (PLG) in Seblat, North Bengkulu, Sumatra , has increased from 50 to 70 over the last two years.

During the first trimester of 2011, eight new baby elephants were born in the 6,800-ha forest area, Anom Zamora, head of the Bengkulu Natural Resources Conservation Agency said.

Most of the wild elephants used to live outside the Seblat PLG and to disturb oil palm plantations.

After being herded into the Seblat PLG with the help of trained elephants, the wild elephants seemed to feel comfortable as there was a lot of food and no poachers at the PLG, Anom said.

"We have also assigned tens of forestry

police to guard the PLG forest area and the wild elephants in order to prevent them from going out of the area because the PLG forest is surrounded by oilpalm plantations," he said.

The Seblat PLG was projected to become a conservation forest. Besides wild elephants, the PLG is also inhabited by thousands of species of reptiles, butterflies, protected birds, and white siamang monkeys.

Bengkulu Province has around 200 elephants found among other things in Bukit Barisan forest and the Seblat PLG.

13. MINISTER SEES OFF HUMANITARIAN TEAM TO JAPAN

Jakarta - Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare Agung Laksono saw off an Indonesian humanitarian team to Japan. Foreign Affairs Minister Marty Natalegawa was present on the occasion.

The team consisting of 15 members is scheduled to leave for Tokyo in March 17.

The 15-member team would be part of 65 people who have been prepared to be sent to Japan, the minister said.

The 15 people are among others from Basarnas (National Search And Rescue Agency), TNI (National Defense Forces), the health ministry, and BNPB (National Agency of Disaster Mitigation).

They bring along with them 10,000 blankets for victims of the massive earthquake and tsunami that had hit Japan last March 11, 2011.

The Indonesian government has also pledged to provide two million US dollars to help natural disaster victims in Japan.

"The money amounting to two million US dollars will be transferred directly to the Japanese government," Minister Agung Laksono said.

He said that the assistance was a reflec-

tion of the Indonesian nation's sympathy to Japan.

Meanwhile, speaking at a press conference with Japan's Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Makiko Kikuta at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Minister Marty Natalegawa said Indonesia was also helped by Japan every time it was hit by a natural disaster and it was very reasonable and appropriate if on this occasion Indonesia assisted Japan in its time of need.

"In situations like this where an extraordinary natural disaster has occurred, we must not think as a country only but also as one humanitarian act that move together hand in hand in cooperation to assist the revival of the Japanese people," said Marty.

Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Makiko Kikuta is in Indonesia to co-chair with Indonesia in the ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief (ARF DiREx) which opened on Wednesday in Manado, North Sulawesi.

According to Kikuta, the Government of Japan highly appreciated Indonesian attitude in providing concrete assistance in the current Japanese situation where the situation is still chaotic after being hit by a 9-magnitude earthquake and tsunami.

14. AUSTRALIAN MINISTER PRESENTS DETECTOR TO TRACE EXPLOSIVES, NARCOTICS

Jakarta - Visiting Australian Minister for Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor here Thursday presented the Indonesian Directorate General of Customs and Excise with a detector that can pick up traces of explosives and narcotics.

"Minister O'Connor is visiting Indonesia this week to discuss mutual cooperation on managing maritime threats and improving regional security," said a press statement of the Australian embassy in Jakarta.

The Ionscan 500DT dual purpose trace detection machine will be based in Jakarta.

"This \$76,000 detection device will help Indonesian Customs officers to more easily and comprehensively detect traces of explosives and narcotics," O'Connor said.

"Indonesia and Australia are not alone - countries across the world are subjected to drug trafficking and terrorism attempts,".

According to the Australian minister, law enforcement technology, such as this detection machine, are an important part of the global fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

"As criminals become more sophisticated in their attempts to commit transnational crime, we must also step up our detection and interception methods."

Australian Customs and Border Protection officers will provide Indonesian Customs officers with training in the use of the machine, to ensure Indonesian officers can use the technology to its full potential.

"The contribution of this detection machine is another part of Australia and Indonesia's close cooperation and focus on improving security in our region," O'Connor said.

The productive relationship will assist both countries to deal with risks to the respective borders and better protect the two countries' citizens, he said.

The presentation builds on past contributions to Indonesian Customs of technology for use at key air and sea ports in the region. This includes the recent handover of another long-scan machine and associated training to officers in Medan.

15. RI SITS ON PACIFIC "RING OF FIRE" : OFFICIAL

Manado, N Sulawesi - Indonesia sits on the so-called Pacific "ring of fire", a volcanologically active terrestrial chain where earthquakes and volcanic eruptions can happen any time, Syamsul Maarif, head of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) said.

"The Pacific `ring of fire` that stretches from a point in the Northern Pacific all the way to Indonesia poses the constant threat of major natural disasters,".

Syamsul was explaining Indonesia's geographical position to a gathering of North Sulawesi local government officials and women organizations in relation with disaster management at the North Sulawesi Governor's office.

The spread was also touched in a series of the ASEAN Regional Forum-Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF-Direx) in Manado and North Minahasa on from March 14 to 20, 2011.

The Pacific ring of Fire is also believed to have the potential to trigger volcanic eruptions, especially as every year Indonesia normally have volcanic eruptions.

Syamsul said that Indonesia rests on three main active tectonic plates namely the Eurasia, Pacific and Indo-Australian plates.

"The three tectonic plates often moved which triggered earthquakes in Indonesia each year,".

Indonesia has about 17 thousand islands and 81 thousand meters of coastline, or the second longest in the world, and has a population of approximately 234 million, the world's fourth largest.

Syamsul said seen from the point of view of disasters, all corners of the Indonesian archipelago including North Sulawesi Province are prone to disasters, including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and tsunamis.

16. RI'S PEAT FORESTS CAN PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE IN CLIMATE CHANGE

Palembang, S. Sumatra - Peat swamp forests in Indonesia consist for 50 percent of tropical peat swamps and 10 percent of dry land, an environmental expert connected with climate change mitigation said.

Indonesia's peat swamp forests had the potential of playing an important role in mitigating global warming and climate change, said Karl Heinz Steinmann, an expert from the REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) Pilot Project Team said.

Scientifically, peat swamp forests in Indonesia store more carbon than natural forests, Steinmann explained at public dialogue on "Questioning REDD scheme in Indonesia," held by WALHI (Indonesian Forum for Environment).

the carbon stocks are very vulnerable to disturbances such as deforestation and degradation.

According to Steinmann, the deforestation and forest degradation in the form of peat could be illegal logging, forest conversion, droughts, forest fires and excessive exploitation.

He explained, in South Sumatra, forest or Merang peat swamp forests is a promising location for a pilot project because it still has natural forest cover, store carbon stocks and its biodiversity is quite large.

In addition, the region is a connecting corridor of protected areas and conservation, such as Sembilang National Park in South Sumatra and Berbak National Park in Jambi.

The REDD pilot project site is one of the areas that has biodiversity and areas where illegal logging is rampant, Steinmann noted.

He explained, an estimation survey of the University of Muhammadiyah Palembang in 2008, estimated, in 25 years (without MRPP project-ed) most of the natural forests will be depleted due to illegal logging.

The project covers an area of 24 thousand hectares and is designed to tackle the main cause of deforestation in Indonesia, namely illegal logging. The project will also prevent the encroachment of forest for agriculture.

With these efforts, it is expected that the project could be beneficial to biodiversity and improve the quality and improvements to surrounding villages, Steinmann added.

He explained, the various parties related to environmental sustainability which is mainly a problem of illegal logging, continued to attempt to fix this matter, but until now it still difficult to be eliminated.

In forest areas, including in South Sumatra, illegal logging cases still occurred.

The public dialogue event was also attended by Teguh Surya, an international campaigner for WALHI and participated by various elements of society including students of public and private universities in Palembang city.

Teguh Surya added, the scheme of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), to address global environmental problems, including in Indonesia have to be scrutinized together so that it will not to be deviated.

Therefore, the public dialogue was to examine critically and comprehensively, whether these REDD scheme could be the right solution and who benefited from the REDD scheme.

He noted, the purpose of the dialogue was to parse the agenda for the implementation of REDD in Indonesia and develop a common view of the management and forest restoration patterns in this country.

18. UN WELCOMES RI'S WISH TO BECOME HUB OF PEACEKEEPING CENTERS

Jakarta - Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) Alain Le Roy said Indonesia's initiative as hub of peacekeeping training centers in the region was welcomed.

"This is an important initiative," he told ANTARA in an interview at the Jakarta-based UN Information Center.

With Indonesia's high credibility in various UN peacekeeping missions, the peacekeeping training center would be good for peacekeepers from Indonesia and other countries in the region.

Le Roy was asked to comment on the Indonesian government's effort to enable the country to become a hub of peacekeeping centers in the region this year as recently conveyed by Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa.

In his annual press statement last January, Marty Natalegawa hinted the Indonesian government's will to be the hub of peacekeeping centers in the region as part of its commitment to maintaining world's peace.

"In the issue of peacekeeping operations,

Indonesia actively contributes to the development of strategic concepts on the world's peacekeeping mission deployment,".

In connection with this commitment, Indonesia would do its best to become the hub of the network of peacekeeping centers in the region, Marty Natalegawa said.

Alain Le Roy praised Indonesian peacekeepers' performance saying that the Indonesian Defense Force (TNI) and National Police (Polri) personnel involving in the UN-PKO were well trained and professional.

However, for the future missions, he also urged Indonesia to involve police women because there were always women among displaced people in the UN mission areas.

Le Roy said Indonesia could possibly involve its well-trained police women into the UN peacekeeping operations in the future due to the country's excellent performance in various UN missions.

Indonesia was currently taking part in three UN peacekeeping missions, namely the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Congo, and Darfur in Sudan, he said.

The Indonesian battalion in UNIFIL consisted of around 1,400 personnel while, for the Darfur mission, it deployed a dozen of police officers to help protect displaced civilians there.

"They are very professional policemen," Le Roy said.

Regarding the increasing demand of women peacekeepers in the UN missions, the UN highlighted such roles that they could play during the peacekeeping operations, such as "interviewing victims of sexual and gender-based violence, working in women prisons, assisting female ex-combatants during the process of mobilizing and reintegration into civilian life and mentoring female cadets at police academies".

By deploying 1,795 personnel, Indonesia is one of 20 top contributors of uninformed personnel to the UN-PKO.

Nineteen other contributing countries are Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Egypt, Nepal, Jordan, Rwanda, Ghana, Uruguay,

Senegal, Ethiopia, Brazil, South Africa, China, Italy, Morocco, France, and Sri Lanka.

Alain Le Roy has been in Jakarta to participate in the Jakarta International Defense Dialogue (JIDD) and meet with a number of top government officials and chiefs of the Indonesian military and police.

The JIDD itself was officially opened by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on March 23.

Le Roy said he would speak at the forum, attended by representatives from 34 countries involving defense ministers and military commanders.

19. RI NEEDS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT TO SOLVE ITS ENERGY CRISIS

Serang, Banten - Indonesia is in need of a nuclear power plant to solve its energy crisis, an official said.

"The installed energy capacity is only 35 thousand megawatts, and in 2030 we will need about 150 thousand megawatts of electricity, therefore a nuclear power plant is needed to meet the demand," National Nuclear Power Agency (BATAN) chief A Sarwiyana Sastratenaya said.

Sarwiyana said that the annual increase by seven thousand megawatts cannot be met by conventional energy resources.

Conventional energy resources such as coal, hydro and geo-thermal means are not sustainable and will some day run out, and a nuclear power plant is a solution to the increasing power consumption.

"The nuclear power plant will act as the supporting electricity source for limited capacity power plants, it will only be used as the energy security,".

The Indonesian government is currently studying the possibility of building nuclear power plants in several locations such as Jepara, Bangka and Banten.

According to Sarwiyana, such single nuclear power plant will take 10-15 years to build.

The building of nuclear power plants also involved studying a number of things such as safety from earthquakes, and with earth faults not younger than 126 years, no tsunami potentials and other requirements based on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

About the Fukushima nuclear power plant leak and breakdown in Japan, the IAEA did not have the proper requirements to prevent tsunamis because it was built in 1967 with an old design.

20. GAS MORE EFFECTIVE ENERGY SOURCE THAN NUCLEAR : OFFICIAL

Ambon, Maluku - The use of gas energy is still far more effective than energy from a nuclear power plant, acting head of Southwest Maluku district energy and mineral resources, Rony Kakerisa, said in Ambon.

"There are many benefits of gas energy as a power plant because it is more secure, compared with nuclear energy which requires mastery of high technology,"

The use of gas energy to turn electric turbines larger than the nuclear and no waste.

Meanwhile, the nuclear plant has a waste which must be removed to a location that is completely safe so as it will not cause danger to the lives of living beings and the environment.

Similarly, with coal as power plants that generate the waste ash.

According to Kakerisa, for Indonesia in general and particularly in Maluku province it is not the time yet to build nuclear power plant because there are a variety of promising alternative energy resources such as gas, coal, geothermal, wind power and hydro-power.

"The various islands in the area of Southwest Maluku district generally have low rainfall in a year, so the potential for solar

energy, wind or waves can be made to build power plants,".

The liquefied natural gas resources which to be produced in Masela block has a potential of more than 10 million trillion cubic feet every year so that it could be used as a capital to build large-scale electricity power plant.

Kakerisa exemplified, the energy use of gas for electricity power plant in Bula, East Seram district, by Kufpec, an oil company from Kuwait can meet their electricity needs.

"If there is any central government policy to make Maluku province as a nuclear power plant construction site, it is actually very positive to meet the electricity needs in the future, but the calculation must be maturely done, considering the region includes tectonic earthquake prone areas," he explained.

21. RI REGISTERS THREE CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES AT UNESCO

Jakarta - RI has registered three intangible cultural heritage sites, namely Balinese traditional dance, Noken handicraft and Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII), at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, an official said in Jakarta.

"The Minister of Culture and Tourism today registered the three sites to UNESCO to preserve Indonesian culture," Jero Wacik, Minister of Culture and Tourism, said.

By the addition of the three heritage sites, Indonesia had added a number of intangible cultural heritage sites, such as Indonesian puppets (2003), Indonesian ceremonial knives (2005), Indonesian Batiks (2009) and Indonesian angklung (2010).

He further said that the more cultural heritage sites are recognized by UNESCO created higher pride for the people in preserving the cultural sites in Indonesia.

On the occasion, he also expressed pessimism in registering all Indonesian cultural heritage sites to UNESCO due to the limited financial factor.

"Thousands of people have been involved in the registration of the three sites, so there must be more people and money to spend in registering all the sites of Indonesian cultural heritage since we have plenty of them ,".

Those three intangible cultural heritage sites are involved in the representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritages (Balinese traditional dances), Urgent Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Noken handicraft) and Best Practice of Intangible Cultural Heritages (TMII).

The registration documents were also signed by Coordinating Minister of People's Welfare Agung Laksono after the Ministry of Culture and tourism.

22. RI MOST READY TO BUILD NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN ASEAN

Pontianak, W.Kalimantan - Among the 10 ASEAN member countries, Indonesia is the most ready to build a nuclear power plant, a ministry official said.

"However, Indonesia still lags behind Malaysia which will start building a nuclear power plant by 2012," Sri Setiawati, a deputy to the research and technology minister said in Pontianak, West kalimantan.

According to her, the preparedness is based on a review of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Indonesia has an adequate expertise, experts, materials and technology in the nuclear field, Sri Setiawati added.

"Not all countries have the things. For example Vietnam, they do not have experts in the nuclear field,".

Unfortunately, the Indonesian people tend to fear with nuclear technology. Currently, there are three nuclear reactors managed in Indonesia, namely in Yogyakarta, Bandung (West Java) and Serpong (Tangerang).

She asserted, in developed countries, the fear is the impetus to overcome the weaknesses to minimize the possibility of failure.

She pointed out, Japan, although there are earthquakes every day there has 50 more nuclear reactors.

"The events that occurred in Fukushima as the impact of the earthquake and tsunami were larger than predicted,".

During an earthquake in Yogyakarta in 2006, the nuclear reactors in the region were in safe condition, even though the buildings around it were destroyed.

Sri Setiawati said, it showed that the nuclear reactor had been made by considering the condition of natural disasters.

"If there is any failure or disruption, this will be used for an evaluation for the next technology. In essence, how we seek to conquer failures through technology development," Sri Setiawati said.

