

Stereotypes standing in the way of friendship, says Yudhoyono

Hamish McDonald Asia-Pacific Editor
September 11, 2007

INDONESIA'S President has appealed for Indonesians and Australians to look beyond the "tyranny of stereotypes" and make full use of the opportunities in each others' countries.

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono celebrated his 58th birthday on Sunday night at a dinner launching a series of "future leader" dialogues among young people from the Asia-Pacific region, run by the University of Melbourne's Asialink program.

In another sign of goodwill, the President delayed his departure yesterday to have lunch with the Prime Minister, John Howard.

On Sunday, the President spoke warmly of Australia's help during Indonesian emergencies and individuals known among Indonesians, including the naturalist Steve Irwin, killed by a stingray while filming on the Barrier Reef last year.

"We love him and treasure his legacy. I want to stress that we are talking of real flesh-and-blood individuals with extraordinary human qualities - not stereotypes. They are the ones who matter."

He hit out at "populist politicians and a few sensationalist members of mass media on both sides" who created suspicions, prejudice and false stereotypes.

Dr Yudhoyono said the Bali bombers were mistaken if they thought they could drive a wedge between the two peoples. A big reservoir of goodwill remained among Indonesians towards Australians. "Hence, I urge Australians to come to Indonesia and make it your second home," he said.

"I want to see more Australians travel, play, rest, study, research, and make new friends in Indonesia. Those who are interested in Asian studies can make Indonesia their gateway to deeper knowledge. To the artists among you, come to Bali and find out how the artists of Europe found the fullest expression of their soul on that island paradise. To the entrepreneurs, come and avail yourselves of our latest package of investment incentives."

Mentioning that his son, Edhie Baskoro, was a graduate of the Curtin University of Technology in Perth, he said the development of Indonesia's human resources owed a lot to Australian educational institutions.

"I should like more and more Indonesian businessmen to come here and look into opportunities in a strongly growing Australian economy, and find ways to strike up joint ventures that will also benefit Indonesia.

"In sum, let us expand and intensify our people-to-people contacts in all fields, especially in trade and investment, and in culture and education. Let this effort be our way of dispelling the mental caricatures that are retarding our co-operation. Let it be the main pillar of our bilateral relations."

When news happens: send photos, videos & tip-offs to 0424 SMS SMH (+61 424 767 764), or [email us](#).

[SAVE 31% on home delivery of the Herald - subscribe today](#)

Copyright © 2007. The Sydney Morning Herald.