

## Come to Indonesia, urges President

Hamish McDonald  
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INDONESIA'S President has made an extraordinary appeal for Indonesians and Australians to look beyond the "tyranny of stereotypes" and make full use of the opportunities in each other's countries.

Speaking in English and cutting the usual policy-laden material of presidential speeches, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono celebrated his 58th birthday on Sunday night at a dinner launching a new series of "future leader" dialogues among young people from the Asia-Pacific region, run by Melbourne University's Asialink program.

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

"So many Indonesians were inconsolable at the death of Steve Irwin, that lovable, cheerful and nature-loving Australian," President Yudhoyono said.

"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.

President Yudhoyono said the Bali bombers had been 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 own son, Edhie Baskoro, was a graduate of Perth's Curtin University of Technology, he said the development of Indonesia's human resources owed a lot to Australian educational institutions.

"I would like more and more Indonesians to come and study here in Australia — by scores of thousands every year if possible," he said. "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."

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