

Bright days are coming

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ACTUALLY, Indonesia and India are not foreign countries to each other. The two have cultural contacts and have forged close commercial relations for at least the last two millennia. Hinduism, Buddhism, and later Islam, travelled to Indonesia along the Indian coast with, among other things, stories from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata which later became important sources of Indonesian art and culture.

This cultural similarity, together with the history of life in the colonial era and the goal of independence for political sovereignty, economic independence and an independent foreign policy, in turn are factors that make it easier for the two countries to establish bilateral relations in the modern era.

Since some of the culture and religion in Indonesia are believed to have been brought by traders from India, it is no exaggeration to say that the economic and commercial sectors are the most important pillars of their relationship.

India and Indonesia are currently the second and fourth most populous countries, as well as the first and third largest democracies in the world. The two countries are also members of the G20, a group of 20 economic powers in the world. In the list, India with a population of 1.3 billion people is in 7th place with a GDP of 2.7 trillion US dollars. Meanwhile, Indonesia, with a population of 270 million people, is ranked 16th with a GDP of 1 trillion US dollars.

Exploring various aspects of cooperation between the two countries, the Independent Republic visited the Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Republic of Indonesia, Shri Manoj Kumar Bharti, at the Indian Embassy in Gama Tower, Jalan HR Rasuna Said, South Jakarta, Thursday (12/8).

Shri Bharti began serving in Jakarta last January. An alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kanpur who is fluent in Persian, Russian and Nepali, he has also served as Ambassador in Belarus (2001-2015) and Ukraine (2015-2018). While serving in Ukraine, Shri Bharti wrote a book entitled "Understanding Indian Philosophy through Modern Science" which attempts to explain the Indian philosophy underlying the country's foreign policy, and its influence on today's technological developments.

Here are the excerpts:

The Second World War ended with the independence of Asian and African countries that lived under foreign occupation for a long time. Indonesia proclaimed independence on August 17, 1945, and two years later, on August 15, 1947, it was India's turn to declare independence. Perhaps many consider this a mere coincidence. How do you see it? What was the process that brought the two countries to independence?

Basically, the independence of our two countries is an expression of the desire to build democracy. As a result of the Second World War, the peoples of many colonized lands realized that a seemingly never-ending foreign colonial power was no miracle. This situation gives considerable confidence to the

people of these countries to gain their independence. It happened in Indonesia, it happened in India. Even then we worked together to wrest independence from our respective occupiers.

I think this is a message that we can convey to the people of the world wherever they are. We are fighting for our democratic rights. We believe that we will get a better life through democracy. This is what makes us demand independence and democracy at the same time.

Indonesians have known India since the beginning of the independence of the two countries, long before the Bollywood film boom. India is remembered as a brother in the decolonization struggle and as one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement. The names of Indian figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are already familiar to the ears and memories of the Indonesian people. What is the reality of the current relationship between the two countries? Can you give an idea of the quality of that relationship, whether in the economic, political, or cultural fields?

India and Indonesia are the second and fourth most populous countries in the world. We, India and Indonesia, together have 1.6 billion people, which means one in four people in the world is Indian or Indonesian. In this regard, we have a shared responsibility.

At the same time, India is the first largest democracy, and Indonesia is the third largest democracy in the world. In the modern world, democratic thinking which is defined as the way in which government is created of the people, by the people, and for the people is under pressure. We as the two largest democracies in the world have a special role to play. If we do not work together and prosper together, we will not be able to set an example to the world community that democracy is a way that can provide a better life.

The third thing that makes India and Indonesia unique is that we experience life in a colonial world. That's why we lost opportunities in the era of the 20th century industrial revolution. But together we can leapfrog that stage to grab what we missed and join the industrial revolution in the 21st century. We can also work together on this, taking advantage of each other's strengths.

Then, I also want to say, very few people realize that geographically we are actually very close. If you take a boat from Aceh, you can reach Nicobar Island in three hours. This means that we must build more intensive maritime connections, which we have been doing so far. If you fly from Aceh, you can reach India's coastal cities in less time than Jakarta.

I use this frame of mind to look at what we have done and what we can do. Indonesia has recorded impressive economic growth since demonstrating its resilience during the 2008 global financial crisis. A large young population and a large middle class with rising income levels provide Southeast Asia's largest consumption base platform, the main drivers of economic growth. On the other hand, in India, the adoption of the "New Economic Policy" in 1991 which ended the mixed economy model and the raj licensing system has opened the Indian economy to the world.

Today, India has emerged as the world's fastest growing major economic power, ranked seventh largest in GDP, and third largest in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). India's economic GDP is pegged at US\$2.9 trillion and achieved consistently high GDP growth from the start of the century until the start of the pandemic.

What we have done so far I think is quite substantial. The two countries enjoy a strong relationship marked by high-level visits by both sides from time to time. President Joko Widodo made a State Visit in December 2016. In January 2018 President Jokowi attended the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi. Meanwhile Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Jakarta in May 2018 when India and Indonesia formed the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" bilateral cooperation framework.

During the last visit, 15 agreements/MoUs were signed between the two countries including nine G2G MoUs covering cooperation in the fields of Railways, Health Cooperation, Pharmaceutical Regulatory Functions, Biology and Cosmetics. The prominent B2B MoU is the MoU between CII and the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KADIN). Both Leaders received "Recommendations and Results Documents" submitted by members of the India Indonesia CEO Forum. The leaders instructed that the forum be held regularly and expand business fields, because it can be a constructive step to take advantage of more opportunities and potentials in developing bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade and investment.

What about the trade side of the two countries?

We also have very strong (profound) trading and investment relationships. As India's main economic partner in Southeast Asia, bilateral trade with Indonesia nearly reached 20 billion US dollars in the 2019-2020 financial year. Indonesia is also the second largest trade destination for India in the ASEAN region.

Trade between the two countries has increased more than fivefold from US\$4.3 billion in 2005-2006. India imported US\$15.06 billion worth of goods from Indonesia and exported US\$4.12 billion worth of commodities in 2019-2020. Thus, Indonesia enjoys a large trade surplus, more than 10 billion US dollars.

India's imports from Indonesia are mainly minerals, vegetable oils, rubber, iron and steel and inorganic chemicals. Meanwhile, India's exports to Indonesia mainly consist of organic chemicals, iron and steel, sugar, beef, commercial vehicles, electrical machinery, cotton and others. There is considerable potential to expand trade between the two countries in the fields of agricultural products, pharmaceuticals, automotive components, automobiles, engineering products, IT, biotechnology and healthcare. India views Indonesia as not only a trading partner but a long-term economic partner and aims to increase bilateral trade to 50 billion US dollars by 2025, balancing scale through increasing exports and reducing the trade deficit with Indonesia, to be sustainable. in the long run.

Can you explain the performance of two of Indonesia's main commodities exported to India?

More than 60 percent of India's imports from Indonesia are coal and palm oil. For coal, India is the second largest importer after China. We imported 97.6 million tonnes of coal in 2020 worth US\$3.4 billion. On the other hand, India is the largest importer of crude palm oil from Indonesia in 2020, which is 4.56 million tons with a value of 2.98 billion US dollars. The MoU was signed on 16 July 2018 between the Solvent Extractors Association of India, Indonesian Palm Oil Council, and Solidaridad Network Asia Limited Cite to promote the use of Indonesian palm oil in India and facilitate the implementation of Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil.

As a follow-up, the 2nd Joint Working Group meeting was held in Medan in March 2019, including discussing the PR strategy for the promotion of Indonesian palm oil in India. Therefore, there is close cooperation between institutions of the two countries in terms of CPO imports.

What about Indian investment in Indonesia and vice versa?

Currently, the presence of Indian companies in Indonesia is quite large and collectively there are 55 Indian companies in Indonesia with a total investment of US\$5.7 billion. So far, in the infrastructure sector alone, these investments have created direct employment for 27 thousand Indonesian workers. To complement this process, the India Confederation of Industry Representative office was opened in Jakarta in September 2019 to facilitate the promotion of India's exports and investment which contributes positively to increased trade and investment between the two countries.

According to data sourced from DIPP (India), Indonesia's investment in India amounted to USD 638.57 million from 2000 to 2020. On the other hand, according to statistics from the Indonesian Investment Board (BKPM), India has invested USD 1,111 million in 3,574 projects during the same period. That figure could be higher because not a few investments from India coming through Singapore, Thailand and other gateways which according to some estimates reach 15 billion US dollars.

Seeing India's investment in Indonesia, almost all big names were present, such as Tata, Adani, GVK, GMR, Godrej, Kirloskar, TVS, Mahindra, Reliance and so on. Given the disruption of the supply chain due to Covid-19, India's investment can be directed to fill the supply chain through production intermediaries. For example, the textile industry can fill the opportunity to produce fabrics that have been imported from China, such as fabrics for face masks with finishing which will be carried out in Indonesia. Or joint manufacture of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) between pharmaceutical companies of the two countries where so far 60 percent of the API has come from China. The two countries could also focus on the automotive sector, particularly in passenger vehicles where India has prominence in the small vehicle segment. Also in electric vehicle projects where India can supply components to do assembly here.

This is a very impressive figure that we often overlook. The number of meetings and, for example in the areas of maritime relations, trade and investment, improvement of agricultural relations, brings us to this point continuously. We are free to discuss anything bilaterally, and in fact we do.

Do you see the conditions that will allow cooperation between the two countries to increase in the future?

The reforms carried out within the framework of the Omnibus Law in Indonesia and Atmanirbhar Bharat in India are expected to improve the investment climate so that it becomes a catalyst in increasing two-way investment. On the Indian side, Atamnirbhar Bharat's flagship program is the launch of the Production-related Incentive Scheme with a total expenditure of US\$26.36 billion for 13 key sectors over five years to improve cost competitiveness, quality, efficiency and technology.

Structural reforms undertaken in the Indian economy, including in the area of tax laws such as the GST, helped the Indian economy soar to 65th in the "World Bank Ease of Doing Business Report" in the last four years. The reforms came even as India saw its highest-ever Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow of US\$81.72 billion during the 2020-2021 financial year, despite the pandemic year.

It can be said that not a few Indonesians know India, especially from Bollywood films. But do Indians know Indonesia? And how do they find out?

I must say, in a normal public perception, Indonesia is seen as a distant country, that is not true. Indonesia is widely known in India as a great tourist destination. Bali, for example, is very famous. Half a million Indians visit Bali every year. In the Bollywood film industry, ancient sites in Bali and Indonesia are generally well known. But I must say that greater exposure is needed from Indonesia in India. That is why it is very important to have several airlines operating directly between India and Indonesia.

Apart from direct flights from Indonesia to India and vice versa, do you think there are other things that can be done to increase the awareness of the Indian people about Indonesia?

Once again, I want to say something unique. To increase knowledge about Indonesia in India, of course Indonesia has done some important things, but from the Indian side I would say, the best way is to use Indian films, namely Bollywood.

If a country is attractive enough for Indian film producers to be used as shooting locations, it will automatically be reflected in the tourism sector and public awareness. There are several examples I can tell. Roughly speaking, prior to 2003 and 2004 it can be said that Indians did not travel to Turkey. However, once a Bollywood film uses Turkey as a shooting location, in a short time, there are several more films that use Turkey as a shooting location. And now, Turkey is a major tourist destination for Indians.

Mexico is another example. Croatia is a recent example. I think in 2016 or 2017, one of Shah Rukh Khan's films was made there. And since then, Croatia has now become prominent in the minds of Indians.

Is there any place in Indonesia that has been a Bollywood movie shooting location?

Bali. But we need more cities. In just six months of being here I have visited three mountains, including Mount Bromo. These places can be a factor that shows the extraordinary things about Indonesia.

Sorry, I don't watch a lot of Bollywood movies. Can you tell me a Bollywood movie set in Bali?

I was told that there were two or three Indian films being screened in Bali.

Most importantly, Indonesia has a lot to offer. The only thing to do is the Indonesian government encourage the Indian film industry to come here and give them some incentives.

Any suggestions, what incentives should be given?

When film producers choose a location as a filming location, they discuss it with the local government about the technicalities and what can be done. In other words, the local government can provide a discount of 15 to 25 percent of the costs required for shooting in that place. It's a simple thing, only a few hundred thousand US dollars at most.

For example, Switzerland has been one of the main destinations of the Indian film industry for a long time, almost around 30 years. You know, Indian films may not have a story based on Switzerland. It just shows some sequences in a song. It could be anywhere in the world. Why not at Mount Bromo, Mount Agung, or Lake Toba. It remains only to provide the right incentives, so that in the end the Indian people are more aware.

Have you mentioned this to any local government in Indonesia you met?

I once discussed this issue with the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy. Before Covid-19 hit India last April, I met him in Bali. We discussed how to promote and he was very enthusiastic. Unfortunately, India used to suffer from the second wave of Covid-19 and now Indonesia suffers from the second wave of Covid-19. We waited for the right time with high expectations (cross finger).

When India was hit by the second wave of Covid-19, the Indonesian government sent aid to India. Then, when Indonesia was attacked by the second wave of Covid-19, India also did more or less the same thing. Is there anything else we can do regarding the handling of Covid-19?

Yes of course. The increased involvement of the B2B level in reaching urgently needed COVID-19 medicines to the Indonesian people is a sign of close cooperation between the two countries in jointly fighting the once-in-a-century pandemic.

In the pharmaceutical sector, during the pandemic, increased cooperation through the export of various drugs related to Covid-19, including Oseltamavir, Remdesivir, Chloroquine Phosphate, Lopinavir-Ritonavir and HCQ Sulphate. Meanwhile Hetero launched its Remdesivir brand, Covifor, in Indonesia on October 1, 2020 and is used for mild to moderate Covid-19 infections. Indian pharmaceutical companies such as Reddy's Laboratories, Cipla, Jubilant Lifesciences, Cadila and others, have also made progress in marketing their Covid-19 drugs in Indonesia by obtaining Emergency Authorization Use (EAU). The last in this line of drugs to gain access is a generic version of Remdesivir's broad-spectrum antiviral drug, Cipla, to treat severe COVID-19 infections.

The Food and Drug Administration (BPOM) has approved the Emergency Use Permit for Cipremi on October 11, 2020. In early July this year, PT Indofarma (Persero) imported 230 million doses or bottles of Remdesivir from India. Informally, the Indonesian Ministry of Health has also shown interest in procuring a Covid vaccine produced by Bharat Biotech India, Covaxin, and India is more than willing to support this proposal at the B2B level, including from a Co-production point of view. No doubt, this cooperation at the B2B level in handling the Covid-19 pandemic has further strengthened the cooperation that has existed between the two countries in the pharmaceutical sector and in providing medicines for the timely treatment of Covid-19 patients in Indonesia.

All of these steps are mainly, as I have said before, (because) we feel very close to Indonesia, and feel that Indonesia is a friend and relative. We have so much history in common. We are always looking for ways to develop collaborations as we can, and we will continue to do so.

Indonesia and India are two countries that played an important role in the era of decolonization and became the promoters of the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement along with a number of other countries. After the end of the Cold War, is it still relevant to talk about non-aligned attitudes?

Non-aligned in my opinion is a concept that teaches us not to be intervened by a bigger power, whether in the form of communism, socialism, or other forms. And, it is a struggle for an independent foreign policy. This includes not allowing domestic policies to be influenced by the so-called major powers in the region. From that perspective, the non-aligned stance is still relevant.

There is a need to strengthen the multi-polar world and avoid all other forms of cold war. And that is why the role of the non-aligned concept is so important. I feel that as two important countries in the region, and as two major democracies with secular credentials, we (India and Indonesia) have a special role to play in strengthening the multi-pole model. I have seen many things happen on earth, such as global warming. You can see forest fires in many places. Even in Greenland and the Arctic there could be fires right now. Humans should see all these as early indications and wake up to take corrective steps.

If you look at images of Earth from space stations around Mars and Saturn, then Earth looks like a tiny, unrecognizable dot. Imagine, we, all humans, are at that point. If we destroy that point, our Earth, what will happen to us. I hope, India and Indonesia, play a role in making the world of society understand the importance of saving the Earth which is the only place of life in the entire universe.

Did you also discuss things like this with the Indonesian side?

I'm sure the leaders in our two countries share the same thoughts on how we should work to resolve this issue.

Did the leaders of the two countries come to the same conclusion that India and Indonesia actually have a big responsibility to safeguard this situation?

I know that on the Indian side there is a good understanding and desire to build interdependence relations with Indonesia.

Does this have anything to do with the Indian government's "Look East Policy" and "Act East Policy" in viewing other countries in the east?

The "Look East Policy" started in the 1990s which was changed to the "Act East Policy" in 2014. Basically, we are giving a more active push for cooperation with countries in the eastern region. Since 2014, India has consistently advocated for a cooperative, secure and stable Indo-Pacific to promote collective growth and prosperity in the region. India's vision is "Security and Growth for all in the Region" (SAGAR) as the "belief" it seeks to follow to better connect with its "land and maritime partners in the east." Through SAGAR, announced in 2015, India wants to work towards cooperation, sustenance and peaceful development in the region.

On the other hand, as the largest archipelagic country in the world and the largest economy in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has shown its intention to play a leading role in the Indo-Pacific framework. "Global Maritime Axis" policy to ensure regional security and growth. Evidently, there is a strong convergence in the views and regional strategies of India and Indonesia as happened in the era of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The two countries share a common goal of developing cooperation and this converged power structure has led to the adoption of the "Joint Vision on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific" by both

countries. Among other goals, this "Shared Vision" envisages "strengthening maritime cooperation to promote peace, stability and bring strong economic growth and prosperity to the Indo-Pacific region."

The alignment of each other's strategies regarding the Indo-Pacific appears to strengthen the basis of interdependence, as evidenced in the formulation of the India-Indonesia "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" and bilateral arrangements regarding the Indonesian port of Sabang. These two things were announced in conjunction with the "Shared Vision".

With the guidelines "Joint Statement on Formation of Comprehensive Partnership" and "Shared Vision on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific" issued during the visit of the Prime Minister of India to Jakarta in May 2018, a Joint Task Force was formed between India and Indonesia for the development of Connectivity between the Islands. Andaman-Aceh and Nicobar.

A preliminary meeting of the Joint Task Force Leaders was held in Jakarta on September 3, 2019 which discussed the terms of reference for the Joint Task Force meeting. The inaugural JTF meeting was held on December 7, 2019 in Banda Aceh, with a focus on increasing trade and investment between regions through export-import and exchange of information on available projects. Also, in an effort to establish direct air and sea connectivity between the two regions, through regular commercial flights from Indonesia-Port Blair or through connecting flights in Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, or by charter flights.

Another focus is the development of infrastructure related to seaports, airports and hospitals through joint feasibility studies, as well as sustainable development of marine and fisheries resources through joint ventures in the fish processing industry and knowledge sharing.

The JTF also mentioned efforts to increase two-way tourism through shipping, tourism events, sea transportation in the form of RoRo ships and so on, as well as promoting cultural exchanges, increasing cooperation in education through MoUs between educational institutions and scholarships, and encouraging people-to-people contacts. through the establishment of twin provincial cooperation between Aceh and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

"Act East Policy" is also an aspect of India's growth. As India grows, it produces key capabilities to offer our neighbours. From that point of view and perspective, you should appreciate the fact that India is always sharing its knowledge and expertise with other countries in terms of education, training, scholarships and so on.

Indonesia is the recipient of nearly 100 IT program scholarships. There are around 1,000 scholarships at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) for ASEAN countries. In terms of population, the total population of Indonesia is half of the total population of ASEAN. That means almost 500 scholarship recipients from Indonesia.

There are also other programs in the IT field, which involve young professionals who can be trained in India at no cost to scholarship recipients or countries. Now during the Covid-19 pandemic, all training is done online. However, before and after Covid-19, scholarship recipients will visit India for a certain time. For each scholarship recipient, the government of India spends 10 thousand US dollars.

Many people wonder as a developing country, how can India offer so much to other countries. The answer is quite simple: India has always been a country that wants to share knowledge with other countries. We have followed the path of "giving" for a long time and will continue to do so.

How would you rate the results of this policy?

We can do better. Our efforts to build relations with the eastern region, especially with ASEAN, are now bearing fruit. ASEAN is an important trading partner for India. And we have a strong interdependence relationship in terms of culture and technology. There are many Indian companies present in ASEAN countries. We would like to see this continue to experience growth in the years to come.

There is another thing I want to convey, namely the assistance that India provides to other countries based on its priority programs. We don't push for help because in our minds we have a desire to get something.

India provides a line of credit to developing countries that have low and middle income (small and middle-income countries). The amount of credit we have given to date is around 50 billion US dollars. However, our policy is that the project is as desired by the recipient country.

For example, if there is a project in Indonesia and the Indonesian government wants it to be done with a line of credit, then the project proposal must be made by the Indonesian government. We never impose projects on other countries unlike some other countries.

Does Indonesia have a debt to India?

I don't think so. This is a good question. I will check. Indonesia has not yet taken credit from India.

Is there any projects India is working on in Indonesia?

There are many. Generally, in the non-renewable energy sector. There is a biomass project in Sumatra carried out by Anchor Enterprises. there are also projects related to biomass and energy generation that we are working on.

We have offered a \$1 billion line of credit to ASEAN. India has the capability to provide such assistance to friendly countries in ASEAN, and we have declared a credit limit of US\$1 billion. It is natural to take advantage of this because Indonesia is still seeking investment from other countries to finance various projects. After all, we don't force anything. The only thing required is a sovereign guarantee for this line of credit.

In short, this should not be a problem because the project proposal is from the recipient's point of view.

I want to return to the issue of the Covid-19 pandemic that we are currently facing. When India faces the second wave of Covid-19 with the Delta variant, what will happen?

That's very serious. The highest number of new cases in a single day was recorded on June 11 with 415,000 cases. very terrible. And the number of victims who died in a day, if I'm not mistaken reached 5 thousand people.

Did the attacks take place in big cities or in small towns?

It is spread all over India, which is a problem in itself. And concentrated in densely populated urban areas.

How do you solve this problem?

In general, there are three things the Indian government does. First, implementing very strict social restrictions. Second, increase detection to a very high level. When I say the highest number of new cases in a single day was 415,000 cases, it is known because the number of tests carried out on that day was 1.7 million. And that keeps the transmission rate between 35 to 40 percent. Very high. As of now, in fact, we still do nearly 1.5 million tests in a single day. The third thing we do is multiply vaccinations. If I'm not mistaken, I think we have vaccinated over 500 million Indians. This is far from safe, about 66 percent of the total population which means almost 850 million people.

Are there groups of people who object to the Covid-19 vaccination in India?

Not much, but sometimes we also face that problem in India.

What do you do with these vaccine repellents?

Basically, with education, telling them that without this (vaccination) their life is in danger, their children's life is in danger, also the society in which they live will be in danger. And the community responded well. We are constantly bombarded with service advertisements on television, radio, social media, community leaders, door-to-door health workers.

Every day health workers everywhere make door-to-door visits to get statistics on how many have been vaccinated, how many have been infected, and so on. Strict surveillance is very important in controlling this pandemic.

It looks like India is special because India is also developing its own vaccine...

Yes, you are right. So far India has developed two types of vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin. Both have proven to be quite effective in preventing Covid-19, both the previous and future variants (Delta variant). Many people say the new variant comes from India. But I don't think that's actually true. All we can say is, the variant was detected first in India. Where that variant actually came from, we don't know.

Can you explain one of India's domestic problems that the world community is also talking about, namely Jammu and Kashmir. What did India achieve after Article 370 of the Constitution which granted special autonomy status to Jammu and Kashmir was abolished two years ago?

Basically, there has always been a high level of development in Jammu and Kashmir. If we talk specifically about the last two years (since Article 370 was removed) you will see great progress in almost all sectors, political stability, education sector, employment, investment, industry. In each of these sectors the situation of Jammu and Kashmir is getting much better. If you look at the reality on the ground, Jammu and Kashmir society is growing and very progressive.

Jammu and Kashmir is always special and earns a lot of money. However, in the previous situation (revocation of Article 370) the use (utilization) of the distributed funds was not properly monitored. When you compare per capita investment in states in India, Jammu and Kashmir should be the highest. However, the effects of it all did not go down to the community earlier.

Can you explain a bit about this diversity of India?

India is a country as diverse as Indonesia. I don't know how many dialects there are in Indonesia, in India there are 1,700 dialects. We have 22 official languages written in the Constitution. But you cannot imagine the nature of diversity in India without realizing that Tamil is the oldest language in the world. It has its own history, literature and everything. Sanskrit is the second oldest language in the world. The language of the people of India in the south is very different from the language of the north.

We have 22 official languages with 17 different letters. And all of that we accept. That is the uniqueness of India. That's why India is setting an example to the world on how to live with diversity. This is what makes India great. When you visit India from place to place, you will be amazed to see how all this really happened.

Is there anyone who can speak all the official languages and write all the official alphabets?

I don't think so. There is not any. At least, in general. Except maybe an academic who studied all that and got a doctorate. (Laugh)

There are 22 official languages in India. What about the national language?

Our national language is Hindi. But we must make a clear distinction and this must be understood. The national language is Hindi, but it is not enforced. In India we have a trilingual policy. In each state, every child is taught three languages. Hindi as their national language, English as their lingua franca, and their mother tongue as their own language.

Children in Tamil Nadu, for example, will learn Tamil, English and Hindi. Children in Kerala will learn Malayalam, English and Hindi. Children in Bengal will learn Bengali, Hindi and English. Children in Gujarat will learn Gujarati, Hindi and English.

Which state are you from?

I'm from Bihar in the north, speaking Hindi. So, I have the privilege to learn English automatically.

So, if you met someone from Tamil Nadu, for example, what language would you speak?

I don't speak Tamil. I will use English.

Why not in Hindi?

Because he might not know Hindi. But now the situation has changed. And do you know what changed it? Can you guess?

What are Bollywood Movies?

Yes, that is true. Bollywood films play two important roles in India. One, to promote nationalism based on dialogue and Hindi culture in India. And second, bringing all the diaspora in the world closer to Indian culture.

As many as 32 million Indian descendants live abroad, and one of the reasons they associate themselves with their ancestral land is Bollywood films.

Reading the theory of "Clash of Civilization" introduced by Samuel P. Huntington, it is stated that there are seven to eight civilizations that emerged and developed rapidly in the world, and one of them is Hindu civilization. Does it refer to Hinduism as a religion, or India as a country?

Sometimes people say Hinduism is a religion. But actually, this is a geographical classification. People living across the Sindhu River or the Indus River have a completely different lifestyle. Foreigners never understand what kind of lifestyle, so they use the terminology of the Sindhus civilization. Because the Greeks could not pronounce it perfectly, then it was pronounced as Hindu. While the word Hindu itself never appears in the ancient texts (scriptures) India. The notion as Hindu does not exist in those texts.

I wrote a book about this called "Understanding Indian Philosophy through Modern Science" in which I said that Indian society lives on a philosophy that can be called Indian philosophy and is different from other philosophies. Where in Indian philosophy nature is in the middle. While the purpose of life is to seek in it. Find happiness in nature. Live life to make your happiness grow. Leading (managing) the community so that all can grow together. That is why the oldest philosophy in India reads "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" that the whole world is one family. And for your information, the phrase "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" is also a creed of India's foreign policy.

India as an idea has a lot to offer the world. The more you learn about India, the more fascinated you will be. We as Indians also keep discovering India.

One of the things that is also difficult to understand is about the assassination of the leader in India. Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were all murdered.

There are incidents that reflect all kinds of perceptions in India. We learned from this incident and continued on the path of progress.

How do you see the future of the world in general in the next 20 or 30 years amid ongoing competition?

As a diplomat, I keep a positive attitude. India has always propagated (spread) synergy with nature, building strength so that the world can survive for the benefit of mankind on this planet. All of our policies and activities are guided by that thinking.

For example, just yesterday Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired a meeting at the UN Security Council where he called for the establishment of a common framework to resolve maritime disputes, climate change and natural disasters.

There are many more initiatives taken by India. An example is the International Solar Alliance (ISA) where member countries should benefit from the development of solar energy. So, that's why I say, from a diplomat's point of view, I'm very positive about the future.

However, I am also saddened to see that the countries of the world do not realize the true impact of their policies made with narrow individual perspectives. If you only think about your own interests, who will think about the interests of the world? How do you survive this mindset? This has a multiplier effect. If we continue to destroy our environment, its deterioration has a geometric progression.

The target set by the United Nations regarding global temperature rise is 1.5 degrees by 2050. But experts believe that this target will only be achieved by 2030. If the pace of this temperature rise is not controlled, we face disastrous consequences.

But, again, I will end my thoughts on a positive note. As a tech person, I believe that technology will be the only source we rely on. We hope that, if nothing else, technology will provide us with a solution, so that humans understand and not play with nature. People in the technology sector, developing artificial intelligence, machine learning and so on, should realize this, that their main goal is to make humans understand how to live with nature. It was the only silver lining on the horizon that I could see.

TEGUH SANTOSA

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