

H.E. THE AMBASSADOR OF THE NETHERLANDS, DR. NIKOLAOS VAN DAM

Nikolaos Van Dam looks every bit the senior diplomat, a bit imposing and regal, but underneath the austere surface is a man who genuinely cares for his adapted home and enjoys his duties and leisure in Indonesia enormously. NOW! Jakarta's Alistair Speirs enjoyed his discussions with him.

NJ Welcome back to NOW! Jakarta. Please tell us the most significant events that have taken place over the last 12 months for you?

NVD Actually many important events have taken place as the cooperation between our two countries becomes stronger and stronger. Last year, Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Maxime Verhagen, visited Indonesia, where he was received by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and later by his counterpart. They discussed the contents of the Comprehensive Partnership Agreement in the fields of, among others, economy, security, justice, human rights, education and culture. It is to be signed by our two government leaders. The intensity of our bilateral relationship is also reflected by the fact that almost all ministers know one another personally. Only recently, in March, our Minister of Economic Affairs, Mrs. Maria J.A. van der Hoeven was here to reconfirm and strengthen the general and economic ties between our countries. She also attended the annual Mixed Economic Commission to support an increased trade and investment relationship. Also our Minister of Justice, State Minister for Transport & Water Works, Dutch parliamentarians and the President of the Dutch Senate visited Indonesia during the past period.

NJ What in particular has happened between Indonesia and Holland?

NVD We have signed some promising cooperation agreements together such as a partnership between the Government of Indonesia, the Netherlands and UNICEF on 3 December 2009. The agreement will see the Government of the Netherlands contribute US\$ 5.6 million (52.6 billion Indonesian rupiahs) over a period of four years in support of efforts to bring HIV and AIDS awareness and understanding to young people through the school system in the provinces Papua and West Papua. Another cooperation agreement on collaborative action in the fight against corruption has been signed between the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in the Republic of Indonesia and the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands.

NJ Indonesia was again struck by a disaster last year. I know you have provided emergency aid. Can you update us on this?

NVD Yes, we have donated 1 million Euro for the emergency aid operations of which half to IFRC and half to Save the Children. IFRC used the funds for tents, blankets, soap, sanitary towels and cooking equipment. Dutch experts took part in UN and EU teams to support

Indonesia in assessing the needs and coordinating the international aid. One of the outcomes was that schools had to be rebuilt. In a response to this we were able to re-allocate US\$ 1,814,324 from the Decentralized Basic Education Project (DBEP) for reconstruction of ten schools near Padang and Pariaman. This was only recently announced. As you may be aware we earlier donated 17.6 million Euro for emergency aid and US\$ 190.125.488,94 for the reconstruction related to the tsunami disaster in Aceh and 2.5 million Euro for emergency aid and US\$ 12 million for reconstruction after the earthquake in central Java and Yogyakarta. To the Netherlands, Indonesia is the biggest recipient of development cooperation funds, which during the past years amounts to over 100 million Euros (around 1,225 billion Rupiahs) yearly.

NJ Indonesia has been remarkably stable over the last few years despite the worldwide banking difficulties. In what ways has this benefitted Dutch Companies operating in Indonesia?

NVD Indonesia's economic stability has definitively contributed to the attractiveness for foreign investments, including Dutch companies. Indonesia's growth, based to an important extent on the growth of consumption, has provided good opportunities for the sector of consumer goods, amongst which from Dutch companies like Unilever, Philips and Frisian Flag. Companies active in consultancy and infrastructure have, however, felt a slow down. It may be interesting to mention here that our Netherlands Development Finance Company, FMO, partly owned by the Dutch Government and partly by private financial institutes, with some important participation in Indonesia, made a profit in 2009.

NJ Has there been a rise in active direct investment interest from Holland into Indonesia over the last 12 months? If so, in what areas are they taking place?

NVD In 2009, the Netherlands ranks as the second largest investor in Indonesia, with a total realised investment value of US\$ 1,198 billion in 32 projects. This figure represents an 11.1% contribution to the total inward investment through BKPM. It includes investment in transport, storage, and communication sectors, food industry, the trading sector, and the non metal mineral industry.

NJ I know you were particularly interested in ensuring all the Dutch-built dams in and around Jakarta were safe following the collapse of Situ Gintung dam,



eighteen months ago even though responsibility for the dams had long been handed over to the Indonesian Government. Has that work now been completed? Any idea why Situ Gintung itself hasn't been rebuilt?

NVD A Dutch team of dam inspection experts has assisted the team of the Ministry of Public Works during the period May – August 2009 with the inspections of many dams in and around Jakarta. The analysis was very thorough and has been used for planning of the repair works still to be done. The repair works of the Situ Gintung requires studies and discussions on the best solutions. The environment in which the dam of the Situ Gintung was built a long-time ago has drastically changed, mainly due to urbanisation. I have been informed that the Ministry of Public Works is working on this so as to ensure that the future dam will be sustainable and effective.

NJ What are your upcoming events for the next year? What's exciting?

NVD We are very much looking forward to a visit to the Netherlands by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. It would be highly significant to further strengthening our friendly bilateral relationship. Another event of a totally different order is the fact that this year we are celebrating the 40 years anniversary of our cultural centre in Jakarta, Erasmus Huis. Throughout the year, there will be many festivities such as recently on the 10th of April, we invited Hind, a Dutch Idol finalist; we organised a special exhibition of Hadassah Emmerich and many,

many more activities and artists are to be invited this year. You may be aware that there are only three Dutch cultural centres in the world: in Paris, Brussels and Jakarta. This reflects the high importance we attach to Indonesia.

NJ There used to be huge interest in Holland in visiting Indonesia, particularly Java, to visit places historically close to Holland, but has fallen off dramatically in the last few years. Why do you think this is? What can be done to revive this?

NVD Indonesia is still an important tourist destination for Dutch people. Luckily also many young people from the Netherlands are visiting Indonesia. This being said, due to a decrease in the number of Dutchmen who actually have been living in Indonesia and due to the distance between Indonesia and the Netherlands and other new alternative interesting tourist destinations in Asia, Dutch tourism to Indonesia did drop somewhat. The Indonesian government's efforts in maintaining Indonesia as an attractive tourist destination will undoubtedly also have their impact on the inflow of Dutch tourists and with the Garuda flight starting on the 1st of June there is much promotion done in the Netherlands for Indonesia as a tourist destination, as well as a destination for MICE (Meetings Incentives, Conferences and Events). Recently, also KLM Royal Dutch Airlines inaugurated a new flight connection between Amsterdam and Denpasar, which is also bound to contribute an increase in tourism to Indonesia.



also took the opportunity to admire the huge Rafflesia flower there in the forests hills. In West Sulawesi, I was impressed by the local culture in Mamasa, which bears great similarity with that in better known Tana Toraja. I visited the Kepulauan Riau as part of a journey to Singapore, and am looking forward to visiting Central Sulawesi as the 33rd and only province I have not seen yet.

NJ What have you personally been involved with over the last twelve months? Have you had any memorable moments you can share with us?

NVD Next to the many meetings with Indonesians all over this beautiful country from Sabang to Merauke, a particularly memorable event for me was a Javanese Wayang Kulit Purwa performance at the presidential Palace, which I had the honour to attend. I was fascinated by the skilful performance of the dalang and various other participants. Although all was in Javanese, most of it was understandable, because not only a summary translation was provided on a screen, but also an explanation and analysis. I very much enjoyed the play and only at the end of it noticed that it was already 4 o'clock in the morning.

I have always been interested in combining my diplomatic work with my scholarly background as an Arabist who served most of his career in the Middle East and the Islamic world. I am interested in promoting understanding between what is called the Islamic world and the West. I published various articles on the subject in the Indonesian media, both in English and in Indonesian, and gave various lectures all over the country, in universities, pesantren, and other educational institutions, such as the Univeritas Indonesia, the University of Semarang, Pesantren Gontor, the Higher Institute for Qur'anic Studies (PTIQ), LEMHANAS, KAHMI, BIMASENA. I published several studies on linguistic issues in Indonesian, including on Arabic loanwords in Indonesian. I also had the pleasure to participate in various television programmes. It is a pleasure and honour to serve in Indonesia.

NJ Talking about travelling, last year you mentioned you wanted to get to know this country better. At that time there were only 6 provinces you did not visit yet. What is the number now?

NVD During the past year, I visited five additional provinces. In Sumba, I inaugurated a Dutch funded local television station. I visited Kendari in South East Sulawesi as part of the TVRI television programme "Colours of the World", in cooperation with Garuda. In Riau, I discussed water and drainage projects with the local government. In Bengkulu, I visited the place where Bung Karno was exiled by the Dutch; and I

Thank you.

Facts and Figures

Population:	16,527,595 (August 2009)
GDP	680 billion \$ (2008)
Investment abroad	851 billion \$ (2008)
Foreign direct investment	673 billion \$ (2008)
Command of foreign languages	English (87%), German (66%) and French (25%)

Worldwide Ranking

- 1st Production and auctioning of cut flowers and flower bulbs
- 2nd Export of agricultural products
- 2nd Household broadband connections
- 2nd Logistics performance index
- 3rd Density of road network
- 4th Largest seaports
- 5th Export of goods
- 6th Investments abroad
- 7th Import of goods
- 7th Energy infrastructure
- 10th Export of commercial services
- 11th Import of commercial services