



DR. ARIFIN SIREGAR



Dr. Willem van Eekelen, Chairman of the INS Board of Trustees presents the Linggarjati Award 2015 to Dr. Arifin Siregar



ACCEPTANCE SPEECH LINGGARJATI AWARD 2015



Mr van Eekelen, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Indonesia Nederland Society, Mr. Kuijper, Chairman of the Indonesia Nederland Society, Excellencies, dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

It was a great surprise for me to be informed that the Indonesia Nederland Society had decided to grant me the Linggarjati Award. It is true that back in 1993 Her Royal Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands granted me GROOTKRUIS IN DE ORDE VAN ORANJE NASSAU as appreciation for my efforts to improve relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia. But the fact that twenty two years after the Queen's Award , the Society has also decided to grant me the Linggarjati Award overwhelmed me with surprise and happiness. May I express on this special occasion my high appreciation and heart-felt gratitude to the Board members of the Indonesia Nederland Society for their gracious kindness. It is indeed very thoughtful on the part of the Society to grant me such a great honor. I became aware of the Indonesia Nederland Society when Mr. Aljosja van Dorssen, a member of the Society's Board, visited me in Jakarta a year ago. He was at that time conducting interviews with Indonesian alumni of the Rotterdams Studenten Corps, to which I used to belong.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we are all aware, the relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia date back more than four hundred years. These relations, which may be characterized as very close but at the same rather fragile, have been subjected to various ups and downs. Owing to this unique relationship, seemingly unimportant events can lead to disrapture in the relationship . It appears useful for us to draw a lesson from the developments in our mutual history in order to avoid a possible breakdown in the future and to

maintain and deepen the ties and cooperation between our two nations in the years to come.

In this connection, allow me to remind you of what took place in 1992. As you may recall, at that time a member of the Netherlands cabinet made a statement in Indonesia that the Dutch government had put additional and stricter conditions which should be fulfilled by the Indonesian government in order to be eligible for receiving economic assistance from the Dutch government. Such conditions as required by donor countries are globally the normal practice to be complied with by receiving countries. Indonesia has generally been willing to accept such conditions. However, in the case of 1992, the undiplomatic way the stricter conditions were made public was considered to be extremely hurtful to the dignity of the Indonesian government as well as to the feeling of the Indonesian people. It reminded them, rightly or wrongly, of the manner in which the colonial Netherlands – Indies government had treated our countrymen for so many centuries. As a consequence, the Indonesian government reacted by abruptly and unilaterally discontinuing the Dutch economic assistance program which in turn led to the discontinuance of the role of the Netherlands government as the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI), a multilateral aid consortium for Indonesia. Meanwhile, the Indonesian public reaction rose to such an extent that the general population started demanding a break-off of all relations with the Netherlands. This worrying process could have led to a similar development of 1958 when the Indonesian government broke-off diplomatic relations with the Netherlands which resulted in so much damage and resentment between our two nations.

To a person like me, who had the privilege of studying at the Dutch Carpentier Alting Stichting (CAS) Lyceum in Jakarta and at the Nederlandse Economische Hogeschool in Rotterdam, the sharply deteriorating relations gave naturally cause for distress and grave concern.

Fortunately, following serious deliberations the Indonesian President decided that the disintegrating relationship should be restored. For this purpose, the President appointed me, at the time the Minister of Trade, as a special envoy to start repairing our bilateral relations. To this end, I took

with me about forty Indonesian businessmen and the Governor of Jakarta to the Netherlands. The primary intention was to demonstrate to the Dutch people and government that while the Indonesian government had unilaterally discontinued the Dutch economic assistance program, it would like to continue and even deepen and expand the relations in other areas, such as trade, investment, culture, education and tourism. I discussed and developed with, among others, then Prime Minister Dr. R. Lubbers, then Minister of Agriculture Dr. P. Bukman and then Mayor of Rotterdam Dr. Bram Peper, a strategy to repair relations and to find a new form of cooperation. As a first step I inaugurated the opening of the Indonesian Trade & Distribution Centre in Rotterdam as a gateway for promoting Indonesia's export products to the vast market of Europe.

Realizing the very positive reaction on the part of the Netherlands government, I returned to Jakarta and reported to my President the willingness of the Dutch government to start a new phase in our bilateral relations and cooperation. As a result, the President asked me to invite my counterpart in the Netherlands to come to Jakarta to work on a new program of cooperation. For this purpose, Ms. Y.M. C. Van Rooy, then Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade led a trade mission to Indonesia. Mrs. Van Rooy was warmly welcomed by the President as well as the business community. Then a new era of our bilateral relationship started developing.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

As you are aware, since that time relations and cooperation between our two countries have been moving in a favorable direction. It is very encouraging to note that not only in the political and economic fields, but also in areas, such as education, science, culture and tourism, substantial progress has been made.

In 2005 as Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Bernard Bot attended in Jakarta the Indonesian Independence Day celebrations on 17 August; the first member of the Dutch government to do so. His presence in Jakarta on that historic day, was a poignant symbol of respect for the Indonesian people and their history as a modern nation state. Bernard Bot's presence and speech were warmly received and

much appreciated by the Indonesian government and the Indonesian people.

Furthermore, in 2007 Prime Minister Balkenende visited Indonesia taking with him a large trade and investment mission and was warmly welcomed by the Indonesian government and business community. It was Prime Minister Rutte who in 2013 took with him another important trade and investment mission and made a joint declaration with the Indonesian President on the conclusion of a comprehensive partnership agreement.

To reinvigorate the cooperation under the sister city relationship between Rotterdam and Jakarta the Mayor of Rotterdam Mr. Ahmed Aboutaleb visited Jakarta in November 2013 and had a productive meeting with then Governor of Jakarta Bapak Joko Widodo on issues like flood protection and management as well as cooperation in mitigating the impact of climate change.

Trade between our two countries in 2014 almost doubled within a period of 10 years. An impressive record was achieved in the field of Dutch investment in our country when in 2014 it reached a level 49 times higher than that of eight years earlier. In the case of investment, an intensive cooperation has been developed in the area of vital water and flood management, agriculture and food security. Dutch companies have been playing an important role in the activities of the National Capital Integrated Coastal Development (NCICD).

It is also interesting to point out that the cooperation in the educational and cultural fields has been expanding. An increasing exchange of students and closer cooperation between Dutch and Indonesian universities are the order of the day. The Erasmus Taal Centrum in Jakarta has been giving training to an increasing number of Indonesian students who wish to learn the Dutch language, especially to those who would like to study the background of the Indonesian legal system, which of course, has a Dutch origin.

Het Instituut voor Internationale Betrekkingen Clingendael has trained a number of Indonesian junior, middle and senior diplomats since 2014, and has started a new phase for 2015 – 2016. Another important development took place in February 2014, when a memorandum of

understanding was signed between the Indonesian and the Netherlands defense authorities on closer military cooperation.

Furthermore, the Cultural Center of the Erasmus Huis in Jakarta has hosted a number of Dutch and Indonesian music and dance groups, including the combined performance of the Dutch singer Tim Knol and the Indonesian singer Koes Plus, which was enthusiastically attended by a large number of people.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As one of the important lessons we should draw from the favorable and unfavorable developments in our bilateral relations is, I think, the fact that personal approach to the relations is of crucial importance. To this end, personal contacts between our two peoples should be enhanced and deepened. These personal contacts are indeed very important to strengthen the ties between the Dutch people and Indonesians which date back so many centuries. Needless to say, there are so many Dutch people and Indonesians who have personal and even blood relationship, which should serve as a solid foundation for enhancing the bilateral cooperation. In view of what I have mentioned at the beginning of this speech, however, I would like to emphasize that the historical ties between our two nations are filled with a variety of delicate and sensitive elements, like personal experiences, sentimental feelings, nostalgia and perhaps a unique combination of love and hate so that we have to cultivate and nurture them with special care.

Excellencies, dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As an old friend of the Dutch people I would like to end my remarks by saying: Let us disregard all the less pleasant events which have taken place in our mutual history and look instead to the future with a highly positive attitude and build a relationship between our two nations based on mutual respect and benefit.

May the ties and co-operation between Nederland and Indonesia continue to blossom in the years to come.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.

Dr. Arifin M. Siregar

Rotterdam, 28 April 2015