

INDONESIA

SECTION A

Capital

Jakarta 9,341,400 (1997 est.)

Area

1,904,443 sq km (735,310 sq mi)

Form of government

Republic

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$2,800 (1999 est.)

Population

224,784,210 (July 2000 est.)

Ethnic composition

Javanese	45%
Sundanese	14%
Madurese	7.5%
Coastal Malays	7.5%
Other	26%

Official language

Bahasa Indonesia

Other languages

English, Dutch, and local dialects, the most widely spoken of which is Javanese

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The Constitution of Indonesia adopted in August of 1945.

Background notes

Indonesia consists of 17,000 islands and over 200 million people and it is the fourth most populous country in the world.

There is a considerable diversity concerning the languages used in Indonesia. There are 669 Austronesian and Papuan languages that can be found in the territory of the country. These languages written mostly in the Latin script have been influenced by the Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese and European languages.

The Indonesian language is considered to be the central feature of the Indonesian national culture. Malay was used for centuries as a lingua franca in many parts of the archipelago. The term Bahasa Indonesian, which refers to a modified form of Malay, was coined by Indonesian nationalists in 1928 and became a symbol of national unity during the struggle for independence. Bahasa Indonesian was spoken in more than 90% of households in Jakarta, but outside the Capital only 10 to 15% of the population spoke the language at home. In Javanese areas, only 1 to 5% of the population spoke Bahasa Indonesian at home. Nationwide, however, some 6.7 million Indonesians used Bahasa Indonesian as a primary language while more than 100 million others used it as a secondary language.

WEST PAPUA/IRIAN JAYA

West Papua is Indonesia's largest province in the eastern part of the country. It was annexed through force into the Republic of Indonesia during President Suharto's government and its name was changed to Irian Jaya (Victorious Irian) in 1973. The indigenous inhabitants rejected this name and the people identify themselves as West Papuans. The government promoted a "transmigration" policy - relocating Indonesians into this area - so that approximately 770,000 people were eventually brought into the territory.

EAST TIMOR

East Timor, one of the oldest European colonies, was the most neglected part of the Portuguese Empire. Many centuries ago the Malay and Melanesian peoples settled on Timor and this ethnic mix was further diluted by the arrival of Arab, Chinese and Gujarati traders. Portugal did not prepare Timor for independence. In April 1974 the popular nationalist movement, Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, filled the political vacuum caused by Portugal's abandonment. On November 28,

1975, the self-proclaimed FRETILIN government declared the colony an independent nation state.

Indonesia invaded East Timor on December 7, 1975 and expected a quick victory, but it misjudged the skills of its own forces and underestimated the East Timorese resistance to the invasion. Between 1975 and 1979, an estimated 200,000 East Timorese - a third of the population - lost their lives due to massacres, war-related starvation and disease. The present population is estimated to be 867,000, of whom perhaps as many as 200,000 are Indonesian immigrants.

CHINESE

The first Chinese people came to Indonesia in the 7th century. When the Dutch colonial forces arrived in Indonesia during the 16th century, the Chinese had already established an important role in the country's economy. Ethnic Chinese constitute quite a large number, from 8 to 10 million and it is the fifth largest ethnic group.

SECTION B

Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?

CHINESE

The Indonesian Chinese community has been intentionally targeted in numerous riots that swept across the archipelago through May of 1998. Anti Chinese discrimination dates back to the Dutch colonial period, but the process of a systematic campaign against ethnic Chinese Indonesian citizens became particularly blatant after Suharto's rise to power in 1967 on the pretext of suppressing a suspected communist coup.

More than twenty discriminatory laws and regulations pertaining to the Chinese minority are still in force in Indonesia. All ethnic Chinese are obliged to take "Indonesian" names. Furthermore, ethnic Chinese Indonesians must carry a special code on their identity cards or passports identifying them as ethnic Chinese and are additionally charged when applying for a company licenses, passports, legal papers and other documents.

EAST TIMOR

East Timor is considered to be multilingual due to the Portuguese, Indonesian, Tetum, English and indigenous local languages spoken there.

The Portuguese established their outpost in East Timor in the 15th century to gain control of the spice trade. The Dutch followed them and the

contest for the power over the territory lasted for 300 years. Ultimately, the country was divided into two parts and East Timor remained a Portuguese colony until 1975, when it became independent. In December of 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor and declared that East Timor “had decided” to integrate with Indonesia. Since 1976, therefore, East Timor has become the 27th Indonesian province.

Linguistically, there are twelve mutually unintelligible indigenous languages. These include four Austronesian (Tetum, Galoli, Mambai, Tokodede) and eight non-Austronesian (Bunak, Kemak, Makassai, Dagada, Idate, Kairui, Nidiki, Baikenu), which can be further subdivided into 35 dialects and sub-dialects. Tetum, spoken in New Zealand, Taiwan, Madagascar and the Easter Island, acts as a lingua franca among the Timorese population. It has between 300,000 and 400,000 native speakers. The Indonesian government, incidentally, while formally acknowledging the existence of twelve Timorese languages, liked to talk about them as “dialects”, which in turn denigrated their status as autonomous languages.

Each of the four main languages has their own supporters. Bahasa Indonesian and English is the choice mainly among young people, who were educated in the Indonesian school system. Portuguese, the language of the freedom fighters is spoken by the older generation. The elite speak all four languages and the common people speak Tetum and Indonesian. There is currently an argument as to which should be the official language; Bahasa Indonesian, the language of the latest invaders, or Portuguese, spoken by only 10% of the population. Regarding Tetum, as an indigenous language it should be the official language. However, further study and work is needed to turn the long neglected language into a fully developed means of communication, in both the spoken and written forms.

On December 30, 1999 the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) declared that Portuguese would be used in government, commerce, bureaucracy and education ahead of the Bahasa Indonesian and English languages. Student activists have suggested English as a politically neutral choice with obvious economic benefits.

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

In the early 1990s, Bahasa Indonesian was primarily the language of government bureaucracy, schools, national print and electronic media, and interethnic communication. In many provinces, it was the language of communication between Chinese shopkeepers and their non-Chinese patrons.

CHINESE

The ethnic Chinese minority, with 3% of the total population, has played a major role in the economy of the country. Since 1959 non-citizen ethnic Chinese have been denied the right to own and operate a business in rural Indonesia. Regulations prohibit the existence of Chinese schools, the formation of Chinese cultural groups or trade associations and public display of Chinese characters. The government permits the publication of a government-owned Chinese language newspaper, but otherwise the legislation bans the import, sale or distribution of Chinese language material, food labels, medicines, clothing and decorations. The law also forbids the celebration of the Chinese New Year in temples or public places.

EAST TIMOR

In 1981 the Indonesian administration tried to force the Church to accept linguistic integration by stipulating that Portuguese should no longer be used during Mass and should be replaced by Indonesian. The clergy rejected this request and applied the Vatican for permission to replace Portuguese with the Tetum language. The Vatican gave its approval in October of 1981. This change in language has helped to integrate the Church even more closely with the community.

Up until 1975, schooling was in the Portuguese language. Chinese was taught in schools outside of the official Catholic school system, but there was no formal instruction in Tetum or any indigenous Timorese language. After 1975, Portuguese was abolished and Bahasa Indonesian took over its place as the new national language of East Timor. The Indonesian government turned its attention to education and linked language with the educational policy. The main reason was that according to the 1980 census, less than 30% of the population of East Timor spoke or understood Indonesian. Conversely, less than 30% of the Indonesian administration in East Timor speaks or understands either Tetum or Portuguese.

To encourage learning the Portuguese language, Portugal has recently sent 183,000 schoolbooks and 4,000 Tetum-Portuguese dictionaries and grammars, along with other teaching material for the schools in East Timor. During the new school year (due to start on October 1, 2000) students in the first two primary grades will be taught in Portuguese. While for older students Indonesian will be the language of instruction, with textbooks revised to exclude Indonesian nationalist ideology. By the year 2004-5, it is hoped Portuguese will have completely replaced Indonesian at schools.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF INDONESIA



APPENDIX B

CONSTITUTION - INDONESIA

as adopted on August 1945

Article 36

The official language shall be the Indonesian language.

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