Embassy of India
Jakarta

PRESS RELEASE

Indonesia's largest Mosque hosts exhibition on India's Islamic Architecture

As part of the ongoing Sahabat India, Festival of India in Indonesia, a special exhibition on Islamic monuments of India and Indonesia was inaugurated today at Istiqlal Mosque by H. E. Prof. Dr. Nur Syams, Secretary General of Ministry of Religious Affairs and H. E. Mr. Gurjit Singh, Ambassador of India to Timor Leste.

The Istiqlal Mosque is the largest mosque in South East Asia and a symbol of independent Indonesia's resurgence. By design it is located between two churches and opposite the national monument, in between which lie the Arjuna and Krishna Chariot. Though it is a large modern mosque, it is a symbol of Indonesia's pluralistic tradition and was thus an important host for the special exhibition of India's Islamic architecture. A special effort was made by the Embassy to include photographs of Indonesia's Islamic architecture through the same famous photographer Mr. Benoy K. Behl.

Welcoming the guests, Drs. H. Mubarak, Chairman of Executive Management Board of Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta said that the exhibition of Islamic monuments reminds us of centuries old friendly relations between India and Indonesia. He said that Islam came to Indonesia from Indian shores. He also remembered support extended by the Indian leadership to the freedom movement of Indonesia.

Speaking at the inaugural function Ambassador Gurjit Singh explained plural cultural of India where all religions are getting chance to flourish. The Islamic monuments are living testimony to secular and pluralistic culture of India. The Islamic monuments in India are national heritage of India and are among the most beautiful medieval structures found anywhere in the world. He pointed out that India which has large Hindu population is often known for the Taj Mahal, an Islamic monument and Indonesia which has large Muslim population is seen through Borobudur Temple, a Buddhist temple, as its national icon. This alone speak volumes about respect for pluralism and culture in both the societies, he commented. He said that he would like the young people of Indonesia to be aware of close friendly ties that were shared between President Soekarno of Indonesia and his contemporary Indian leadership and also the common cultural values that is shared by the two countries.

The Secretary General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Prof. Dr. Nur Syams in his speech lauded the ancient traditions of India and Indonesia. He said Hinduism, Buddhism and even Islam came to Indonesia through Indian shores. He also spoke of the close cooperation during the independence struggle between both countries. He welcomed the Festival of India in Indonesia as an important manifestation of our increasing close cooperation in which the religious and
cultural cooperation was integral due to our similar outlook. He recalled the success of the television serial Jodha Akbar, pointed the many photographs of Fatehpur Sikri relating to Emperor Akbar and said that the success of serial in Indonesian television showed the mutual respect we had for our syncretic cultures. He spoke about the success of the Mahabharata serial and recounted that Yudhistir, Bhima, Arjuna, Ghatotkach and many others were common characters in Indonesian households. Referring to the close ties between two countries and the need for the two countries to work together in future as well he said “India membutuhkan (needs) Indonesia and Indonesia membutuhkan India”.

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