

Former Indonesian President Megawati: "My Duty Was to Recover The People's Mind and Spirit"

Question: Your Excellency Megawati Sukarnoputri, former President of Indonesia, would you tell me your main purpose of visiting Korea?

Answer: I was invited to attend the 2005 Asian Leadership Conference, titled "Cooperation and Rebuilding After Tsunami," organized by the Chosun Daily newspaper. It was a great honor to attend the Conference. As you know, the tsunami disaster has left a huge number of victims across the Southeast Asia region and devastated countries such as Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In fact, it is important to discuss the problems and countermeasures in order to prevent further natural disasters like the tsunami, which may occur anytime, anywhere and in any form whatsoever in the future.

Q: Can you briefly give us an outline of your speech at the conference?

A: As a guest speaker, I spoke about the natural disaster. My speech mainly focused on the massive tsunami disaster which took place on Dec. 26, 2004, in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. On my visit to Banda Aceh, the area attacked by the tsunami, I could not imagine how huge the tidal waves were that hit the shore. The damage was so terrible, and it was really heartbreaking for me to see the victims. During my tenure as the President and the Vice President, I had traveled several provinces attacked by tidal waves, but I had never seen such a big disaster.

Q: Will you explain about the achievements during your presidency?

A: When I was inaugurated as President, Indonesia was facing a lot of economic problems. The economic situation was very bad because of the IMF crisis. I decided to settle the problem with a clean mind. If I missed such a decision, there might be more problems, and the problems may not be solved. At that time, 24 big enterprises were facing severe difficulties. Fortunately, most of the problems had been settled, but two enterprises are still suffering difficulties.

Although the national financial status was very bad, we started to recover step by step. We built roads, airports and harbors with national taxes. Our exports have gradually increased and developed step by step. Today, Indonesia has reached a very good situation in trade. By dealing with the step-by-step policies and using national taxes effectively and properly, the

Indonesian economy could gradually be healthier.

Q: How did you overcome the IMF crisis?

A: During the IMF crisis, we studied the amount of Indonesian debts in accordance with the stop IMF assistance and researched for solutions in various fields. Although the US dollar was important, the Indonesian economy was also greatly affected by the Japanese Yen and EURO. We tried to solve problems step by step compared with all those currencies.

Q: Can you recount the most painful experience during your tenure as the President of Indonesia?

A: When I was inaugurated as the President, Indonesia was facing a lot of pressure to encourage the people, due to the fact that the country's economy was extremely bad during that time.

I have always thought that I was not only the President, but my duty was more important to recover the people's mind and spirit. Even if there was immediate, visible development and outcome of the country, the people's minds were more necessary. Now, we can keep up with the world without pause when the people's spirit is awake in the era of world globalization.

Q: What encouraged you to become President?

A: I might have been affected by family circumstances. My father was a President. I had always thought of what I could do for the people and the country to help them. It was the reason why I wanted to be the President. After I retired from being President, I have been asked a lot of people, "How can you always keep a bright face?" My answer was the same at all times. "Because my original aim was not to be a President, and had thought about what I really have to do for the people and the country from the very beginning."

Q: Will you explain about the achievements of your father, Sukarno, during his tenure as the President?

A: He contributed to the reconciliation and unification of the nation. As you know, Indonesia is a huge country which is well harmonized with various cultures and religions together. At the time of independence, my father introduced the five basic principles of Indonesia called the "Pancasila". He was able to unite the nation through these principles. Since then, the five principles have become the blueprint of the Indonesian nation.

Pancasila consists of two Sanskrit words, "panca" meaning five, and "sila" meaning principle. It comprises of five inseparable and inter-related principles as follows:

1) Belief in one and only one God;

- 2) Just and civilized humanity;
- 3) The unity of Indonesia;
- 4) Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives; and
- 5) Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia.

I believe that the Pancasila is not only principles adopted for Indonesia, but also it can be universally applicable where needed as their guiding ideology.

Q: According to your experience, what is your concept as President?

A: Faithfulness is the most important thing as the basics of being a President in Indonesia. It is too difficult to combine and agree with the conception of various cultures and religions without faithfulness. However, it is no matter how smart and knowledgeable a President may be. He or she cannot embrace and lead the people without faithfulness or diligence.

Q: What is your general impression of Korea?

A: When I think of the Korean people, there is one thing that makes me envy them so much. They work so hard and are very faithful to their jobs. I could see them working with pleasure all the time. I was very impressed with that Koreans work together and not work individually. I hope that Indonesians will do the same as the Koreans do.

In Indonesia, we have various types of cultures and religions which are very different from one another, so we prefer working alone and not work together. Today, It doesn't seem to be appropriate in the world we are living in. We should go in a group in spite of being various. I believe that we should learn from the Korean people.

Q: What is the best way to solve North Korea's nuclear issue?

A: In this regard, we need more consistent patience. The solution of North Korea's nuclear problem refers to the peace in the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, I think it is right that the consistent patience should be followed up to solve the problem gradually. Without its effort to solve the problem, it tends to become worse.

Now, the two Koreas are the legacy of divided countries in the world. Germany and Vietnam had similarities with the two Koreas, but they were reunified in a peaceful way. I am convinced that the Koreas would also be reunified in the same way by getting assistance from world peace organizations like the United Nations.

Q: What do you think of organizing an "Asian Union" in Asia such as the European Union

in Europe?

A: In the case of Europe, they have been sharing a common culture, historically and accordingly. It could possibly give them a birth of the European Union. However, it will be hardly possible for the Asian countries to have a common union like the Asian Union, because they have not shared such a common culture. For that reason, it will probably take long time for the Asian countries to have such a common community, the Asian Union.