

# Why Indonesia matters

## INTERVIEW WITH H.E. MOAZZAM MALIK

AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA



**MOAZZAM MALIK** is a graduate of the London School of Economics (LSE), holds a Masters degree from Oxford University, and a Chartered Diploma in Accounting and Finance from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). Prior to his appointment as Ambassador to Indonesia, ASEAN and Timor-Leste, in October 2014, he was Acting Director General in the UK Department for International Development (DFID), leading the UK's relationship with multilateral organisations and overseeing the country's engagement in the Middle East and Western Asia.

**You assumed your current post in October 2014, just as the new government of President Joko Widodo was coming into office. What have been your main priorities since your arrival?**

Among our main priorities is raising awareness about Indonesia in the UK, because I believe the time has come to start seeing Indonesia alongside India and China as a country that will shape the future of Asia and the world. This means we need to create deeper partnerships between the UK and Indonesia, and one way to do that is through more British businesses investing here, more British products being successfully marketed here, many more tourists going both ways, and many more young people going to study both ways. I'm also committed to helping our two countries work together to solve global problems like climate change and extremism.

**How would you characterise the economic relationship between Indonesia and the United Kingdom, and how are you going about promoting trade and investment between the two?**

Investment and trade are very much at the heart of the Indonesia-UK relationship. One way we've been trying to raise awareness here of what the UK has to offer is through our GREAT campaign, which stretches across education, health, tourism, investment, productivity, engineering and more.

GREAT helps promote British expertise in infrastructure design, engineering, financing and planning. The big players in these fields are already here; what I'd like to see are more medium-sized British companies taking a serious look at the Indonesian market, which is huge: this is a country of 250 million people, with a middle class of 45 million.

There are other areas where Britain can make a difference, such as education. For Indonesia to compete in the world, its workforce needs world-class skills, so we're creating partnerships between British universities and Indonesian universities to help improve the quality of higher education. I am very keen for Indonesian young people to come in much larger numbers to the UK, where they can develop world-class leadership skills and then come home and use these skills to help build their country. Equally, I'd like to see more British young people visit Indonesia, so that they can get a sense of the potential of this Asian giant.

**How would you assess the Indonesian government's performance in rolling out reform over the last 18 months?**

The government faces challenges, but I think the reforms that have been rolled out over the last year show a clear commitment to easing regulation. They also send out a signal to the world that this is a country committed to being a major part not just of the ASEAN economy, but also the global economy. This country has so many things going for it: demography, natural resources and a geo-strategic location that will drive its progress from being the 16th largest economy in the world to potentially a top five or six by 2030. The numbers show that, alongside India and China, Indonesia will be one of the main drivers of the Asian economy through the 21st century. In a globalised world, the UK needs to be part of Indonesia's journey.

**You're also working to raise awareness about Indonesia in the UK. What can you tell us about #IndonesiaMatters?**

Early in my time in here, I came to the view that not enough people in the UK know about Indonesia; we need a greater pipeline of interest and engagement from the UK. We need to take the message to UK politicians, business people, and educators that Indonesia matters. So, #IndonesiaMatters has organised a series of events that will take place from May to the end of this year, covering politics, business, economics, and education to highlight Indonesia's potential, its role in this region and its role in Asia. As an open trading nation, the UK's future will depend on relationships with the big Asian countries, like Indonesia, China and India. In short, #IndonesiaMatters is not just about Indonesia but about the UK's place in the world, alongside the countries that are going to shape the 21st century.

**What final words of advice do you have for our readers in the UK and around the world?**

I think Indonesia's moment has come. The government has set itself an ambitious agenda, and what's more, it has the strategies in place and the plans drawn up that it needs to transform this economy. Our job at the embassy is to help Britain better understand Indonesia, spread the message that Indonesia is prosperous, stable, democratic, and a force for good in its region and in the world – and one that is a good partner for the UK. **E**