

Indonesia Plans Retail Sharia Bonds' Sales in H1 '09

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New Zealand businesses stand to benefit from projects worth millions of dollars in Indonesia following unprecedented access to the country's highest ranking decision makers.

The drive to open doors for New Zealand businesses is being spearheaded by charismatic Indonesian Ambassador in Wellington, Amris Hassan.

He is shaking up perceptions of New Zealand, which for many years has been seen as an extension of Australia by Indonesians.

"There has been a wall between us; Australia. Many people think ignorantly that New Zealand is part of Australia, but that is now changing."

Relationships have received a huge boost through a top level disaster risk management conference between the New Zealand and Indonesia in Jakarta last month (*NB: August*) that was initiated by Mr Hassan.

It identified projects worth more than \$20 million to New Zealand natural hazard and earthquake engineering specialists.

Mr Hassan returns to Indonesia this week to keep the ball rolling.

"But I'm not helping New Zealand; I'm helping Indonesians to open their eyes to what New Zealand can offer."

"Unfortunately they have very little knowledge of New Zealand, despite the fact we have been married for 50 years," says Mr Hassan of the two countries' 50 years of diplomatic relationships.

Mr Hassan is working closely with Natural Hazards New Zealand (NHNZ) and Earthquake Engineering New Zealand (EENZ); two Wellington-based business groups that represent more than 50 organisations and companies with specialist skills in disaster recovery and preparedness work.

They were involved in the high-profile Jakarta conference that attracted senior decision makers from the Indonesian government and other agencies involved in disaster risk management.

Among the New Zealanders attending was Civil Defence Minister Rick Barker and Wellington Regional Council Chair, Fran Wilde.

Mr Hassan says the conference was an eye opener for Indonesians to what New Zealand disaster management and earthquake engineering businesses could offer.

Now, he is on a mission to see more sharing of expertise between New Zealand and Indonesia as the country moves from disaster recovery and reconstruction into disaster risk management and preparedness.

Indonesia has recently established a National Agency for Disaster Risk Management to oversee work on emergency management and disaster reduction, including community preparedness and earthquake engineering solutions.

It throws up a number of opportunities for New Zealand specialists, says Mr Hassan.

Next week he will be firming up plans to develop a Geosciences Centre of Excellence for research into multi-hazard risk assessment and earthquake engineering in Indonesia using New Zealand models and expertise.

Mr Hassan will meet with Indonesia's former Finance Minister Dr Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, who heads the country's Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (BRR) and Gadjah Mada University research director Professor Danang Parikesit, to discuss just what New Zealand can offer.

The project will take another leap forward when Drs Mangkusubroto and Parikesit visit New Zealand in December for a risk management workshop and study tour.

The GeoSciences Centre of Excellence is one of the many projects that came out of the joint conference. Other initiatives under discussion include earthquake engineering projects to retrofit public buildings and the installation of early warning systems into even the most remote communities.

Indonesia is a vast archipelago of some 17,000 islands that lie along the geologically active Pacific Ring of Fire.

It has been hit by a string of natural disasters since the 2004 Boxing Day earthquake and tsunami that killed nearly 132,000 Indonesians. Since then thousands more have been killed in two major earthquakes and rumbles continue.

Specialists from Natural Hazards New Zealand were in Indonesia within weeks of the disasters. Their work has included protection and restoration of water catchment areas, earthquake resistance building design and training, earthquake risk assessment and community disaster risk reduction.

The two groups were honoured with a certificate of appreciation from the Indonesian Government at a function in Wellington earlier this month (NB: *Sept 9*) to recognise their efforts.

Co-chairman of Natural Hazards New Zealand, Dr Noel Trustrum, of GNS Science, says Mr Hassan's efforts have opened top level doors for members.

"It has just been tremendous."

"The high profile of the conference and workshop gave unparalleled access to senior decision makers in the Indonesian Government and other agencies involved in disaster risk management in Indonesia, Asia and the Pacific. Together we are also looking at how our combined skills can also be applied in other countries in South East Asia and the Pacific," he says.

Source: Scoop