

Indonesia's power women

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The struggle to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women in the workforce and economy is an active issue in many parts of the world, including Indonesia. The Indonesian women's movement started even before Indonesia's independence, and its roots can be traced to the life of a woman whose legacy is celebrated annually even to this day, **Raden Ajeng Kartini** (1879 - 1904). In many respects, the conditions of Kartini's life were similar to those of most other Indonesian women during the Dutch colonialisation era. She attended school only briefly, and was subsequently placed on home confinement to be married off at a young age. However, in other aspects, her life story is unique. Kartini was an intellectual; she learned Dutch during her schooling - an uncommon feat for the time - and she read a wide range of literature and newspapers, contributed to a Dutch journal, and even established a school for women. After her untimely death at the age of 25, Kartini's various correspondences were published in the book "Out of Dark Comes Light." Her voice helped change the view of the international community towards Javanese women, as well as improving the treatment of women in her own community. Kartini stands to this day as Indonesia's symbol of women's empowerment.

It is likely that **Kartini Muljadi** was named after Kartini. Born in May, 1930, Ms Muljadi shares not only her name, but also Kartini's determination and social awareness, having risen to the pinnacle of Indonesia's legal community. Kartini Muljadi studied law and built her life around that profession. Commencing as a judge of the Jakarta District Court, after the passing of her husband, Ms. Muljadi became a notary to help provide for her family. She subsequently opened her own law firm, assisting both Indonesian and international clients, particularly in the banking and finance sector. One of Indonesia's richest women, her success has allowed Ms Muljadi to engage her passion not only for the preservation of Indonesian art and antiquities, but also for philanthropy and providing education and healthcare for the less able.

Kartini Muljadi's role in advising troubled banks during the 1998 Economic Crisis earned her the Capital Market Life Time Achievement Award, bestowed in 2004 by Indonesia's then president, **Megawati Soekarnoputri**; another outstanding woman, being the first female to rise to the top job of this archipelago. The daughter of Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, Megawati began her political career in 1987 during an era of political tension. After serving as a member of both houses of Parliament, her rise truly



began when she took over as Chair of one of Indonesia's major political parties. Megawati was elected vice president in the nation's first free election, serving in that role from 1999-2001 until the then president, Abdurrahman Wahid, had to step down due to poor health. Megawati then served as President until 2004. Indonesia's first women president, she is one of very few women ever to lead a predominantly Moslem country.

Another woman who has made a huge impact on Indonesia's development, particularly on the economy, is **Sri Mulyani Indrawati**. Having obtained master's and doctorate degrees in economics from the University of Illinois in 1992, Sri Mulyani first served as a consultant for USAID, working on programs to strengthen Indonesia's autonomy, before being appointed Executive Director on the Board of the IMF. In 2005 she was appointed as Indonesia's Minister of Finance. Her efforts led Indonesia to attain record economic growth in 2007 - the highest since the 1997 financial crisis, as well as the highest foreign exchange reserves, significantly reducing public debt and increasing direct investment. Forbes Magazine designated her as the 23rd most powerful woman in the world, and she

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was named Asia's Finance Minister of the Year two years running (2007 & 2008). Ms Mulyani currently holds the number two position in the World Bank.

There are a number of formidable women in Indonesia's current cabinet. **Mari Elka Pangestu** was the first ethnic Chinese woman Minister, serving first as Minister of Trade (and temporarily also as Minister for Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises) during Mr Yudhyono's first term, and is now Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy in his second. Ms Pangestu obtained her bachelor's and master's degrees from the Australian National University, and a doctorate in economics from University of California in the US. She is active in various trade forums, edits numerous international journals, and also served as Co-coordinator of the Task Force on Poverty and Development for the United Nations Millennium Project. In these roles Mrs. Pangestu has implemented policies focusing on promoting greater free trade, utilizations of local businesses, strengthening intellectual property and increasing Indonesia's flow of tourism. In 2012, she was shortlisted for the position of Director-General of the WTO. As we write, it was announced that the President of Indonesia has just awarded her the Bintang Mahaputera Adipradana, the nation's highest civil service award.

The current Minister of Health, **Nafsiah Mboi**, started her career as a pediatrician, having earned a Masters' Degree in Public Health from the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, in 1990, and thereafter acted as a research fellow in Harvard University. She is passionate on the issue of human rights, having headed the committee of children's rights for the United Nations; while her role in instituting health programs in Indonesia's remote eastern islands, where her husband was governor, led her to receive national and international recognition. Ms Mboi dabbled in politics as member of Parliament from 1982 until 1987, always carrying her passion for affordable healthcare with her. She pioneered the Sentani Committee in 2004 which became the main tool for the Indonesian government to tackle the growing HIV/AIDS problem, and in 2006 became Executive Secretary of the National Aids Commission and vice head of the Women National Commission. In 2012 Mrs. Mboi was appointed Minister of Health.

The means by which one can help improve the economy of the state are not confined only to politics. **Galalia Karen Agustiawan**, recently named as one of Forbes's "Asia's 50 Power Businesswomen," has achieved greatness through the private sector. Ms. Agustiawan began her career studying engineering physics at the Bandung Institute of

Technology, and thereafter joined Mobil Oil (prior to its merger with Exxon.) She then joined the local branch of a multinational company that merged with Halliburton, becoming the project manager for oil and gas accounts in 2002. In 2006 Ms. Agustiawan became first woman to be appointed as head of upstream activities of Indonesia's national oil and gas company, Pertamina, and in 2009 she was elevated to President Director, the first woman ever to hold the highest position in that prestigious state-owned enterprise. Under her leadership, Pertamina ranked a record 122 in Fortune 500, winning numerous awards such as Corporate Image Award 2012, Sustainable Business Awards 2012 and Emerging Markets Award. Ms Agustiawan has recently been reappointed for a second term, a first in the history of Pertamina.

It would be difficult to maintain a healthy government without a truly free press. Tempo Magazine is one of the oldest and most well-known publications in Indonesia. Its history is deeply intertwined with Indonesia's own, and its coverage of news and politics has continually made an impact on the State by encouraging a more transparent government. The primary Indonesian news vehicle for over 40 years, the magazine began publishing an English edition in 2000, with **Yuli Ismartono** as its executive editor. Ms. Ismartono studied political science at Delhi University and journalism at Syracuse University, New York. She served as a journalist for the original Indonesian version of Tempo, covering Thailand and other international postings, until her appointment to head of the English edition. Under her lead, Tempo Weekly Magazine was selected as the laureate of the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights for its reporting of injustice and corruption in Indonesia. When Tempo was banned for some years during the reign of Suharto, Ms. Ismartono worked in one of Indonesia's leading commercial television stations, and also served as vice president of corporate communications for the mining giant, Freeport Indonesia. Today, aside from her very active role as editor, Ms Ismartono also contributes her time and expertise to a number of journalistic organizations and NGOs, the advisory board of the Revenue Watch Institute, and also serves as the managing editor of ASEAN-wide AsiaViews.

The above are only a few of the amazing women who are striving to see Indonesia realize its true potential as a great world leader. As we move forward, Indonesia will rely more and more upon the rich resource of powerful women to help this young democratic nation take its place among the world's top economies.