

## Celebrating Independence Day

Soon after entering August, Bambang couldn't wait to celebrate Independence Day. The Indonesian Independence Day was commonly known as *Tujuhbelasan* because it was celebrated on and around the 17th. During this period, Indonesian people celebrate by holding sports events, cultural shows, parades, and small contests. As an active member of society, Bambang was looking forward to joining as many events as possible to add to the *Tujuhbelasan* atmosphere.

Bambang went outside and checked the *Bendera Merah-Putih*, the red and white Indonesian flag he had raised since August 1st. It was the day before Independence Day, and a few sports matches were being held in the neighboring village. Soccer and badminton were the most popular sports in Indonesia, with soccer being the most popular. Bambang was very much into soccer, and he had grouped with a few of his friends to join some matches for the day. While their team did not manage to win, Bambang and his friends were nevertheless happy when they went to watch the afternoon matches.

The next day, Bambang went to his neighbor's place to watch the live TV broadcast of the national celebration. After a series of ceremonies and cultural entertainment, the morning broadcast ended with the flag-raising ceremony attended by President Joko Widodo. In the afternoon, Bambang and his friends went to watch the series of small contests held nearby. Tug of war, sack race, *lomba makan kerupuk* or *kerupuk* eating contest, and many others were staples for the *Tujuhbelasan* celebration that adults and children enjoyed.

Bambang and his friends joined the highlight of the day, *Lomba Panjat Pinang*. This contest required a group of people working together to climb the trunk of a tall tree. Generally, this game was won by the first person or group that successfully climbed to the top and grabbed the flag, but sometimes they had the prizes hung on top of the tree itself. Since the tree was oiled, the cooperation and skills of the group members were crucial to successfully climb to the top and win prizes such as electronic goods, bicycles, or even gold. This time, Bambang and his group had to climb to grab the flag to win the prize. With hard work and good cooperation among Bambang's group, they managed to score a prize.

The day after that, a parade and entertainment were scheduled at a nearby village. The parade was held in cooperation with a few nearby villages and was sure to be a huge spectacle. Despite being tired from all the climbing they did the previous day, Bambang and his friends went to where the parade was starting. They could see many other people dressed in traditional clothing going in the same direction. Some people had creatively made costumes out of leaves and flowers, and others wore *kebaya* and *batik* for the parade. Since Indonesia was diverse, many came wearing their ethnic clothing. Despite being from various backgrounds, they came together and celebrated *Tujuhbelasan*. Bambang and his friends joined in the festivities and followed the parade and the crowd around the villages all afternoon and watched the cultural show until well into the night.

Independence Day was a time to remember that Indonesian people had come together to achieve the better future that they had now. The oppression in the past might have been grueling and was important to remember, but it wasn't something to hold on to for the future. Nevertheless, we are grateful for those who sacrificed themselves to free the people from the colonials and will remember them forever.

### Questions, Answers and Hints:

**1. Does Bambang live in a large city, or a small village?**

**Answer:** In a village.

**Hints/Clues:** Bambang and his friends went to the neighboring village to join the soccer match and watched the parade organized by several villages.

**2. Why did Bambang go to his neighbor's place to watch the broadcast?**

**Answer:** Because he didn't have a TV at home.

**Hints/Clues:** The people who live in a small village in Indonesia generally have little to no electronic devices.

**3. Did Bambang and his friend win any contest?**

**Answer:** Yes (or maybe), the *Panjat Pinang* contest (or the tree climbing contest).

**Hints/Clues:** Bambang and his friends managed to be the first few to reach the top.

**4. Why did the people celebrate *Tujuhbelasan* and show their different backgrounds with different clothing?**

**Answer:** To show their solidarity.

**Hints/Clues:** Despite being from various backgrounds, they come together to celebrate *Tujuhbelasan*.

**5. Why do Indonesians celebrate *Tujuhbelasan*?**

**Answer:** Because they were freed from the oppression in the past/colonialization (or to remember those who sacrificed themselves for freedom).

**Hints/Clues:** Some people sacrificed themselves to free the people from the colonials.

**6. Is Independence Day celebrated only on the 17th?**

**Answer:** No. It is celebrated before and after the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Hints/Clues:** Bambang and his friends played in a soccer match, watched the national broadcast, and joined the *Panjat Pinang* contest the next day, then joined the parade the following day.