

Kunci Budaya: Business in Indonesia, The Cultural Key to Success
 By Thomas Brandt
 goasia Verlag, 1997
 252 pages

JAKARTA (JP): It is quite a paradox that Indonesia's rich culture has acted as a formidable magnet for international tourists, yet at the same time, it is seen as an obstacle to doing business in the country.

That, in a nutshell, is how Thomas Brandt tries to explain, through his book *Kunci Budaya: Business in Indonesia, The Cultural Key to Success*, the importance of mastering local practices and understanding local cultures to succeed in business in Indonesia.

An economist at the German-Indonesian Chamber of Commerce, Brandt lays out what all foreign businesspeople or expatriate managers, especially those from western countries, need to know about doing business in Indonesia.

The 252-page book draws mainly from the mistakes, failures and successes of doing business in Indonesia which Brandt gathered over three years through interviews with 150 business executives from Indonesia and eight western countries.

Some of the practical advice, presented with clear examples and illustrated with photographs and caricatures, is general in nature in the sense that it basically refers to expatriates working overseas.

But most of the advice the book provides for various aspects of managing a business — being specific to the

are those on conflict management within the Javanese culture, dealing with Indonesian employees, business negotiations, Indonesian approaches to law and contracts, work ethics, the importance of personal connections, and how to deal with and court bureaucrats.

The book is easy to digest because each chapter or subchapter is concluded with an underlining of the most important points to remember or ponder regarding the topics discussed.

Obviously, the book stops short of discussing in detail corruption and other forms of illegal payments which are often needed to facilitate things related to government bureaucracy.

Neither does it want to mislead expatriates. The book frankly warns that it is essential to hire trustworthy local staff to deal with the various government departments because dealing with these bodies can be most time consuming.

It acknowledges that procedures at some departments are sometimes delayed for a variety of reasons, including attempts to generate "facilitation money."

Many management consultancy companies in Indonesia, the largest of which usually have technical tie-ups with foreign consultants, have also published business guidebooks on Indonesia, but most of these emphasize the legal aspects.

Brandt's book, which was launched here this month, is one of the few which emphasize the social-cultural aspects — the most important elements to be considered in human resource management — which is the core of business

cultural manager's guide and the role of Indonesia as one of the most favorite places of foreign investment in Asia encouraged Brandt to present an English version.

The enthusiastic response to the book can also be noted from the corporate sponsorship

— Vincent Lingga

Thomas Brandt

“Kunci Budaya” Business in Indonesia The cultural key to success

