

The land of swaying coconut trees

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Englisch

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North Sulawesi is located on the northern peninsula of Sulawesi Island at 0 – 30 degrees north latitude and 120 – 127 degrees east longitude.

After Gorontalo was declared a separate province in 2001, the land area of North Sulawesi province became 15,272.44 square kilometers. In the north, this territory is bordered by the Sulawesi Sea, the Philippines and the Pacific Ocean, and in the east by the Maluku Sea, in the south by the Gulf of Tomini and in the west by Gorontalo province. The North Sulawesi peninsula extends from the west to the east, with Sangihe (Sanger) and Talaud archipelagos in the northernmost, comprising 124 islands. Some of them (Mingas and Marore islands) are directly adjacent to the Philippines. The population of North Sulawesi prefers the name Provinsi Nyiur Melambai (province of swaying coconut trees) for the region.

North Sulawesi has a fairly long history prior to being declared a province. In the early period of independence of the Republic of Indonesia, this region had the status of karesidenan (residency, former colonial territory) as part of Sulawesi province. Based on Government Regulation No. 5/1960, Sulawesi was divided into two provinces: South–Southeast Sulawesi and North–Central Sulawesi. The first governor of North–Central Sulawesi was A.A. Baramuli (former Supreme Court chief justice), with F.J. Tumbelaka as deputy governor. North–Central Sulawesi covered Gorontalo municipality and eight regencies, namely Sangihe–Talaud, Bolaang Mongondow, Minahasa, Gorontalo, Buol Toli–Toli, Donggala, Poso and Luwuk/Banggai.

On Sept. 23, 1964, the Indonesian government introduced Law No. 13/1964, which changed the status of North–Central Sulawesi by establishing North Sulawesi as an autonomous province with Manado as its capital. In this way, North Sulawesi's de facto area stretched from the north to the south and southwest, from the northern tip of Mingas island in Sangihe–Talaud regency to Molosipat west of Gorontalo regency. In its development up until 2000, the North Sulawesi administrative territory consisted of five regencies and three municipalities: Minahasa, Bolaang Mongondow, Gorontalo, Sangihe–Talaud, Boalemo regencies, and Manado, Bitung and Gorontalo municipalities.

In line with the spirit of reform and regional autonomy, the territorial division of North Sulawesi was manifested in Gorontalo province through Law No. 38/2000. In later years, North Sulawesi had its territory added to by Talaud regency through Law No. 8/2002 as the splitting of Sangihe–Talaud regency, South Minahasa regency and Tomohon city through Law No. 10/2003 and North Minahasa regency through Law No. 33/2003, the latter three originating in the division of Minahasa regency. With the separation of Gorontalo from North Sulawesi and the addition of new areas, Nyiur Melambai now has nine regencies and cities. They are Bolaang Mongondow regency (capital: Kotamobagu), Minahasa regency (Tondano), Sangihe/Sanger regency (Tahuna), Talaud regency (Melonguane), South Minahasa regency (Amurang), North Minahasa regency (Airmadidi), Manado city (Manado), Bitung city (Bitung) and Tomohon city (Tomohon).

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), North Sulawesi with its 15,272.44–km² territory had a population of 2,154,235 in 2005, comprising 463,145 in Bolaang Mongondow, 416,771 in Manado, 167,625 in Bitung, 78,944 in Talaud, 193,110 in Sangihe, 385,699 in Minahasa, 81,583 in Tomohon, 159,954 in North Minahasa and 207,404 in South Minahasa. Various circles in North Sulawesi claim that the province is

a potential market for the Asean Free Trade Area (AFTA) because it is geographically located in the Pacific Rim, surrounded by ASEAN growth centers like Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and eastern Indonesia with a population of around 120 million.

North Sulawesi has multiethnic communities, but the Minahasa people are the most dominant group, inhabiting Minahasa, Manado, North Minahasa, South Minahasa and Bitung. This ethnic majority is made up of seven subethnic groups with different languages and dialects: Tonsea, Tolour, Tombulu, Totemboan, Tonsawang, Pasan and Bantik. The other groups are Sanger in Sangihe regency, Talaud in Talaud regency and Mangondow mostly in Bolaang Mongondow regency.

The region is also endowed with abundant and diverse natural resources. According to the North Sulawesi Investment Coordinating Board, the province's investment potential and opportunities are in the sectors of mining, tourism, industry, agriculture and fishery. Agriculture -- covering livestock breeding, estates and food crop cultivation and fishery -- are dominant areas due to local agrarian conditions. The main agricultural commodities of the region are coconuts, cloves, nutmeg, vanilla beans, coffee beans, potatoes and vegetables, while tuna, skipjack, grouper and seaweed are among its major fishery products.

Large quantities of these commodities have been exported to Asian, European and U.S. markets. Besides agriculture, North Sulawesi also boasts mining resources and tourism. Especially for mining, it relies on gold, which is both traditionally extracted by local communities and exploited according modern means by PT Newmont Minahasa Raya, PT Avoset and PT **Meares Soputan** Mining, the latter planning to start operations in the middle of this year.

Meanwhile, tourism is the sector this province is most eager to promote. For its further promotion, the regional administration recently requested former tourism and telecommunication minister Joop Ave to act as consultant. In a seminar, Joop Ave expressed readiness to help formulate North Sulawesi's tourism development strategy once a month. In response to his consulting role, a number of national entrepreneurs from the region pledged to invest in tourism on the peninsula.

The products of the above sectors have contributed to the economic growth of North Sulawesi. As indicated by the Manado branch of Bank Indonesia, this region's economy in 2004 grew by 6.7 percent compared with the national economic growth rate of only 4.8 percent. In 2005, however, North Sulawesi's economic growth declined to 5.1 percent due to discouraging national economic developments.

Infrastructure is relatively favorable in this region. Land transportation is very smooth throughout North Sulawesi as road networks reach its remote parts and remain in good repair. BPS data show that North Sulawesi at present has 811 km of state roads, 1,313 km of provincial roads and 167 km of regency/city roads. In addition, the trans-Sulawesi highway links the region with other provinces in Sulawesi, serving as a trade and distribution route to ensure the high mobility of goods, services and travelers. Bridges totaling 721.60 km are scattered over various regencies and cities.

With regard to sea transportation, North Sulawesi's seaports have adequate capacities and facilities to serve passenger, fishery and cargo/container ships plying international, inter-island and cabotage routes. One of them is the international seaport of Bitung city. Its facilities include a 1,416-meter terminal, a 12,000 m² storage yard, a 13,392 m² warehouse, four cranes, 12 forklifts, a 85.70 ha port pool with a depth of 19 meters and a 50,000 m navigation line. Its operational area covers 85.70 ha of water, 45 ha of land, 171 ha of public utilities and 350 m² of offices, with four tugboats and other equipment.

The provincial administration has since 2000 been working toward promoting Bitung into the largest international HUB port in Indonesia, but so far no investors have indicated interest in this project.

"If this position is achieved, all exports from eastern Indonesia can be realized through Bitung at lower costs and within shorter distances to reach destination countries. North Sulawesi and other eastern populations will undergo rapid advancements as a result," said Fenny Wurangian, former chairman of the Manado-Bitung Integrated Economic Development Zone, who continues to advocate this mega project.

In the sphere of air transportation, North Sulawesi people can be proud of their Sam Ratulangi international airport in Manado, now capable of accommodating wide bodied aircraft like MD 11s, Boeing 737s and Air Bus 300s. Serving inbound and outbound flights almost round-the-clock, the airport also houses local airline firms and a Singapore private airline company, thus enabling direct foreign trips from Manado. A Philippine airline firm also plies Manado routes though not yet on a regular basis. For regency destinations, air strips have been developed for small and medium planes such as Naha in Sangihe and Melongguane in Talaud.

Electricity supply in the province is met by its diesel and hydro power generators, and a geothermal power generator in Lahendong, Tomohon, all being directly managed by state electricity company PLN, territory VII (North/Central Sulawesi and Gorontalo). According to PLN, North Sulawesi's power supply still highly depends on diesel generators. In coming years other electricity sources will be developed, including micro gas power generators, in view of the region's abundant natural resources.

Ten generators are now operating: Tonsea Lama with an installed capacity of 14,380 KW, Tanggari I with 18,000 KW, Tanggari II 19,000 KW, diesel generators in Bitung with 51,120 KW, Manado 5,760 KW, Sewa 10,000 KW, Manado branch 1,982 KW, Kotamobagu branch 17,490 KW, Tahuna branch 18,144 KW and a geothermal generator in Lahendong with 20,000 KW. These generators have been supplying various public electricity needs to the extent of around 97 percent of the North Sulawesi territory.

For accommodation and communication, North Sulawesi today has a five-star hotel, Hotel Santika, 15 km from Manado, besides two four-star hotels and dozens of three-star and lower rated ones. By the end of this year, all regencies and cities will enjoy telephone services.

With the availability of natural resources and the different advantage factors earlier described, North Sulawesi Governor Sinyo Harry Sarundajang, who was directly elected by local people in 2005, is determined to bring about prosperity and high competitiveness for the region's population. To this end, Sarundajang has said the development of this province requires involvement by the Indonesian private sector as well as foreign interests. (Jongker Rumteh)