

August 17, 1945

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Indonesia with approximately 242 million inhabitants has long struggled to achieve freedom from the Dutch and Japanese controls. The Dutch colonized Indonesia from 1575 to 1934, and the Japanese colonized Indonesia from 1935 to 1945. Colonization was the hardest time for Indonesians. After fighting the Dutch and the Japanese, we gained independence on August 17, 1945 and proclaimed August 17 our Independence Day. It is the most important day in Indonesia. Every August 17, our president delivers a speech to the citizens to remember our difficulties in the past. In addition, all Indonesian citizens should attend the ceremony of the Independence Day, the symbol of our freedom. Moreover, Indonesia has many unique ways to celebrate the Independence Day with contests and ceremonies.

First, “panjat pinang” is the most regular game played in public places. In English, “panjat pinang” means “climbing a high pole.” Many people want to participate in this event. The pole is lubricated by oil and becomes so slippery that none of the participants can climb the pinnacle by themselves. If they want to reach the top, they must have good teamwork involving seven people. Then, one strong person must be the base because he will withhold the other six teammates. Next, another person climbs to the base person’s shoulders, and so on until they reach the top. On the top of the pole is a circle made of bamboo attached to the pole. There are many prizes in that circle such as bicycles, television, clothes, radios, watches, and a set of school equipment wrapped with unused magazines.

Moreover, Indonesia holds a famous “bakiak” contest every August 17. “Bakiak” is traditional Japanese shoes made of wood. Indonesians can not walk properly with “bakiak” because they are not used to it. The game includes seven participants. Spectators who watch this game will laugh because sometimes the participants can be very clumsy and fall in funny ways. In addition, some Indonesians modify this game by using ski boards, so right now, instead of one person playing, three participants can play together in one pair of ski boards. Usually, families including the father, mother, and children participate in this game. Then, as long as the field is wide, seven families can participate at the same time.

Lastly, speed contest is also a famous game. Speed contest has various kinds of games such as “run race,” “spoon and marble race,” “gunny-sack race,” “marathon,” and “eating krupuk.” The last game is the most awkward because participants must eat “krupuk,” which is hung as high as the height of a man. “Krupuk” is chips made of flour and flavored with fish or shrimp. “Krupuk” is round with many holes and has a diameter of 5 cm, so it is very big. The person who eats up “krupuk” the fastest is the winner of the contest. Another strange contest is the “spoon and marble race.” The participant should hold a spoon with his or her lips. Then, a marble is put in the oval part of the spoon. After that, the participants must run to the finish line without dropping the marble. Even though the game is hard, it is fun to watch the contests.

It is important to participate in the August 17 contests because it can ease pain and sorrow that Indonesians received from the Dutch and Japanese. The participants can choose to play “panjat pinang,” “bakiak,” “eating krupuk,” or “spoon and marble race”

on Indonesia's Independence Day. In conclusion, the contests not only provide entertainment but also symbolize the Independence of Indonesia.