



Democratization has resulted in political stability, military reforms, Yudhoyono says

Nusa Dua, Bali (ANTARA News) - President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said democratization in Indonesia had resulted in political stability, military reforms and economic growth although it was previously feared to be short-lived because the country was too big and its people were not ready for it.

"Many people earlier predicted that democratization would not last long in Indonesia as its people were not ready for it and the country was too big and facing complex problems," the president said when opening the 40th congress of the International Association of Political Consultants here Monday.

On the occasion, the head of state on behalf of all the Indonesian people received a citation dubbed "Democracy Award" from the association.

In the past, the award was only bestowed on prominent political figures as individuals not on behalf of a state like former Philippine President Corazon Aquino and former South African President Nelson Mandela.

At the function which was also attended by First Lady Ani Yudhoyono, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Widodo AS, Home Minister Hardiyanto and Minister/State Secretary Hatta Rajasa, the president said the prediction of many people had turned to be wrong.

"We have been successful in effecting radical political reforms and in achieving economic growth," the president said before participants of the association's annual congress.

"We have managed to reform the National Defense Forces (the military) and they now concentrate on their tasks of maintaining democratization and reforms," the president said.

Despite the success in reform and democratization, the president however admitted that the country was still going through critical times.

"It is important that Indonesia popularize the process of democratization in the country," the president said.

Yudhoyono was the first head of state/government to open an annual conference of the international association.

Also on hand at the conference's opening were Regional Representatives Council (DPD) Chairman Ginanjar Kartasasmita, Jakarta Governor Fauzi Bowo, Gorontalo Governor Fadel Muhammad and Bali Governor Dewa Beratha. (*)

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