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21/12

Democracy in danger

The motive for the recent bomb attacks in Indonesia is to undermine the nascent democracy, writes AMIT BARUAH

INDONESIA IS in the news once again, for wrong reasons. Ridding the country of Gen. Suharto's 32-year-old draconian rule has not proved sufficient to create the basis for a strong, vibrant and secular democracy. The largest Islamic nation with an evolved and tolerant culture was a victim of a series of 18 blasts on Christmas eve which killed 15 persons and wounded another 50. The toll would have been much higher but for the police intercepting parcel bombs sent to churches in Medan, North Sumatra.

As has become the practice, no group came forward to claim responsibility — indicating that the outfit which carried out the dastardly attacks was not in a position to identify itself. The mayhem fits into a pattern, seen along with the September 13 attack on the Jakarta Stock Exchange building. No group owned up that attack either.

The motive of these two strikes as well as the bomb attack on the Philippine Ambassador to Indonesia earlier in the year was to undermine the fledgling democracy. While the stock exchange blast was meant to send a signal to foreign business and investors that Indonesia was not a "safe" destination, the Christmas eve blasts seemed a bid to provoke communal violence.

Mercifully, Wednesday's Id-ul-Fitri (as Id-ul-Fitr is known in Indonesia) passed off peacefully, coming two days after Christmas.

The fact that churches were targeted was no coincidence — given the current tensions between Muslims and Christians in Maluku.

The Lasykar Jihad, which has sent a large number of "jihadis" to fight the Christians in the Maluku, has, however, distanced itself from the bomb attacks. Condemning the bombings, the Lasykar said in a statement: "The bombings obviously have political nuances in the background.



Children injured in Jakarta blasts... mindless mayhem in a fledgling democracy.

The Lasykar Jihad in this regard has no involvement in national political manoeuvres."

The President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, has been at the forefront condemning the incidents which came a day before he travelled to Irian Jaya to participate in Christmas celebrations in the troubled province. "These actions (were planned) by politically-motivated people... while the perpetrators acted only for money," Mr. Wahid was quoted as telling reporters in Jakarta. "We must not accuse anyone... if it's just a matter of making accusations, I too have suspects (in mind), but to announce them without strong evidence would only embarrass us.

The problem for the Government and the police is that they have been unable to pin previous attacks on any particular group of individuals. While allegations have previously named the remnants of Gen. Suharto's "New Order" regime, no hard evidence has been produced. Pressure seems to be mounting on Mr. Wahid to ensure that the culprits responsible for the Christmas eve killings are brought to book. This is an imperative for the Government to restore its

credibility. Given the differences within the Government and the inability of the Cabinet to work together as a team, there is all the more reason why a quick, credible investigation should take place and the guilty should be brought to book.

However, if the past track record is anything to go by, such a prospect will appear unlikely. If the finger is not pointed at the perpetrators, then the current feeling that the Government is not able to govern will only get stronger. Already, the "missing" Mr. Tommy Suharto, convicted son of Gen. Suharto, has proved a major embarrassment to the Government — especially since Mr. Wahid had two inexplicable meetings with the youngest Suharto.

While many lament the absence of "stability" (of the authoritarian kind) which allowed cronies to get on with their business, the larger Indonesian nation sees the police inability to arrest Mr. Tommy Suharto as an inexcusable failure. There is, perhaps, a certain inevitability to the enormous problems facing Indonesia — a country used to one-man rule for 32

years. The transfer from despotism to democracy is proving painful.

The Christmas eve attacks, in a sense, sum up the dimensions of the Indonesian problem — unseen forces bent upon destabilising a multi-religious, albeit Muslim-dominated nation.

As Mr. Wimar Witoelar, spokesman for the President, told this correspondent after the pre-Christmas bombings, the attacks were personally aimed at the moderate and tolerant Mr. Wahid himself.

In a sense, Indonesia and Mr. Wahid have no option but to bury the ghosts of the past. If the country is to regain its lost stature, then those responsible for the Christmas eve carnage and other attacks must be brought to book expeditiously. The attacks are an open challenge to the authority of the Government.

The impunity and apparent ease with which they were carried out only go to show the urgent need for unified and effective governance. While questions remain how "loyal" the security establishment is to the civilian Government, it is up to the leadership to assert its authority unambiguously.

THE HINDU

31 DEC 2000

Wahid extends olive branch to Aceh rebels

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, DEC. 19. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, who made a brief visit to the troubled province of Aceh on Tuesday, promised to continue the dialogue process with the rebels even after a ceasefire expires next month.

Mr. Wahid's much-awaited visit was a brief one. The President spent just three-and-a-half hours in Aceh — a consequence of the bad law and order situation in the troubled province.

A little before the President arrived in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, a bomb exploded outside the main mosque. There were no casualties. The incident was one of the many that has shattered the peace in the restive province earlier.

Mr. Wahid, who has promised autonomy to a region which has been demanding independence, said at the grand mosque of Banda Aceh: "We will end the humanitarian pause, but we'll continue to hold dialogue until Aceh is completely free (from violence) in the framework of the Republic of Indonesia."

He described rebels belonging to the Free Aceh Movement (known in Indonesia by the acronym GAM), as "our brothers", and said the military should not be harsh against them. The President, known as a moderate and humanist, was quoted as saying: "I ask the Government apparatus not to treat people as their enemies, treat them as friends."

Mr. Wahid, who was both frank and humorous in his speech, said: "As the President, I feel the most bitter because I could not change this. If I was not a Muslim, I would have committed suicide because of the bitterness."

Accompanying the President was the Senior Security Minister, Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the military chief, Admiral Widodo Adisucipto, the national police chief, Gen. Suroyo Bimantoro, and 16 ambassadors from OIC countries.

Interestingly, the Indonesian Government abandoned a plan to announce the imposition of the Shariat in Aceh. Earlier, it had been made known that Mr. Wahid would announce the enforcement of the Shariat in the province. There has been mounting pressure on Mr. Wahid to take a more hardline approach to the rebels in Aceh. One result of the pressure has been the statement that the humanitarian pause will not be extended.

There have also been assertions that human rights violations continue in Aceh despite the "soft" approach taken by the President.

According to available information, there are different pulls and pressures within the Indonesian establishment which have made the pursuit of a consistent policy difficult.

Also, there are reports that the military is unhappy with the President's approach and wants a more proactive line to be taken by the rebels in Aceh and other parts of the archipelago.

THE HINBU

20 DEC 2000

110-18
23/9

Verdict triggers street clashes

S. B. K. S. J. W.

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, SEPT. 28. The Jakarta court that on Thursday dismissed the corruption case against the former President, Gen. Suharto, involving the alleged embezzlement of \$ 570 millions, was in fact scheduled to decide only whether or not the accused was medically fit to stand trial. The court, however, threw out the case in a surprise verdict.

Political analysts in Jakarta were quick to point out that a new problem had arisen for the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, and his Government. There appears to be little doubt that the reformist students, who have already taken to the streets, will unleash all their forces against the court verdict.

"The panel of judges rules that the case of H.M. (Haji Mohammad) Suharto cannot be accepted and frees defendant H.M. Suharto from his city arrest and returns the dossier of the case in the name of defendant H.M. Suharto to the prosecutors," the presiding judge, Mr. Lalu Maryun, said in his ruling.

The decision came after an "independent" team of doctors announced that Gen. Suharto was "permanently" unfit to stand trial.

"The entire clinical psychiatric and psychogeriatric findings show that H.M. Suharto is mentally unfit for trial... seen from the physical or mental aspects, he (Suharto) is pronounced in an unfit condition to be tried and this unfit for trial condition is of a permanent nature," a doctor who examined him, said.

The court verdict, which sparked protests on the streets, also drew adverse comments from analysts. "A new conflict may be seen in Indonesia. The reforming students and ordinary people are very unhappy," Mr. Arbi Sanit, who teaches at the University of Indonesia, told this correspondent from Jakarta.

Stating that there could be a link between the Supreme Court order sentencing Mr. Tommy Suharto, the former President's son, and today's verdict, Mr. Sanit said the court had shown it was only "concerned with Suharto's rights, not those of the Indonesian people". It appeared that the medical opinion given today was tailor-made to permit the release of Gen. Suharto, who was forced by agitating students to quit office in May 1998 in the midst of the South-East Asian economic crisis.

Democratic elements in the Indonesian society have long argued that sick or not, Gen.



Protesters kick a supporter of the former Indonesian President, Gen. Suharto (inset), in front of the Agricultural Department, the venue of the Suharto trial, in south Jakarta on Thursday. Hundreds of students and residents attacked scores of Suharto supporters and torched a bus outside the court. — Reuters

Suharto must be forced to stand trial. Whether such an opinion is valid or not is quite another matter; but those who have suffered at the hands of the former dictator are unlikely to be satisfied with anything else.

The verdict is also likely to have major ramifications for the Wahid Government. The reformists want Gen. Suharto and the rest of the one-time "first family" brought to justice for corruption and human rights violations.

That the trial of Gen. Suharto was a "sensitive" matter for the Government was clear from the start. Mr. Wahid had gone as far as to say that if the former President was convicted, he would immediately pardon him. The Jakarta court, however, has ensured that Mr. Wahid will not need to exercise himself in extending

the pardon.

The court ruling is also likely to hamper any further legal action against Gen. Suharto as the doctors have ruled that he is "permanently" unfit to stand trial. However, reformist elements are likely to mount as much pressure as they can on the Government to initiate further proceedings against Gen. Suharto.

It is to be seen whether the bomb attacks that have taken place on key days in the Suharto trial (including the one at the office of a human rights organisation in Jakarta yesterday) will now come to a halt.

Any suggestion that a grand compromise has been arrived at with the erstwhile "first family" is also likely to create problems in the weeks and months ahead.

Clashes after court breather for Suharto

Jakarta, Sept. 28 (Reuters): An Indonesian court today ruled former autocrat Suharto was too ill to stand trial for corruption, all but ending efforts to punish him for widespread graft and abuses during his army-backed rule.

In a decision that triggered street clashes and raised fears of further violence following a spate of bomb blasts that have coincided with the case, the court also lifted Suharto's city arrest order, allowing him to travel anywhere. Prosecutors said they would lodge an appeal.

But they face an uphill battle after independent doctors told the

South Jakarta court the 79-year-old former President, who has suffered three strokes since stepping down in 1998, had the comprehension of a young child and was unfit to stand trial.

"The court has decided that the criminal case of Suharto cannot be accepted," said chief judge Lalu Mariyun. "Therefore the case is closed."

On the volatile streets of Jakarta, the reaction was quick.

Troops were forced to fire warning shots above the heads of scores of outraged students as they headed toward Suharto's luxury home in central Jakarta. The

students fled, but later burnt a motorcycle after earlier torching a bus.

Local residents then tried to attack two plainclothes security officials nearby, who were forced to draw pistols and fire shots in the air to protect themselves.

Earlier, at least 10 students and local residents were beaten by police near the court venue after throwing molotov cocktails at security forces. Two local journalists have also been hospitalised after being beaten by police.

Some 600 pro-Suharto loyalists have since gathered near the ex-autocrat's home in anticipation of the students, who witnesses said had regrouped and were heading to his residence.

Wahid abroad again

The latest turmoil strikes Indonesia at a time when President Abdurrahman Wahid is on yet another overseas trip.

Wahid's frequent forays abroad since taking power 11 months ago have won him few friends, especially with Indonesia's international standing at such a low ebb because of pro-Jakarta militias causing havoc in West Timor. Troops began asking the gangs to hand in weapons today, and said they would use force from tomorrow.

China coal mine blast kills 36

Beijing, Sept. 28 (Reuters): A gas explosion in a coal mine in southwestern China has killed 36 miners and trapped another 122 underground, the official Xinhua news agency said today.

Eighty-three people were also hurt in the blast that ripped through Muchonggou coal mine in Shuicheng province on last evening. Hundreds of rescue workers were trying to restore the air supply in a bid to save the stranded miners. Xinhua gave no further details about the cause of the blast.

A team headed by the minister of the state economic and trade commission, Sheng Huaren, was on its way to the disaster site. China's coal mines have an abysmal safety record, with thousands killed in accidents every year. Beijing has pledged to improve safety and close down thousands of small unregulated pits.

Suharto family to be grilled

9.4.12
ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, Nov. 18. — Indonesian police will question family members of Mr Suharto after President Wahid today ordered them to press on with their hunt for the fugitive youngest son of the former leader. Hutomo "Tommy" Mandala Putra, a multimillionaire businessman, has been on the run for more than two weeks evading an 18-month prison sentence for corruption.

Police have so far failed to trace him despite orders from the President that he be put behind bars.

National police chief, Gen Bimantoro Surojo said detectives will start interrogating Tommy's family and other relatives from Monday. "The President asked me to continue the manhunt for Tommy," Mr Bimantoro said after a brief meeting with President Wahid.

The members of the prosperous Suharto clan claim they don't know where Tommy is. Some of their homes have already been searched by officers who have denied bungling the case or going soft on Mr Suharto's family.

Tommy's disappearance is proving to be a major embarrassment for the crisis-ridden 13-month-old Wahid administration.

Anwar case: Government prosecutors will review five remaining charges against jailed Malaysian politician Anwar Ibrahim after the appeals against his corruption and sodomy convictions are over.

THE STATESMAN

19 NOV 2000

The Indonesian President celebrates the completion of one year in office with more enemies than ever as talk of impeachment is whispered in the corridors of power. SUSAN SIM reports

INDONESIAN President Abdurrahman Wahid has been telling insiders this new joke for some weeks now: "There are three bodies beginning with the initials AS which do not like me. Adi Sasano, Amerika Serikat and Aryanti Sitepu."

He intones this before erupting into laughter, in reference to a former friend-turned-foe who was a minister in the Habibie government, the USA and the woman who claimed to have had an adulterous affair with him in 1996.

He can now add another AS to the list: Alip Suwondo. Mr Suwondo, as everyone knows, is the masseur who allegedly bamboozled a Bulog official into giving him 35 billion rupiah under the guise of presidential authority.

Mr Wahid went on the run as soon as the public, and the police, became interested in knowing who benefited from his scam, and was arrested only last Saturday.

And now, even the insiders are worried he might be able to provide a hostile Parliament with the excuse it has been looking for to prove the President's unsuitability to govern.

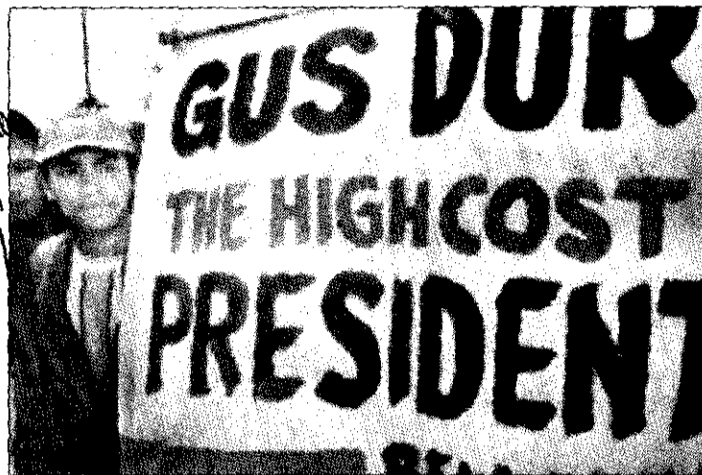
Perhaps for the first time, the question "Can he be impeached for this?" is being whispered in the corridors of power with some urgency.

For, unlike earlier false alarms, the President has recently made quite a number of enemies among those who might have interesting tales to tittle-tattle, including a couple of police chiefs, one of whom might think he lost his job for arresting Mr Suwondo.

But the President is marking his first anniversary in power, blissfully doing what he likes best -- hobnobbing with fellow world leaders. Although Indonesians might quibble over whether his constant travels provide good value for money, there is no doubt he is the country's best salesman.

The government can claim

Wahid gets a mouthful



Indonesian student protesters look on from behind a banner criticising Abdurrahman Wahid (above right), popularly called Gus Dur, near the presidential palace in Jakarta on Thursday. Demonstrators had gathered there to demand his resignation on the eve of his first year in power. — AP/PTI

some justifiable credit for its success this week in persuading the Consultative Group on Indonesia to pour more money down a seemingly bottomless pit.

Mr Rizal Ramli's economic team worked hard to project an image of policy coherence and accountability, and Mr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's security group took some hard collective decisions the President would not take, like ordering the arrest of a notorious East Timorese militia leader whose continued liberty had irked donor countries.

But, in truth, there was no way the CGI would not lend the Wahid government the \$4.8 billion, not unless donor countries wanted to give his enemies the green light to unseat him, and watch the democratic process unravel (and lose all hope of ever recovering the \$60 billion Jakarta already owes).

Mr Wahid might be angry over not being on Washington's A-list after his recent tongue-lashing from US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright — she took umbrage at his sexist remark that Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri needed to shower while the new Cabinet was being announced in August — but he knows they still consider him their best friend in Indonesia.

If nothing else, Mr Wahid epitomises for a slightly paranoid West a moderate Islam that is beating back the hard edge of Islamic fundamentalism that others like Adi Sasano and even Assembly Speaker Amien Rais sometimes represent.

But it is always a mistake to boast at home of one's utility to the West. And Mr Wahid did precisely that when Parliament leaders came to his palace for consultations on 10 October.

Ministers present said he spoke behind closed doors for more than two hours about the goodwill and investments he had earned for Indonesia on his foreign trips, oblivious of the rising tension in the room.

When it was time for legislators to speak, Deputy Speaker A M Fatwa launched a blistering attack.

"Why would any country ask you to solve their conflicts when you cannot solve Indonesia's? Don't you realise they are only entertaining you?," he shouted as a total silence descended on the room, a minister recounted.

"I suggest," the politician from Mr Rais' National Mandate Party (PAN) concluded after an hour, "that you pray for guidance as to whether you can hold on to your job if you change your behaviour or whether you should resign."

Then Mr Fatwa added a caveat that stunned the entire room: "If you decide to continue, it is better you have a psychiatrist by your side to whisper to you."

It was only at this point that Parliament Speaker Akbar Tandjung cut him off, another minister said later.

It is the Parliament's fixation to recycle the same old issues. Without any clear ideological divide or policy differences to justify their antipathy towards the

President, politicians like Mr Fatwa are focusing on character issues.

And their no-holds-barred tactics are tolerated and tacitly encouraged by party leaders who see themselves in a zero-sum game vis-a-vis the President — when he's up, they gain nothing. A year ago, these same party leaders thought they had everything to gain, and nothing to lose, if Mr Wahid became President with their votes.

— The Straits Times/Asia News Network.



THE STATESMAN

20 OCT 2001

Pact mooted to reduce U.S. influence?

HD-24
25/10
By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, OCT. 24. The Indonesian Defence Minister, Mr. Mohammad Mahfud, has proposed a defence pact with India, China and Japan to counter American influence in the region.

"If Indonesia, India, China and Japan unite to set up a joint defence pact, the U.S. would be limp. The U.S. can be arrogant but I'm considering cooperation with other countries," Mr. Mahfud was quoted as saying.

The Minister's statements are a clear sign of his frustration with the American role in Indonesia.

Mr. Mahfud recently claimed that the U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia, Mr. Robert Gellbard, pressured him to appoint a particular individual as the new Army Chief of Staff, a charge that the Americans denied.

While talking about such the pact and the mechanics of achieving it are two different issues, Mr. Mahfud's remarks are a clear signal to the U.S. about its policies.

Asked whether he had sought the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid's consent before floating the idea, the Minister replied: "The President is an easy going person. He just said go ahead."

"As a sovereign country, Indonesia should find other alternatives. We don't want to be continuously pressured by the U.S.," Mr. Mahfud, a personal choice of the President as Defence Minister, said.

Though ideas of cooperation between India and other countries have been suggested earlier, Mr. Mahfud's statement is the first concrete suggestion emanating from Indonesia — that of a defence agreement.

Clearly, a couple of the countries mentioned by Mr. Mahfud will be far from pleased about the proposal — specially as the "pact" is directed against the U.S. and its influence in the region.

It is, indeed, strange that the U.S., which cheerfully cooperated in all kinds of areas with its protegee, Gen. Suharto, today does not even maintain military-to-military relations with Indonesia.

While the question of East Timor and the havoc caused by pro-Indonesian militias is a crucial one, American policy towards the fledgling democracy appears to be that of applying pressure and more pressure.

That Indonesia does not speak with one voice was made clear by the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Social Affairs and Security, Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

"Everybody knows that after the Cold War, it's no longer relevant to form a military pact," Mr. Yudhoyono, a man well liked by the Americans, was quoted as saying.

Mr. Mahfud, in another sign of tension with the U.S., recently alleged that an American national, Mr. Aaron Ward Meness, arrested by Indonesian author-

ities and deported on Sunday, could have been involved in espionage activities in the troubled Irian Jaya province.

"The U.S. citizen...was arrested on October 21, but he was taken by the U.S. Ambassador to Jakarta when he was about to be deported at Soekarno-Hatta (Jakarta) airport," Mr. Mahfud maintained.

In response, the U.S. embassy in Jakarta has regretted the Defence Minister's statement and other recent "false charges" against America and its Ambassador.

"Together these charges suggest a dangerous pattern of disinformation that is creating a climate of anti-Americanism in Indonesia and undermining the warmth and close relationship that Indonesia and the U.S. have enjoyed for many years," the embassy statement said.

Mr. Mahfud's statements and the strident American response only go to reflect the delicate nature of the relationship between the two countries.

American representatives had earlier warned Indonesia that multilateral funding would be stopped if action was not taken against the militias operating from West Timor.

While that assistance has, mercifully, gone through in the form of a \$4.8 billion package, the tensions with the U.S. remain.

Local equations could have a lot to do with the current events of statement and counter-statement.

THE HINDU

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Wahid orders arrest of Suharto's son

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, SEPT. 15. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, has ordered the arrest of Mr. Tommy Suharto, son of former dictator, Gen. Suharto, in connection with a bomb attack.

"In the Cabinet meeting yesterday, I ordered the (police) to arrest Tommy Suharto in relation to the bomb case," Mr. Wahid told a religious gathering in Jakarta today. It was not immediately clear whether the "bomb case" the President was referring to was Wednesday's explosion at the Jakarta stock exchange building which killed 15 persons.

The President also warned that more places had been targeted for explosions. Apart from the attack on the stock exchange, the Philippine Ambassador to Indonesia was injured in a powerful blast and the office of the Attorney-General was targeted.

At yesterday's Cabinet meeting, Mr. Wahid told his colleagues that he was determined to bring the perpetrators to justice. "I want the police chief and the Attorney-General not to hesitate to act against suspects regardless of their position or status," the President maintained. "There are no



Mr. Hutomo Mandala Putra (also known as Tommy), the youngest son of the former Indonesian President, Gen. Suharto, surrounded by mediapersons before entering a court in Jakarta for his corruption trial in this April 12, 1999 file photo. — AP

sacred cows in this country," Mr. Wahid was quoted as telling the religious gathering.

There is little doubt that Mr. Wahid's move to arrest Mr. Tommy Suharto will be welcomed by

the people. However, it is not clear whether the "arrest" is being backed by evidence of Mr. Tommy Suharto's involvement in the bombing.

However, the President's move

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can also be interpreted as a desperate measure where repeated questions are being raised about the civilian Government's ability to run in the strife-torn country. Wednesday's blast at the stock exchange building and the recent brutal murder of three U.N. staffers in West Timor have only gone to underline the country's helplessness at the growing violence.

Senior Ministers have openly begun to speak of the involvement of Gen. Suharto's supporters in the latest round of violence but have failed to provide any concrete proof. The Attorney-General, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, has gone as far as to say that the police investigations have stopped at some influential sections of the military. Sections of a poorly-paid military, which not so long ago had one of Gen. Suharto's sons-in-law as a top commander, is still reported to be backing remnants of the old, dictatorial regime.

Incidentally, Wednesday's bomb blast came a day before a hearing in the corruption trial involving Gen. Suharto. The former General, who failed to turn up, will now be brought before the judges as a consequence of a court order.

THE HINDU

16 SEP 2000

Religion and politics in Indonesia

By Asghar Ali Engineer

THIRD WORLD countries are experiencing social turmoil along caste, communal or ethnic lines. Indonesia is no exception. An international conference on "Abrahamic religions and modern challenges" held at Yogyakarta from August 5 to 10 gave me an opportunity to discuss the fragile communal and ethnic situation with scholars in the country.

It is Indonesia's good fortune that in this hour of crisis it has as President a man of vision and liberal and secular scholar. Mr. Abdur Rahman Wahid is the head of one of the most widespread religious organisations, Nahdlatul Ulama, and thus wields a great influence on the nation's religious life also. Minorities are looking up to him for their security and well-being. I had a long discussion with him on the fragile communal situation.

The situation under Gen. Suharto was no less precarious. But under his authoritarian regime the tension was latent. In all dictatorial regimes, social tensions remain hidden and erupt suddenly when dictatorship is removed. Now that there is a democratic regime in Indonesia, the suppressed tensions are surfacing.

Though it has an overwhelming Muslim majority, above 85 per cent, Indonesia has never been declared an Islamic state formally. There is a constant RSS propaganda that Muslims when in minority take refuge under secularism but when they are in a majority declare the country an Islamic one. Indonesia has not done so though there is a great deal of pressure now from some fundamentalists, who are holding demonstrations demanding that Shariat be declared the law of the state and that the state be governed by Islamic laws.

The vast majority of Muslims are against fundamentalism and they fully support Pancasila, which is a secular doctrine. I met a large number of students, both men and women, who support secular politics and are quite apprehensive of the growing influence of fundamentalism in some quarters. They enquired whether Islam could support secular politics. I gave them the examples of the Indian ulema, Maulana Husseini Ahmad Madani and Maulana Azad, who issued injunctions in favour of a secular state. In Indonesia there are a large

number of Pesantrens (a combination of Sanskrit and Bhasa for religious school which we call madrasa in India) which impart religious and secular education. Thousands of students graduate from the Pesantrens every year and join universities in different parts. These students are well versed in religious issues and many of them can also speak English and Arabic fluently. Co-education is adopted in many of these institutions. In a Pesantren at Yogyakarta, students welcomed us with their

Indonesian democracy is facing teething troubles. Social tensions and communal strife which were suppressed during the authoritarian Suharto regime are surfacing. But the country has a hope in Mr. Wahid.

traditional Javanese music and dance. They were wearing the Javanese dress and headgear. Also, there is a great awareness of female education in at least urban areas. Many of the girls are getting educated in the Pesantrens and are acquiring religious knowledge too. Some of the women teachers and students were much concerned with the issue of gender justice and have done doctorate in gender justice in Islam. Thus many students in Indonesia are quite liberal and secular in their attitude. They are prepared to take on the fundamentalists.

However, there is a serious strife in certain areas like Ambon between Muslims and Christians. Conversion is a sore point. As in India there are exaggerated fears of conversions leading to an increase in the Christian population. Some fundamentalists maintain that the Christians' target is to increase their population up to 50 per cent and hence the jihadi Muslims are crying hoarse, declaring a jihad against the Christians. They are attacking each other. Ambon, where Christians have their concentration, is in turmoil. In the second week of July, more than 28 persons were killed on this spice-rich island.

Residents said seven persons were killed in bitter fighting which raged despite the deployment of heavily armed police and soldiers after 14 others had been murdered

on July 13. Gunshots and explosions were heard across the once picturesque harbourside city and thick columns of smoke choked the air as mobs went on the rampage and torched buildings on a Sunday. A Muslim leader said at least five Muslims were killed on July 14 and six a day later.

In the tiny port of Lemate, street signs urge young men to join the Laskar Jihad and attack Christians on the neighbouring Halmahera island in Moluccas. Dozens of people were killed there in the third week

communal harmony, himself headed a peace mission to Ambon late last year. But the fighting broke out again a day after he had left. It is indeed sad that blood is flowing as Indonesia is grappling with its worst economic crisis and a painful transition to democracy after three decades of authoritarian rule.

The Indonesian society is a very complex one. Java is much liberal, enjoying a composite culture. It was ruled by Hindus from the eighth century and the Hindu rule has left a deep imprint on the Javanese culture, of which Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are the main constituents, with Islamic and Hindu influences dominating. Hindu names such as Sita, Laxman and Ram are common place among the Muslims. The Indonesian Bhasa is also composite one, consisting of Sanskrit, Latin and native tongues. You will find Sanskrit and Latin words along with native words in every sentence. It is not only the language but the entire way of life which are influenced by the composite Javanese culture. No wonder, this region is much more tolerant and free of conflict. But there are fewer Hindus and Christians here. Even Ramayana and Mahabharata dances in Java are performed by the Muslims as very few Hindus are around.

Other regions are witnessing violent conflicts. Hindus are mainly located on the Bali island and are not a growing community anyway. Buddhists are also a small minority and cannot become a cause for any conflict or tension with any community. The Chinese account for 2-1/2 per cent of the population but are economically powerful and hence when the economy went downhill they, seen as responsible for it, came under attack. Now the Chinese no longer face any problem.

The Indonesian democracy is facing serious teething troubles. Unemployment is on the rise and economy is still far from the road to recovery. As long as unemployment is on the increase, not only will the youth be in rage but it is likely to be diverted through communal channels. Mr. Wahid is facing serious political problems but he is the only hope for Indonesia. It is he who can hold the country together when communal, sectarian and secessionist forces are raising their heads.

Fledgling waits to spread its wings

The UN estimates it will take three years to provide the basic infrastructure for East Timor to be a viable state.

This mission is in danger of losing focus, writes

ANTHONY SMITH

ON 25 October 1999, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1272 to empower itself to establish the UN Transitional Authority in East Timor. It was to exercise all legislative and executive authority there until formal independence could be achieved.

The UN now has the responsibility of overseeing the process of independence — holding elections, establishing government branches, setting up health and educational services and the provision of development needs. But the nature and time-frame of involvement are yet to be determined.

UNTAET is under the authority of the Special Representative of Secretary-General Sérgio Vieira de Mello of Brazil. A UN Peacekeeping Force has formally replaced the Australian-led multinational force that was assembled to secure East Timor after the destruction and violence that followed the 30 August 1999 voting.

The UN has authorised a force of 8,950 troops, 200 military observers and 1,640 police officers. The UN budget for 2000 is \$200 million, while the method of financing the operation had not been determined. The UN estimates that it will take about three years to provide the basic infrastructure to allow East Timor to be a viable state.

This mission is in danger of losing focus. As yet, there are no firm dates for full independence, or the best way to build on the East Timorese people, although press reports suggest that election may be held in mid-2001.

The UN faces the dilemma of which organisations to work with as partners in the rebuilding phase. Claims and counter-claims are being made by various independence factions for representation. In a sense, the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) could be regarded as an important partner in the rebuilding phase as it was the winning side of the ballot last August.

The CNRT's current situation has been described as "ground zero". East Timor does have some political stability in the universal acceptance of Jose Alexandre Xanana Gusmao as leader, his brother Carlos Belo as Bishop and Carlos Belo remains an important spiritual leader.

The CNRT's leaders are committed to creating a democracy, although its exact nature (parliamentary or presidential) is yet to be determined. Mr Gusmao and the CNRT deputy leader, Jose Ramos Horta, are not united on the issue. But with the lingering threat of militia infiltration and regions, the CNRT leadership may back away from this position.

But the cohesion of East Timor's political factions within the CNRT, let alone the attempts at reconciliation with the Indonesian military, has been shaky. Spots are emerging.

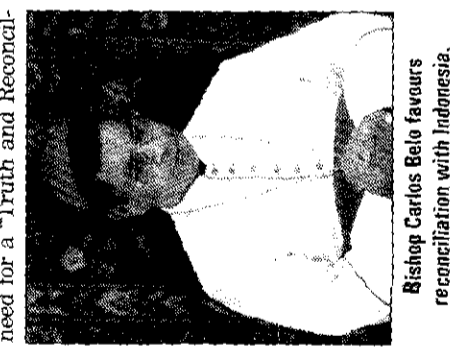
Mr Gusmao has said often that he does not wish to be President, but there is no other leader that can exercise the same charisma. Currently, the 15-member National Consultative Commission — comprising the UN as chair (with four members from the United Nations umbrella group CNRT) and seven members from the representatives of the pro-independence side (three) — debates policy issues and serve as a government-in-waiting.

Two sectoral committees on the economy and the civil service have been formed and so far decisions have been by consensus. It is uncertain whether this can be transformed into a

stable government. The recent election of East Timorese officials will be an ongoing issue. As the results of the referendum indicate, there is still a minority that favours integration with Indonesia. Bishop Belo and the Catholic Church in East Timor stressed reconciliation even prior to the ballot, and continue to do so.

After a meeting with Mr Gusmao on 12 December 1999, Jose Taveas, principal militia commander, announced that he would disband all militia groups (but the UN reports that isolated small bands, of 20 or 30, are still active on the border). Radio programmes have returned militia members to return saying that they would disband and go back into the community. The UN stressed forgiveness for past crimes, but acknowledged the need for a "Truth and Reconciliation" tribunal.

The UN and many NGOs have indicated that they would like to push further, but ultimately this decision should be taken by the East Timorese leaders when they are eventually elected.



Bishop Carlos Belo favours reconciliation with Indonesia.

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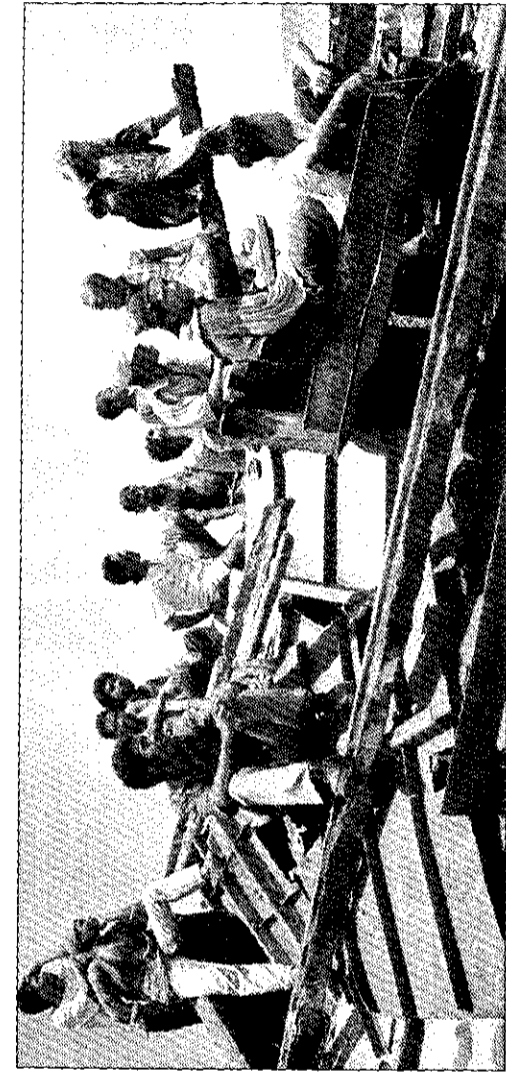
The long-term serious challenge to East Timor is obtaining the funding resources necessary to sustain government, bureaucracy, health and medical care, education and so on. These arguments back back to an early 20th-century idea that states needed a critical mass to survive, which led to such artificial creations as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. But this has not been the case with states like Singapore and Brunei which had been thought to be invulnerable after decolonisation. East Timor will be able to survive as an independent state.

East Timor was desperately poor, with the pre-ballot figures indicating the average gross domestic product at \$168 (half the Indonesian average), 50 per cent of households on the poverty line, and life expectancy at 56 years. The problem of East Timor's ability to survive as an independent entity has been compounded by the spiteful destruction of the militia, which, aside from the terrible human tragedy, destroyed 70 per cent of the population.

The traditional subsistence livelihoods of the population, revolving round primary production, have been disrupted by the militia violence which resulted in the death of farm animals, and the destruction of tools and vehicles, which hampered the crop cycle. This has led to a situation whereby 70 per cent of the population are reportedly without employment, which is to say that the inability to "subsist", has forced many to look for wage labour.

While the Indonesian authorities constructed roads, ports, airfields and power plants, other aspects of infrastructure have collapsed even prior to the problems surrounding the referendum. The return of the grants to Indonesia has removed the bulk of civil servants, school teachers and medical workers, while most of the remaining population are illiterate.

East Timor must start afresh in terms of establishing fiscal and monetary policies, banking systems, a currency, judiciary and law enforcement, health



East Timorese men stationed along the store of Dili. East Timor, on Monday. — AP/PTI.

being part of Asean, and the Wahid administration, while not having made a public announcement, has not repudiated this. The dampening down of hostilities over the border, and the apparent commitment of the Wahid administration to respect the sovereignty integrity of the new state, has seen bilateral contact with Indonesia that have seemed likely not so long ago.

President Abdurrahman Wahid's visit to East Timor on 29 February was hailed as the beginning of normalisation of relations between the two states. Indonesia under Mr Wahid has made great strides in recovering its reputation as a neighbourly power.

The East Timor crisis has begun to make up for lost time and Mr Wahid has confounded his critics over the East Timor issue.

In March, he went to Dili to establish bilateral relations. While laying wreaths at the site of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre and a graveyard for

Indonesian soldiers, he said: "I would like to apologise for the past to the victims of the tragedy for the East Timorese."

The author is a Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore. This article was excerpted from East Timor: Status Quo Ante Hellum — The Straits Times/Asio News Network.

While Indonesia poured in money to fund East Timor's administration and infrastructure, none of this could make up for the fact that almost every family in East Timor has lost a loved one. The Indonesian occupation is that it attempted to integrate East Timor into Indonesia but ultimately only succeeded in uniting East Timor's various ethnic groups in opposition to its rule.

The Suharto regime's short-sighted destruction of the territory over more than 20 years created a terrible need for assistance that could only be met by the East Timorese.

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Fledgling waits to spread its wings

The UN estimates it will take three years to provide the basic infrastructure for East Timor to be a viable state. This mission is in danger of losing focus, writes ANTHONY SMITH

ON 25 October 1999, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1272 to empower itself to establish the UN Transitional Authority in East Timor. It was to exercise all legislative and executive authority there until formal independence could be achieved.

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This mission is in danger of losing focus. As yet, there are no firm dates for full independence, or elections which will determine the legitimate leaders of the East Timorese people. (Although press reports suggest that election may be held in mid-2001).

The UN faces the dilemma of which organisations to work with as partners in the rebuilding phase. Claims and counter-claims are being made by various independence factions for representation.

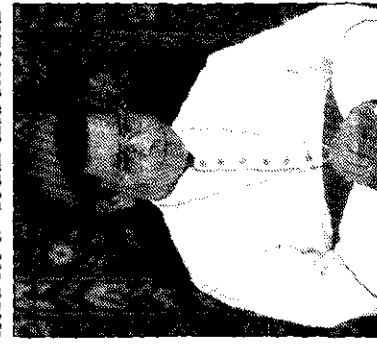
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The CNRT's leaders are committed to creating a democracy, although its exact nature (parliamentary or presidential) is yet to be determined. Mr Gusmao and the CNRT deputy leader, Jose Ramos Horta, are reluctant to establish a military. But with the lingering threat of militia infiltration and the need to patrol the border regions, the CNRT leadership

stable government. The reconciliation of East Timorese of all persuasions will be an ongoing issue. As the results of the referendum indicate, there is still a minority that favours integration with Indonesia. Bishop Belo and the Catholic Church in East Timor stressed reconciliation even prior to the ballot, and continue to do so.

After a meeting with Mr Gusmao on 12 December 1999, Joao Tavares, principal militia commander, announced that he would disband all militia groups (but the UN reports that isolated small bands, of 20 or 30, are still active on the border). Radio programmes have urged militia members to return saying that they would be accepted back into the community. The church has stressed forgiveness for past crimes, but acknowledged the need for a "Truth and Reconciliation"



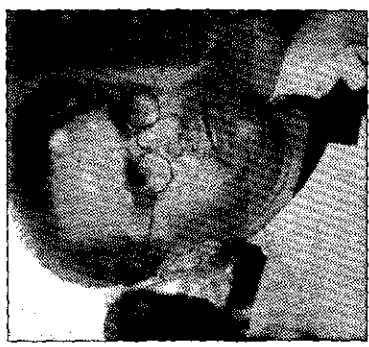
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The long-term serious challenge to East Timor is obtaining the funding resources necessary to sustain government, bureaucracy, infrastructure, medical care, education and so on.

These arguments hark back to an early 20th-century idea that states needed a critical mass to survive, which led to such artificial creations as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. But this has not been the case with states like Singapore and Brunei which had been thought to be unviable after decolonisation. But there are reasons to think East Timor will be able to survive as an independent state.

East Timor was desperately poor, with the pre-ballot figures indicating the average gross domestic product at \$168 (half the Indonesian average), 50 per cent of households on the poverty line, and life expectancy at 56 years. The problem of East Timor's ability to survive as an independent entity has been



National Council of Timorese Resistance leader, Jose Ramos Horta, is against the establishment of a military in East Timor.

compounded by the spiteful destruction of the militia, which, aside from the terrible human tragedy, destroyed 70 per cent of the infrastructure. The traditional subsistence livelihoods of the population, involving round primary



East Timorese men seated on a heap of metal wreckage along the shore of Dili, East Timor, on Monday. — AP/PTI.

care and so on. Previously, the Indonesian government provided the funds for the administrative budget, at around \$110 million (although much of this money was subsequently remitted to Indonesia through a network of Indonesian civil servants and contracts). The absence of these funds poses a problem.

There is no doubt that East Timor will be highly aid-dependent for many decades. But it is possible that East Timor has some reasonable prospects. The World Bank concluded at the end of 1999 that there was the chance for it to be an economically self-sufficient country in the medium term. The potential area for growth remains agriculture, particularly coffee. East Timorese arabica coffee, grown organically primarily because of a lack of funds to buy fertilizer and pesticide, sells at a premium on the US market. In 1998, the US market bought \$20 million worth of East Timorese coffee.

There are reserves of gold, manganese and other minerals, besides abundant marble. There is also oil and gas potential in the Timor Gap, although the reserve is difficult to tap. Interest is being shown in the tapping of the gas reserves.

Tourism has been touted as another possibility, given the pristine nature of the landscape, the beaches and the sea. Foreign investment seems unlikely until political stability is deemed to have returned, although Portugal has tried to drum up investors for infrastructural development.

East Timor's economic prospects are not too bright. But it wasn't bright under Indonesia's de facto authority either.

But the end of exploitation of primary production, mainly coffee, through monopolistic military front companies, and the remittance of the bulk of the administrative budget, means that East Timor will at least be able to seize full control of its available resources. Second, in an age of globalisation, few states can claim to be independent of the global marketplace. East Timor is not likely to become a developed state soon, but its prospects are at least as good as an independent nation as they were with Indonesia.

But until East Timor starts to achieve some of its potential, international aid is the only means to plug the gap. On 17 December 1999, delegates from about 50 countries pledged \$520 million for the reconstruction of East Timor over the next three years. Despite growing "aid fatigue" among developed countries, East Timor will remain a popular aid cause. A good deal of the onus falls on Australia and New Zealand due to geographical proximity, and guilt by the current governments over the acquiescence of previous administrations to Indonesia. Some have suggested that a "free association" with a larger neighbour, such as Australia, might be the best alternative.

East Timor's transition to independence will introduce a

Timor, maintain the road link to West Timor, and scholarships for East Timorese students.

An agreement was also reached on cooperation between the Indonesian Attorney-General's office and the UNTAET in their investigations of leading Generals over their role in the crisis. This visit was crucial in at least two respects.

First, it gave a modicum of psychological security to the East Timorese leaders, who know that geographical reality means that they will have to build a relationship with Indonesia. Second, for Indonesia, removing the East Timor issue is the one necessary step that Mr Wahid needs to take to improve Indonesia's international reputation, shattered by the inability to halt the genocide that occurred in East Timor throughout 1999.

In March, he went to Dili to establish bilateral relations. While laying wreaths at the site of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre and a graveyard for

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Jose Alexandre 'Xanana' Gusmao is hopeful about Asean membership.

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WAKE UP CALL

For Indonesia's Wahid

5-8
1999

IT'S true that Abdurrahman Wahid took on the challenge of being Indonesia's first elected President in four decades in a bit of a mess. In July this year, government auditors came up with the revelation that 46 per cent of the country's state funds, roughly 11 times the amount promised by the IMF, had vanished without a trace, during the 1998-99 fiscal year. Wahid was not then in charge and, therefore, is not being blamed. But neither his management of the economy, nor the pursuit of offenders has left the country's parliament satisfied. He got into a major row with the House of Representatives over the sacking of the State Enterprise and Trade and Industry ministers, when he said that the law empowering the House to summon him for an explanation was ultra vires the 1945 constitution. He later apologised and then kicked up a fresh row when he said that he would be pursuing some important legislators for aiding and abetting sectarian and separatist violence. It is known that relations between him and Amien Rais, Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly, which has the power to remove him, are not good and commentators read a strong political message to the latter.

By all accounts, Wahid hasn't been a very effective president, a fact he himself partially acknowledged when he handed over what he called "daily technical duties" to Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri. He is almost blind and his concentration is often under stress. The Assembly now has some ammunition on him: a 35 billion rupiah diversion from the state food agency and a \$2 billion gift from the Sultan of Brunei. If not handled properly, this can lead to impeachment. Parliament has already deputed 50 legislators to investigate the two scandals. Wahid took some of the pressure off when he made a conciliatory speech before the Assembly in August, but if he doesn't show results in the economy soon, these threats may crystalize. All ministers handling the economy resigned, new faces were inducted, but the Jakarta stock exchange refused to respond. Earlier, the central bank governor and the government's principal intermediary with the IMF were also sacked by Wahid for reasons having to do with reducing the influence of Megawati's PDI-P in the government. Wahid gives the impression of not having a grip on his government and often seems puzzled by his own authority. He looks increasingly as though he can't run the country.

THE STATESMAN

19 SEP 2000

Students take to streets in Jakarta

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, April 1. — Hundreds of protesters rallied today to protest against hikes in the prices of electricity and public transport, a day after the government backed down on a plan to raise fuel costs.

The government's move, announced by President Abdurrahman Wahid, defused plans by student and labour groups to mount massive protests in the capital and other cities.

The last time the government pushed up gasoline prices by cutting fuel subsidies, Indonesians took to the streets in bloody riots that ousted President Suharto.

Although police commanders said they planned a massive security operation, no police were visible at today's peaceful protest by about 500 students and workers.

They gathered in front of the national parliament building in downtown Jakarta carrying banners reading: "We demand free education" "No price rises" and "Down with capitalism".

In a separate protest, about 200 people rallied outside the residence of former President Suharto, demanding that he be tried for alleged corruption.

"Hang Suharto," shouted the demonstrators. The former dictator has defied repeated summons to appear for questioning by state prosecutors.

(Attorneys for Mr Suharto say he will ignore a third summons, but have invited state prosecutors to his home to conduct interviews, according to reports today, adds DPA.)

The government said the cost of electricity and public transport would go up as planned. The attempt to reduce government subsidies is due to pressure from international lenders who want to see Indonesia become a more market-oriented economy.

Indonesia is a net exporter of oil and though it maintains massive subsidies on both fuel and electricity, the higher world oil prices are an unexpected windfall for the government as it tries to pull the nation out of its worst economic crisis in a generation.

The International Monetary Fund last week delayed the disbursement of \$ 400 million for Indonesia because the government has not met a host of deadlines laid out in its programme with a fund.

THE STATESMAN
- 2 APR 2000

BORDERLINE CASE

East and West in Timor

LIFE in East Timor is an enduring catastrophe. Roughly 80,000 homes were destroyed in the violence unleashed by pro-Jakarta militias, backed by the Indonesian Army, last year, very few of which have been rebuilt. Much of the infrastructure is gone and most of the population remains unemployed. The Timorese desperately need foreign assistance to help them rebuild their country. Foreign investors, of course, are unenthusiastic because of the situation created by frequent cross-border raids. The UN refugee operations in that part of the island have been brought to a dead halt; the border is held precariously by the 7000 UN peacekeeping troops.

The problem is obviously with the Indonesian Army which doesn't seem interested in keeping its part of the deal. There has been no effort to disarm the militias or even to rein them in, without which their stranglehold on the refugees remaining in the camps in West Timor cannot be broken. The fear of reprisal is undoubtedly being kept alive. The capital, Dili, is not far from the border and was a renegade stronghold before independence. Tensions also exist between the refugees that returned, loyalties suspect, and those who remained behind. The installation of a universal franchise regime will go some way in alleviating these tensions, by giving a voice to all parties, but before that some kind of arrangement has to be reached with the militias. Secretary General Kofi Annan has spoken to Abdurrahman Wahid at the millennium summit; the Indonesian President must have given his usual soporific assurances. There is a question mark over how much influence Wahid has over the Indonesian Army which he needs for all kinds of other paramilitary situations. East Timor will take some time to raise its own troops and even then may not be able to effectively counter the Indonesian Army's proxy aggression. The only answer, therefore, is international pressure on Jakarta. Plus some money for East Timor.

GRAFT CHARGES / CASE ADJOURNED, COURT SEEKS MEDICAL OPINION

Suharto too ill to attend trial

By Amit Baruah

JAKARTA, Aug. 31. The former Indonesian dictator, Gen. Suharto, failed to turn up at a South Jakarta court today, with his lawyers claiming that he was too ill to attend the trial.

A five-judge court adjourned today's hearing until September 14, calling upon both "independent" and Gen. Suharto's doctors to explain their case in simple language to the court at the next hearing.

Reflecting a general sense of disappointment, some of the 400 members of the audience in the make-shift courtroom boomed when Gen. Suharto's lawyers announced that their client would not be present for the hearing.

The public prosecutor, Mr. Muchtar Arifin, twice called on the accused, "Suharto alias Haji Mohammad Suharto" to present himself, but to no avail.

A little distance from the courtroom, student protesters were wild with rage as the news filtered to them that the man they love to hate was not going to submit to the law of the land.

"This is a farce, a soap opera," shouted one student leader, while others called for "reform, revolution".

When the proceedings began at 10 a.m. in the auditorium of the Agriculture Ministry, Gen. Suharto's lawyers said their client would not be attending. "Twenty-three doctors have conducted a medical examination and come to the conclusion that our client is an ailing

state and therefore, our client cannot take part in the trial," Mr. Juan Felix Tampubolon, the leading defence lawyer, told the bench.

"On Thursday, August 31, 2000, at 6 a.m. (local time), an examination has been conducted on the patient... (Gen. Suharto) is currently in a sick condition... since June 20, 1999, (he) has suffered three strokes and is still under the threat of impending, recurring strokes," the former President's doctors claimed in their opinion.

The doctors claimed that Gen. Suharto was suffering from hypertension, irregular heart-beat, kidney problems, diabetes and "other ailments". An "independent" panel of doctors also presented their opinion, wherein they claimed that while Gen. Suharto was sick, he was not too sick to attend the trial.

Gen. Suharto's lawyers claimed that they could not tell whether "what he says is what he thinks". When presented with this opinion, the court first adjourned the proceedings for 10 minutes, and then rose for the day, calling upon the doctors to be present at the next sitting.

The public prosecutor also demanded that Gen. Suharto subject himself to a "second opinion". The court, however, did not rule on the issue, preferring to summon the doctors who had presented their view first.

Hundreds of ordinary persons and media-persons were present, both inside and outside the court-room, for what must be one of the most significant trials in Indonesia's 55-year-

long post-independence history.

Gen. Suharto's absence from the trial has angered the student community, which was instrumental in obtaining his resignation in May 1998, which led to the establishment of a democratic system of governance in the country.

The police and security forces, who were present in strength, made no effort to stop the protesters from sitting outside the gates of the Ministry, whose premises house the auditorium-turned-courtroom.

"Try Suharto sick or not, try Mr. Dracula," some of the posters held by the students said, standing firm even as rain fell from the skies.

Unlike what has happened in the last few days, there were no "pro-Suharto" protests at the venue of the trial, though some 20 demonstrators loyal to him rallied outside the former President's residence.

There is little doubt that the Suharto case has become a battle field for his lawyers and doctors, who it is clear, will make every effort to keep him away from the trial.

In the days and weeks ahead, the former dictator's lawyers will use every legal and medical ruse to prevent their client from attending the trial, while the prosecution has signalled that it will oppose such efforts.

While the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, has announced that he will pardon Gen. Suharto if there is a conviction, the Government is aware that going through with the trial is necessary.

THE HINDU

1 JULY 2000

Wiranto not a suspect in East Timor riot probe

FROM TOMISOETJIPTO

Jakarta, Sept. 1 (Reuters): Indonesia today named three generals as suspects in its probe into the violence that followed last year's East Timor independence vote but immediately came under pressure to go higher up the military chain of command.

The list of 19 names did not include some top generals, including Indonesia's military chief at the time, Wiranto, who human rights activists insist had a hand in the systematic destruction of East Timor after most of the population voted a year ago to end 23 years of often brutal Indonesian rule.

Also absent were the names of some of the most notorious of the pro-Jakarta militia leaders who, with Indonesian military backing, launched a campaign of terror in the tiny territory after the result of the August 30 vote was announced.

The attorney-general's office named the three generals — former regional military commander Major-General Adam Damiri, former East Timor military commander Brigadier-General Tono

Suratman and ex-East Timor police chief Brigadier-General Timbul Silaen.

The others named included a former East Timor Jakarta-appointed governor Abilio Soares as well as mostly middle-ranking military officers who used to be base in East Timor's hardest-hit areas.

"The list is very unsatisfactory, especially because Wiranto is not on the list," Asmara Nababan, secretary-general of Indonesia's Human Rights Commission told Reuters.

"We are talking about gross violation against humanity and Wiranto, who was at the top of the command line at that time, was excluded... (It) indicates that Indonesia still faces a lot of political constraints," he said.

The majority of East Timorese were forced from their homes and much of the impoverished territory's infrastructure was laid to waste in the violence in which hundreds are thought to have died.

Multinational troops were eventually sent in to bring under control the former Portuguese colony which Indonesia invaded

in 1975. The territory is now under United Nations administration.

The initial international reaction was modestly enthusiastic.

"I think it is a good beginning. You have heard some say it fell short of expectations. It is true," head of the United Nations operation in East Timor, Sergio Vieira de Mello, told reporters during a visit to Jakarta.

But he said it was difficult to expect Jakarta to resolve the issue at its first attempt and took heart from a pledge by Indonesian attorney-general Marzuki Darusman that the investigations would continue.

Indonesia has been under strong international pressure to put on trial those responsible for the violence or face the threat of an international tribunal.

De Mello's comments were echoed by Nobel peace laureate and key East Timorese independence leader Jose Ramos Horta.

"It's a good start, but we now have to wait to see how far the process will go in order to satisfy those who expect justice," he told Reuters by telephone from East Timor.

THE TELEGRAPH

7 5 10

Winds of change sweep Indonesia

By Amit Baruah

JAKARTA, SEPT. 2. A new democracy is gradually replacing the "new order" Government of Gen. Suharto in Indonesia. Replete with challenges, this "new democracy" in Indonesia is under constant test from within.

After 32 long years of the "new order", a free Indonesian people are able to express their views and articulate their concerns. In the towns and villages, there is a new *glasnost*, which can be felt by visitors.

The celebration of democracy; the spirit of change is evident. From students to workers, everyone has something to say about their country and Government, a sign of a vibrant, though troubled, nation.

Expectations are high among the people for constitutional changes and reforms in the bureaucracy, a task which proves to be quite daunting for the new Cabinet of the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid.

It is not as if Mr. Wahid (better known by his nickname of "Gus Dur") doesn't have his share of critics. But, in real terms, despite the fact that his party has a minuscule share of seats in Parliament, the TINA (there is no alternative) factor operates heavily in his favour.

Also, the President has benefited as a result of differences between the Golkar Party, tied to Gen. Suharto, and the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P).

In Jakarta, critics of the new Government abound. They bemoan the lack of leadership, the inability to provide governance. Human rights activists have taken the Wahid Government to task for not naming the then Army commander, Gen. Wiranto, as an accused responsible for last year's violence in East Timor.

A former Governor of the province, however, is among the 19 accused by the Government, a step necessary to meet growing international criticism for Indonesia's perceived failure not to bring the culprits to book.

In a sense, this decision of the Government is quintessential of the new democracy. Half steps are taken, often under pressure. Democracy is taking the first faltering steps in a country bent by the burden of authoritarianism.

While critics will have their say, there is little doubt that democracy needs time

to take firm root in the country. Almost everyone lived under the shadow of Gen. Suharto, and it will take time to reform State institutions.

The decision to gradually phase out the military from being represented in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), which elects the President, also reflects that "phasing out" is possible, outright removal is not.

If the President and Ms. Megawati can develop a good working partnership, following the latest devolution of duties to the Vice-President, backed by a team of Ministers who have good coordination, then some of the pressures on Indonesia will reduce.

"Domestic stability has still to be achieved. I cannot say with any degree of certainty whether Mr. Wahid will be President in 2004 (when elections are due). It depends on his performance and the ability to work together," a political science Professor in Jakarta told this correspondent.

"The new Cabinet has a better chance of succeeding as it is peopled by the President's nominees. The last one was pulling in different directions. Of course, we must wait to evaluate the performance of the new team," a newspaper editor maintained.

A country, which has major problems in Aceh, Irian Jaya and Maluku, needs a sensitive leadership, a team which can help heal the wounds of the past and, simultaneously, develop hitherto neglected regions of the country like Irian Jaya.

"Yes, it is true that the island of Java has exploited other parts of the country (archipelago). We need to change all that. The Government must hold talks with these regions and a new autonomy must be devolved. If this is not done soon, then things could get difficult in the months and years ahead," the Professor stated.

The Government's handling of the Suharto trial has also drawn considerable flak. Critics point out that the former dictator, who is genuinely said to be ill, is not being tried for his crimes as head of State. The corruption charges don't relate to his duties as President, but as head of some Government-linked foundations.

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U.N. evacuates staffers from W. Timor

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, SEPT. 7. The United Nations today evacuated 196 members of its staff working in West Timor, Indonesia, following yesterday's lynching of three workers in the border town of Atambua.

The evacuation came as the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Lt. Gen Susil Bambang Yudhoyono (Retd), said in Jakarta that he could not rule out "political motives" behind the incident.

The U.N. staffers were pulled out both by air and by road as it became clear that the operations of the organisation had become untenable after the incident.

While the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that it would return to West Timor only after credible guarantees, it is clear that such a development is not likely to take place in a hurry.

The foreigners killed in yesterday's attack have been identified as: Mr. Carlos Casaeres (American), Mr. Samson Aregaheyen (Ethiopian) and Mr. Peril Stumundze (Croatian).

In Jakarta, Mr. Yudhoyono said: "I will not rule out the possibility of political motives behind this incident... the Indonesian Government deeply regrets the incident. We feel concerned and extend our condolences for the UNHCR personnel who became the victims in this incident."

The Minister, however, did not spell out what he felt could be the political motives behind the inci-

dent. "Any possibility could have happened but we will further investigate this incident."

According to Lt. Gen. Yudhoyono, 16 persons had been detained for questioning by the police. He said that apart from the three foreigners, two locals had also been killed in yesterday's violence.

Describing the situation in

West Timor as "very difficult", the Minister said yesterday's incident was a special case. "It does not mean that we have not done everything in the first 12 months in protecting the refugees, in securing the area and in solving problems in the vicinity of Atambua and Kupang."

There is little doubt that the in-

cident has shown up Jakarta and its security forces in poor light, as institutions which are unable to provide basic security to international aid workers.

Foreign pressure on Jakarta can only grow after this incident. The pullout of the U.N. staff will also have grave implications for the refugees still living in West Timor.

THE HINDU

7 8 SEP 2 00

Suharto to face court today

By Amit Baruah

JAKARTA, AUG. 30. The man who ruled Indonesia with an iron hand for 32 years is scheduled to go to court tomorrow. In what will be a first for the country, Gen. Suharto, who ruled Indonesia from 1966 to 1998, will be the first political leader to face a court of law on corruption charges.

There are no celebrations on the streets of Jakarta, only a quiet air of satisfaction that a man who decided the destiny of millions, will finally face a process of accountability. After May 21, 1998, the day Gen. Suharto was forced to quit in the face of unprecedented street protests, August 31, 2000, is perhaps the most significant date in his calendar.

However, there are still doubts whether Gen. Suharto will face the media circus and the court proceedings, with his lawyers (and there are a large number of them) crying themselves hoarse over how ill the 79-year-old man is. Gen. Suharto, who has the status of an accused under Indonesian law, is not being charged for abuse of power or for the large-scale massacre of communist party activists in the 1960's. The killings of some one million Indonesians remain a forgotten chapter in the country's history.

He is scheduled to appear in court after being charged with pilfering \$ 570 millions from State-run charities.

Even before the charges were filed, the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, announced a pardon for Gen. Suharto if he is convicted. That announcement could be interpreted as a sign of political wisdom or a recognition that Gen. Suharto and his cronies still wield clout in a country which they ruled without a

thought for the common man.

While there are no charges on the abuse of political power or the amassing of wealth (estimates of how much money was made by Gen. Suharto, his family members and cronies vary widely), the Attorney-General, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, believes that the restricted charges are sufficient to obtain a conviction.

Mr. Darusman, however, is still unsure whether or not Gen. Suharto will appear in court. "The biggest hurdle to Gen. Suharto's appearance in court is the state of his health. That's the only thing that can prevent it. On the points of law, we are not overly worried."

In Jakarta, the auditorium of the Agriculture Ministry has been converted into a court room which will permit some 200 journalists to be seated. A restricted number of others can also be accommodated.

On Wednesday, armed personnel carriers were deployed near the court room, where a large crowd of mediapersons is already gathered. Television broadcast vans are readying for the big day. Gun-toting policemen are lounging around, preparing to provide security to the man to whom they once kow-towed.

"Suharto must face trial. He must be punished. His health condition is a mere drama to avoid the court," a shop owner told this correspondent near the makeshift court.

Another said: "We don't know what will happen tomorrow, but the process of accountability must begin somewhere."

If Gen. Suharto provided secure investment space for Western entrepreneurs, the people of Indonesia paid a price for it. They got little or nothing out of the money that poured into the country.

THE HINDU

31 AUG 2000

Wahid announces new Cabinet

By Amit Baruah 2/18

SINGAPORE, AUG. 23. A new 26-member Cabinet was announced by the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, in Jakarta today, following the stringent criticism of his style of functioning in the last 10 months.

Mr. Wahid named Lt. Gen. (Retd) Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as Coordinating Minister for Political Affairs, Security and Social Welfare and Mr. Rizal Ramli as Coordinating Minister for Economy, Finance and Industry. The President, the Vice-President, Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri, and the two Coordinating Ministers are expected to form the new "quartet" who will take all the decisions.

Interestingly, Ms. Megawati, who is to take over the task of every day governance, was not present when Mr. Wahid announced his new Cabinet.

A confidant of the President, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Alwi Shihab, retained his old portfolio while a friend of the President, Mr. Prijadi Prapto Subardjo, was appointed Finance Minister.

The 26-member Cabinet, which is down by nine from the previous strength of 35, comes close on the heels of a People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) session which asked the President to pull up his socks.

Some 17 members of the previous Cabinet have been retained by Mr. Wahid while a little-known college professor, Mr. Mohamad Mahfud Mahmudin, comes in as the new Defence Minister.

The new Cabinet, which is

scheduled to be sworn in on Saturday, consists of two senior Coordinating Ministers, 16 Ministers incharge of different departments, five State Ministers and three junior Ministers. The changes in the Cabinet amount to a "second chance" for the President who made a number of compromises in order to survive the just-concluded MPR session.

Maintaining that the new Cabinet would be result-oriented, Mr. Wahid was quoted as telling mediapersons in Jakarta: "My consideration was that they must be experts in their fields....I know them one by one."

The appointment of Mr. Bambang and Mr. Rizal as Coordinating Ministers was widely expected after a deal was worked out between Mr. Wahid and Ms. Megawati.

While Mr. Wahid joked at his press conference that the Vice-President stayed away from the announcement of the new Cabinet because she had to "take a bath", speculative reports suggested the latter was not happy with the constitution of the Cabinet.

However, analysts in Jakarta stated that Ms. Megawati stayed away because she would have had to read out the list of names. She wanted to avoid this task and the list was read out by a senior official.

The analysts insisted that the President had held several rounds of consultations over the constitution of the new Cabinet and Ms. Megawati was satisfied with the line-up.

THE HINDU

24 AUG 2000

Wahid cedes some powers to Megawati

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, AUG. 25. As part of a new power-sharing exercise, the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, has formally delegated to the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, the tasks of formulating the Cabinet's agenda and priorities of the Government.

In a decree, Mr. Wahid said the new arrangement, which is to last till the end of his term in 2004, was required to improve the efficiency of Government. As per the new order, Ms. Megawati, whose party has the largest representation in Parliament, will chair Cabinet meetings and evaluate the performance of Cabinet Ministers. Following severe criticism of the President's style of functioning, a new Cabinet, with two senior co-ordinating Ministers working under the Vice-President but under the overall supervision of Mr. Wahid, had been put in place some time ago.

In the meantime, the Vice-President has categorically denied rumours that she is planning to resign in the wake of the President's decision to appoint a new Cabinet, where representation for her party is negligible. "I still have my office here and all of us know that the Cabinet has been announced by the President, and the induction ceremony will take place on Saturday," Ms. Megawati was quoted as telling reporters. Calling upon the press not to blow things out of proportion, she said: "One thing I really want is for the situation and condition to remain stable, no matter what. I also hope the press will help."

The new decree issued by the President will allow the Vice-President to issue orders on Government policies — but only after the green signal has been given by Mr. Wahid. The Vice-President, the decree said, could also sign decisions on the promotion, removal or retirement of civil servants, military and police personnel, which currently can only be

done under Presidential authority. It also stated that the Vice-President shall report on the implementation of tasks to the President "regularly or at any time if necessary".

In a related development which should help end speculation of growing differences between the President and the Vice-President, Mr. Wahid called on his deputy yesterday. Though details of the two-hour-long meeting between the two leaders was not immediately available, the President made the trip to the Vice-President's residence last evening.

According to a report in *Jakarta Post*, Mr. Wahid wanted to personally hand over to Ms. Megawati the Presidential decree outlining the power-sharing arrangement. Also, it is now expected that Ms. Megawati will swear in the new Cabinet tomorrow, similar to the previous team announced by Mr. Wahid. Another power player in Indonesian politics, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) Speaker, Mr. Amien Rais, also met Ms. Megawati yesterday. Mr. Amien Rais said after the meeting that the Vice-President got to know about the composition of the new Cabinet just one hour before the formal announcement was made in the presence of Mr. Wahid.

The latest meeting between the President and the Vice-President notwithstanding, Ms. Megawati is reportedly not happy with the new team that Mr. Wahid has given her. The choice of the new Finance Minister, who was apparently rejected by the Indonesian State bank to head another banking institution, has come under considerable fire. Also, the reduced representation of Ms. Megawati's party in the Cabinet can create real problems in the future. One of the reasons for the Cabinet reshuffle was the fact that Ministers were pulling in different directions and could not work as a team.

THE HINDU

26 AUG 2000

New policy role for Megawati

Jakarta, Aug. 25 (AP) — Long sidelined from the inner workings of government, Indonesia's popular but untested Vice-President today was handed a new role in policy and decision-making.

Beleagured President Abdurrahman Wahid issued a decree that gave his deputy Megawati Sukarnoputri a direct say in the formulation of state strategies and management of day-to-day issues.

The move is central to Wahid's campaign to get his troubled 10-month-old administration back on track and to stem growing criticism of his often erratic presidential style.

The decree said Megawati would "increase the effectiveness of the government." It was issued after she held private talks with Wahid at her official residence last night.

Relations between the two have been strained by the failure of their fractious coalition to fix a deep economic crisis or to end sectarian and separatist violence in several outlying provinces. Their differences came to a head this week when her aides publicly accused Wahid of stacking a new Cabinet with his own supporters.

THE TELEGRAPH

26 AUG 2002

Wahid offers to mediate in West Asia process

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, AUG. 16. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, has offered to mediate in the West Asian peace process following separate meetings with the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the former Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres. Displaying an unusual interest for a role in international politics, Mr. Wahid doesn't seem to be restricted by massive domestic problems at home — those of power-sharing and ethnic violence.

Mr. Wahid has said that his country would be "honoured" if it were to be invited to participate in the West Asian peace process. On West Asia, Mr. Wahid remarked that the biggest obstacle to a peace settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians was on the issue of sovereignty over Jerusalem.

"In my view, we better differentiate between administrative sovereignty, which will be in the hands of the Israelis, and political sovereignty, which will be conducted by a committee of seven States," Mr. Wahid said, referring to Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestinian State, Israel and the United Nations. Talking of domestic issues, he warned Parliament about the continuing dangers to the country's sovereignty. "On the shoulders of every single leader of the Indonesian Government, at the national as well as regional levels, lies the burden to

forestall the occurrence and the continuation of the process of national disintegration," Mr. Wahid said.

About the proposed structural changes in the Government and Cabinet, the subject of considerable discussion in Indonesia, Mr. Wahid said in his speech, which was read out by the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, that a leaner Cabinet would soon be put in place.

Mr. Wahid drew cheers from Parliamentarians when he said that the powers of the President "have to be limited as our Constitution has given too much power to the President". Though a new Cabinet is likely to be announced next week, it is still not clear how the new administrative arrangements involving the Vice-President and two co-ordinating Ministers will work.

While major devolution of powers to Ms. Megawati was expected earlier, it now appears that Mr. Wahid's decision to appoint two co-ordinating Ministers, and simultaneously retaining overall authority, will fall short of the Vice-President's expectations.

Talks resume

Meanwhile, Israel today announced resumption of peace talks with the Palestinians ahead of a fresh U.S. effort to clinch a deal that would bring an end to decades of bitter conflict, reports AFP. Israel's acting Foreign Minister and top peace negotiator,



The Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat (right), kisses the hand of the Indonesian Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, as the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, looks on at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta, on Wednesday. Mr. Arafat is on a tour of the region to discuss the West Asia peace process. — AP

Mr. Shlomo Ben Ami, said negotiations would resume in view of a looming September 13 deadline for a peace accord. Asked if he would be meeting a Palestinian negotiators, Mr. Ben Ami told reporters: "We are resuming talks with the Palestinians and will be meeting a Palestinian team."

THE HINDU

17 AUG 2000

Learning the ropes^{VV}



Indonesia's President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, and Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri... on the troubled road to democracy.

FOR A country grappling with a post-authoritarian fledgling democracy, Indonesia's crises are, in a sense, not unexpected. The feud between the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, and an assertive Parliament underlines the problems the country is facing. By making a conciliatory speech at the opening of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) on Monday, Mr. Wahid demonstrated his political skills once again. His apology, though not satisfying all, certainly took the wind out of the sails of his opponents.

"To all the people of Indonesia, I seek to apologise, if in this past nine months the Government has not been able to fully overcome all problems, but trust us to work hard and continue to fight to do more," Mr. Wahid said in his address. "A Cabinet reshuffle will be done when the time is right... A Cabinet reshuffle also means that there will be a division of tasks... hence the President will focus on foreign affairs, assisted by the Foreign Minister," he added.

What Mr. Wahid's gameplan is

10-17 12/8

In Indonesia, a people long subjected to authoritarian rule are now enjoying the fruits of democracy. But, says AMIT BARUAH, it is up to them to use this space responsibly.

remains unclear. After his opening speech on Monday, it was reported on Wednesday that he had handed over domestic administration to his charismatic Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri. But a couple of days later the President himself disputed this. "There's been some misunderstanding about what I said in the Assembly. What I delegate to Megawati is not authority but only duties."

Mr. Wahid had said Ms. Megawati would lead Cabinet meetings as part of the transfer of responsibilities, a position he repeated on Friday. He added that a "coordinating minister", an official who usually oversees related Ministries, would help her. But her aides have said she wants extra powers, including a veto on who

should serve in a new Cabinet.

For the moment, Mr. Wahid is safe from any impeachment move by the MPR, which can call into account his performance. However, he has been subjected to considerable criticism in Parliament, something which the President can ignore only at his peril.

Dr. Greg Barton, the President's biographer and an Australian academic, told *The Hindu* from Jakarta, "things have gone quite well for the President". "Any impeachment proceedings are off the agenda," he said, adding that given the nature of politics the entire scenario would unfold only after the MPR session ended on August 18. "We will have to wait until after the session".

Dr. Barton, considered close to

Mr. Wahid, was of the view that the President's speech to the MPR was also to "test the waters". This clearly means that the President will wait and evaluate the response to his speech and the entire proceedings in the MPR before making his next move.

It was known that Mr. Wahid had certain strengths and weaknesses, but a strong Vice-President would have helped his cause. But that has not happened, says Dr. Barton.

Another Jakarta-based analyst felt questions being raised about Mr. Wahid and his performance were inevitable with the arrival of democracy in the country. Given that Mr. Wahid's National Awakening Party (PKB) has just 57 seats in the 695-strong MPR, it is not surprising that he is under pressure both inside and outside Parliament. Other parties such as Ms. Megawati's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and Golkar, with 185 and 182 seats, have their own ambitions.

The analyst pointed out that Mr. Wahid had inherited a large number of problems — separatist violence in Aceh, the Maluku islands and Irian Jaya, an economy in crisis plus the need to meet the expectations of those forces who wanted a process of accountability for Gen. Subarto.

The President, keeping in view the current situation, announced that special autonomy for Aceh, where talks are on between the rebels and the Government, would materialise within this year itself. "The implementation of a special autonomy will also take place in Irian Jaya, the land of Papua, at about the same time as the implementation of the same system in Aceh," Mr. Wahid informed the MPR.

The President, however, in his written speech was not so unequivocal in his understanding of a solution to splittist trends in the country. "Separatist movements that have appeared in those two regions are not representative of the stance of their entire population," Mr. Wahid said, adding that separatism was one of the main problems confronting Indonesia.

While Mr. Wahid may be out of immediate trouble as of now, things could change depending on how the political situation in the country unravels. His opponents too are unlikely to reduce pressure on him as the jockeying for position continues. A churning is on in Indonesia. A people long subjected to authoritarian rule are now enjoying the fruits of democracy. Criticism is no longer forbidden. But it is also up to the leaders and the people of Indonesia to use this democratic space responsibly.

THE HINDU

13 AUG 2001

Key Minister quits Cabinet

JAKARTA, AUG. 10. Indonesia's pro-democracy Government was thrown into turmoil on Thursday when the Minister charged with rescuing the ailing economy resigned from the Cabinet. The Senior Economics Minister, Mr. Kwik Kian Gie, resigned less than 24 hours after the embattled President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, surrendered the day-to-day administration of the world's fourth most populous nation to the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Although a close ally of Ms. Megawati, Mr. Kwik has been widely criticised along with Mr. Wahid for not ending a crippling financial crisis. As the chief architect of the economic policy, Mr. Kwik has been the Government's prime contact with the International Monetary Fund, which is overseeing a multibillion-dollar rescue and reform package.

Mr. Wahid empowered the popular but inexperienced Ms. Megawati, on the insistence of disgruntled lawmakers who earlier threatened to impeach him. In stormy sessions of the National Assembly, they complained that his erratic leadership during the past 10 months had worsened the many crises facing the nation.

Others have raised concerns about the President's health and strength. He appeared to doze off in front of the Assembly several times.

Although Mr. Wahid (60), is nearly blind and has been weakened by a series of strokes and diabetes, he maintains that he is fit for office.

While Ms. Megawati will be in charge of a new and streamlined Cabinet, she would be answerable to him, he said.

Mr. Kwik's resignation has added to the uncertainty over how this unprecedented power-sharing arrangement will work.

Some of the Vice-President's aides complained on Thursday that it was unclear exactly how far her authority would extend. "We still need to clarify some of her executive powers," Mr. Laksamana Sukardi, a former Trade Minister and close aide to the Vice-President, said.

Mr. Kwik's resignation was widely anticipated. On Thursday, financial markets reacted positively to the news with the currency strengthening by two percent to 8,400 against the dollar. The stock market also rose by 1.5 percent.

It was not clear how the development will affect Jakarta's patchy relationship with the IMF.

The Fund has repeatedly complained that Indonesia has been slow to meet agreed targets of reform. It has sometimes delayed crucial loan payments to push the Government into action. Mr. Kwik's departure has also muddied the water over the possible lineup of the new Cabinet.

Mr. Sukardi, whom Wahid fired in April against Mr. Kwik's and Ms. Megawati's wishes,



Kwik Kian Gie

said she wanted her enhanced powers to include a veto on who would serve in the new Cabinet.

Although her Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle has the biggest slice of seats in the Assembly and the National Parliament, Ms. Megawati (54), has confined herself to ceremonial duties. Critics accuse her of lacking ability despite her popularity, being the daughter of Indonesia's founding President, Sukarno. Some question her grasp of the problems facing Indonesia, citing her failure to negotiate an end to a bloody Muslim-Christian conflict in the Maluku Islands after Mr. Wahid named her a special envoy to the region.

"Her leadership will now be tested," said Mr. Salim Said, a prominent political analyst. "If it works, that means she could be elected President in the (2004) elections. But if she fails, she is finished." Mr. Sukardi acknowledged Ms. Megawati lacked experience in Government.

"But Megawati is someone who respects the due process of law and strong discipline," he said. "This is what is needed from our leaders."

Last October, the National Assembly chose Mr. Wahid — a moderate Muslim cleric — over Ms. Megawati in an election for the presidency. Mr. Wahid then engineered Ms. Megawati's election as his deputy.

The two had been longtime political allies and led a joint campaign to bring about democratic reform after the downfall of the dictator Suharto two years ago. — AP

THE HINDU

7 1 AUG 2000

Wahid faces a stormy House session

By Amit Baruah 19-16

SINGAPORE, AUG. 6. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, faces a stormy session of the 700-member People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) from Monday. The House will take up his performance record after he took power in October 1999.

For a country facing immense problems, the MPR session is the last thing an embattled Mr. Wahid will want.

However, in the face of concerted pressure from a string of parties, the President has no option but to face the music in the session which will continue till August 18.

By first acting tough and not responding to demands from the lower House of Parliament to explain the sacking of Ministers and then apologising, Mr. Wahid may have gained some ground but that has come too late for him to escape unscathed.

The violence against Christians in Maluku, the trouble in Aceh, the problems in East Timor and an unsatisfactory economic recovery have turned the spotlight on Indonesia as never before.

Simultaneously, the problems have also focused attention on the ability of the President to deliver the goods at a testing time in the country's history.

With Indonesia far from having buried the ghosts of the past authoritarian rule, Mr. Wahid remains the best bet for a divided country.

A man with many skills, there is little doubt that the President needs few lessons in political manoeuvring.

However, Mr. Wahid needs to improve his skills in the management of Government and economy. Often, his whimsical actions have landed him in political trouble.

The unexplained sacking of key Ministers has angered some of his close allies, including the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Though there have been



In this July 20 file picture, Ms. Yeni Zanubah Arifah tries to wake up her father and Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, who fell asleep during a parliamentary session in Jakarta.

threats from within Parliament in the past that the President could be impeached, it is likely that he will escape with a reprimand.

As per procedure, Parliament must issue a memorandum of warning to Mr. Wahid about his conduct and then he gets three months to improve his record.

In case he is still found to be

lacking, one more month becomes available to the President to prove himself.

Only after this time period is over that a special session of Parliament can be convened for impeachment proceedings.

Several Indonesian analysts believe that there is no alternative to Mr. Wahid at this stage in

the country's politics. While being critical of Mr. Wahid, there is a realisation that a replacement could be even more problematic.

Reports emanating from Jakarta have also spoken of the possibility of large-scale changes in the scheme of governance, with a First Minister being appointed by Mr. Wahid.

However, it is still not clear what exactly the equation between the First Minister and the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, will be.

These reports state that the First Minister to be appointed by Mr. Wahid will be the Energy Minister, Gen. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (Retd).

Others are of the view that instead of adding to the bureaucracy, more tasks should be delegated to Ms. Megawati.

Reuters reports:

Around 10,000 people, including Mr. Wahid, gathered in Jakarta on Sunday to pray for peace and religious harmony on the eve of the MPR session. The Parliamentary Speaker, Mr. Akbar Tandjung, also attended the non-political rally at a stadium, which follows similar mass public gatherings in recent weeks calling for an end to bloodshed in the world's fourth most populous country.

Mr. Tandjung told the crowd they had nothing to fear from the MPR session. "The MPR session will be safe and smooth," said Mr. Tandjung, a key Wahid critic, without elaborating.

Leaders representing the country's main religions — Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism — made sermons and called on the people not to use their faith for political purposes. Mr. Wahid has said he is confident he can end the violence that has killed thousands in the past two years in the multi-ethnic archipelago, especially in fighting between Muslims and Christians. But he has provided few concrete plans.

THE HINDU

7 AUG 2000

INDONESIA has barely recovered from losing East Timor to independence when a similar call for freedom from the republic is now being made by the people of Irian Jaya (West Papua). In Aceh, the killings continue despite a recent truce signed between the government and armed separatist leaders. On a quieter tone, students and activists press on with their demand for a referendum.

Weeks of violence that began in late May have left at least 126 people dead in Poso, central Sulawesi. In Maluku, savage communal clashes rage on. Last Monday, over 100 were killed when thousands of Muslims attacked the mainly Christian village of Duma on Halmahera Island, north Maluku. Later that week, at least another 11, including five security force personnel, were killed in two days of violence between Muslims and Christians in Ambon.

These clashes and separatist movements have placed Indonesia under constant international and media scrutiny. Interestingly, AFP reported on 22 June that the Maluku clashes had resulted in (Christians) calling for independence. A day before, the US state department expressed concern over the Muslim-Christian strife. Spokesman Phil Reeker also urged Indonesia to "prevent organized groups from initiating attacks and stop extremists from outside areas from inflaming the situation and engaging in violence".

Nothing, however, is as startling as a 12 June statement by Pope John Paul II. According to reuter, he urged Indonesia to respect human rights and condemned the attacks by Muslims against Christians in Maluku.

The US reaction to the Maluku violence is only expected. After all, the USA is often considered biased when confronted with human rights or humanitarian issues and will only raise its voice to either maintain its humanitarian facade or when it

A nation divided by faith

Religion unites as much as it divides people. It is also a dangerous political instrument, pitting followers of one faith against those of another, with both sides willing to die to defend what they believe to be the only truth. This is what's happening in Indonesia, writes LELA E MADJIAH

serves its purpose.

To Indonesia's Muslims, the Pope's statement may be seen as a provocation, a reminder of the event of 17 November 1095, when Pope Urban II called men to take up swords in the name of Christendom. Countless men, women and children were slaughtered during the First Crusade. The fact is, both Muslims and Christians have been victimised in the Maluku conflict and to say that either side suffers most is inappropriate, even dangerous to the point of provoking more bloodshed.

The question is, was the Pope ignorant of the fact? It is highly unlikely, because the Vatican has one of the best information, if not intelligence, networks in the world, with facts gathered by its priests and nuns, many of whom are in Maluku. Is the pope calling for a "crusade" that will eventually lead to Maluku's separation from Indonesia?

Already, suspicions are high of the Catholic Church's involvement in East Timor's separation from Indonesia. After all, Portugal received the blessing of Rome when it embarked on a holy mission to conquer the world and save it from "savages". And it was Portugal that

relentlessly defended its right over East Timor, one of its colonies that it abandoned in 1974 due to a volatile situation at home.

Although the West — the USA, Australia, the European Union — have all chorused their support for Indonesia's territorial integrity, Indonesia should not befooled by such diplomatic niceties. Australia repeatedly gave its support for East Timor's autonomy within Indonesia, and yet it was also the first to ready its troops for "humanitarian" intervention.

The USA made the pledge only after President Abdurrahman Wahid announced rejection of the Papua Congress, arguing that the organisers of the congress had reneged on a condition that no foreigners take part. The US embassy in Jakarta sent one of its diplomats to the congress in Jayapura.

On 6 June, two days after the Papua Congress ended, the US-based Asia Foundation announced a plan to work closely with the human rights and environment commission of Irian Jaya's regional legislature. The work will include monitoring and reporting of past human rights abuses.

Ten days later, on 16 June, the Papua Congress Presidium appointed



a human rights advocacy team to provide legal assistance to those who may have to stand trial under Indonesian law for their involvement in the congress. In a statement, the presidium specifically asked for Australia's help in the matter.

The following day, churches in Irian Jaya urged the Indonesian Military ((TNI) and National Police (Polri) to be open in dealing with various human rights violations in the province.

This new approach shows that, like in East Timor, human rights issues will most likely be used to help the Irianese attain their goal. Once again, the rest of Indonesia's people will feel they are being treated unfairly by the international (Christian) community simply because they are not Christians. Why, for example, did the

Pope not condemn the violence in Aceh?

Daring Indonesia is a daring experiment. A nation of over 220 million people, It has all the elements of discord. Its ethnic and religious diversity, its multi-culturalism, its economic differences, all combine as a potential threat to national unity. It seems a miracle that Sukarno, then Soeharto, managed to hold the country together. Of the many potential conflicts, religious issues have been a major threat to the republic ever since its establishment. Muslim aspirations to build an Islamic state of Indonesia have never really died down. The Darul Islam rebellion that lasted for nearly 13 years, from the late 1940s to early the 1960s, is an example of such efforts.

Under President BJ Habibie,

Muslim hardliners found a new, stronger footing that united them against Western-oriented moderates and non-Muslims. These Muslim hardliners also blamed the West for international pressure on Indonesia regarding East Timor, which they saw as a mainly Catholic province.

Recent international reactions to events in Aceh, Poso and Maluku only serve to intensify suspicions of a conspiracy against Indonesia's Muslims. There are fears that the West, and the Catholic Church, are trying to divide Indonesians into two parts: the western part for the Muslim population and the eastern part for the Christians.

It is easy to follow such logic. After all, the West succeeded in helping East Timor, home to a mainly Catholic population, secede from Indonesia. Will Irian Jaya and Maluku follow?

Indonesia is a relatively young concept and the fall of the New Order government triggered some soul-searching. If neither Sukarno's Old Order nor Soeharto's New Order is the Indonesia dreamed up by the founding fathers, then what is the real Indonesia?

It is a big question that Indonesians are grappling with. As a first step, they may start by putting religion where it belongs: in their hearts, as a private matter. Religion unites people as much as it divides people. Religion is a powerful tool that can mobilise any nation to raise arms to defend their beliefs. Religion is also a dangerous political instrument, pitting followers of one faith against those of another, with both sides willing to die to defend what they believe to be the only truth.

This is what is happening in Indonesia. Certain people or groups are using religious sentiments for political gain. Even without the Pope and the West, Indonesians are divided by their differing faiths.

— *The Jakarta Post/Asia News Network.*

Wahid cracks the whip

JAKARTA POST
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

JAKARTA, July 3. — President Wahid's disclosure on Saturday that he had ordered the arrest of legislators, who, he thinks, are behind Indonesia's current troubles has baffled the nation once again.

The President did not clearly state any names nor the specific crimes, thus making the nation's political elite speculate as to who exactly he was referring to.

Fingers are being pointed at Mr Ginandjar Kartasasmita and Mr Fuad Bawazier, two ministers who served the corrupt regime of President Suharto and are now members of the People's Consultative Assembly. Others feel the President could be targeting Assembly chairman, Mr Amien Rais, and House Speaker, Mr Akbar Tanjung, two of his staunchest critics.

Gus Dur's revelation comes after earlier accusations that the Maluku violence was the work of Suharto's supporters, aimed at keeping Indonesia constantly unstable.

"I don't know the reasons behind his approval for the police to arrest several legislators. I will call Gus Dur for an explanation," Mr Akbar, chairman of the Golkar party, was quoted by Antara as saying.

He hopes the investigation is not



President Abdurrahman Wahid at a ceremony in Jakarta Monday. — AP/PTI

part of the President's effort to silence outspoken legislators, for it would undermine Indonesia's nascent democracy.

Mr Ahmad Sumargono from the Crescent and Star Party (PBB) urged Mr Wahid to supply evidence to back up his accusation that the source of Indonesia's political conflicts came from the assembly.

"If Gus Dur cannot come up with

the evidence, then his accusation was merely a political ploy," Mr Ahmad said. "In that case, he is not all different from Suharto."

Mr Ahmad is also in the dark about the legislators to be questioned by police or about the charges against them.

Speaking to participants of the National Dialog Forum in Bali, Mr Wahid had said "I have signed the letter for a number of members of the House and the Assembly to be summoned because there is enough evidence."

He also accused some legislators of engineering corruption charges against him to remove him from office, including their initiative to use the House's Interpellation Rights against him.

Mr Hasyim Muzadi, chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Muslim organization and a close confidante of the President, said he was aware that police were currently investigating some legislators but refused to disclose names. He declined to confirm whether Mr Fuad Bawazier, a former finance minister, is one of those to be questioned but added that rumours about Mr Fuad did not originate from Gus Dur.

The latter, who was attending the same gathering, called the accusations against him slanderous and nonsense.

THE STATESMAN

Wahid casts a wider net

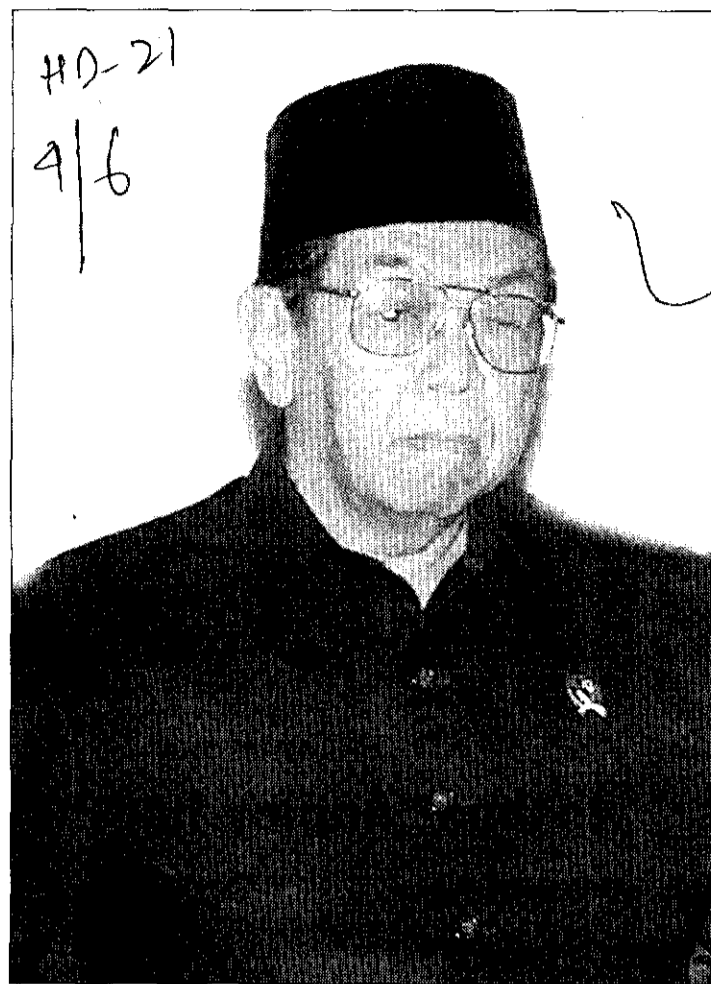
A FLURRY of recent initiatives on international cooperation in the Asian region, concerning more especially its eastern flank and its contiguous southern segment, has been given a new impetus by the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, who is known to speak his mind frankly. Mr. Wahid says his grand vision of an Asian renaissance should be seen in a historical perspective.

Mr. Wahid's decisive call to associate India with China and Japan, besides Indonesia and Singapore, in this scenario, and his willingness to endorse New Delhi's credentials for participation in the exclusive economic grouping of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plus Three, have acquired importance in the overall context of an intensive introspection in key sections of the Asia-Pacific region at this time. The ASEAN Plus Three consist of all the States of South East Asia and Japan, China and South Korea.

With claims for inclusion among the best and the brightest of leaders of South East Asia and its environs, Mr. Wahid has broken new ground in being somewhat expansive in the outreach of his ideas. In his reckoning, India belongs to the club of rising nations of Asia, although his own country, Indonesia, as a member of this amorphous group, has slipped considerably in recent years and would now need to make up for lost time.

While South East Asia has been no stranger to the explosion of geostrategic ideas, emanating within and outside its confines over time, the latest spree began with Shintaro Ishihara's notion of "the Japan that can say No" and the Malaysian leader, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's concept of an East Asia caucus. The U.S. had seized its historic moment of opportunity, in the wake of imperial Japan's humiliation in the Second World War, and spread Washington's military wings across East Asia in a 'protective' mode of assurance for several key countries in the region. Any notion of strategic autonomy, not necessarily of the security complexion, by any of the states in this region will, therefore, produce more than a ripple-effect.

For those South East Asian



Indonesia's President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid... visions of an Asian renaissance.

A flurry of recent initiatives on international cooperation in the Asian region has been given a new impetus by the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, writes P. S. SURYANARAYANA.

countries which had originally feared the "expansionist" designs of China a few decades ago, economic security at the individual and collective echelons became a mantra in the context of Washington's pulsating and increasing "forward (military) presence" in the region to confound Beijing. But the notion of a "containment" of China gradually acquired the overtones of a "constraint" of the same country before it was revised to connote an "engagement" with Beijing.

Even in this age of "engagement" with a fast-changing China, as practised by the ASEAN, some American

opinion-makers, Edward Timperlake and others, have, nonetheless, raised the spectre of a "red dragon rising" to challenge the U.S. interests in Asia. It is in this milieu that South East Asian leaders have begun to envision new security paradigms pertaining to the military, economic and human-resources aspects.

While China, Japan and the U.S. continue to figure in these scenarios being sketched out in South East Asia, Mr. Wahid recently took the first step of inviting India to enhance the economic security of Asia as a whole. Making a broader sweep of the painter's brush, the Singapore Foreign Minister,

Prof. S. Jayakumar, portrayed a new scene while welcoming India's External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, on Friday.

According to Prof. Jayakumar, India will be a "part" of "whatever new equilibrium or security architecture or geopolitical balance" that "eventually emerges" in the Asian and global arenas in the context of the "major strategic shifts" still under way.

In a narrower breadth of vision, the Philippines President, Mr. Joseph Estrada, had proposed some time ago that a new East Asia security forum be formed in the 21st century. It has remained a non-starter even as an idea, if only because the possible role of the U.S. in such a security theatre has not been properly defined and discussed.

In one scenario, an East Asian security forum can just be strategic extension of the 'ASEAN Plus Three', which is being increasingly viewed as a clearing house for economic security issues concerning the ASEAN and its major continental interlocutors such as Japan, China and South Korea.

In another sense, though, the Estrada initiative can take off only if the U.S., a traditional guarantor of peace and stability in East Asia, can be suitably co-opted by the ASEAN. With Mr. Jaswant Singh reaffirming in Singapore that India would be a factor for stability in East Asia as New Delhi intensifies its engagement with the ASEAN and with Mr. Wahid keeping India on the ASEAN checklist of major players, the contours of an East Asia security forum have hardly been drawn.

Dr. Mahathir's call for a specialised East Asian caucus, since redefined by him to serve as a regional monetary fund, has received a major push in the latest context of the 'ASEAN Plus Three' agreeing upon a regional currency swap arrangement.

A currency bloc, which will facilitate its members to draw upon collective reserves to ease crises in individual States, could evolve into an Asian monetary fund, which is being opposed by the U.S., though. But a new marker in South East Asia is collective security of the comprehensive kind — strategic, economic and human dimensions.

THE HINDU

4 JUN 2000

Indonesian House votes to question President Wahid

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
JAKARTA, JUNE 29

INDONESIA's parliament, the People's Representative Council (DPR), on Thursday voted in favor of questioning President Abdurrahman Wahid over the recent sacking of two ministers. In a vote taken during a plenary session, attended by 431 members of the 500-member DPR, an overwhelming 332 MP's voted in favor of summoning Wahid. Sixty-three were against the questioning while 36 abstained.

With the vote the legislature will exercise its interpellation rights — the rights to question a member of the government, including the President, on a point of government policy.

The Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (PDIP) faction, the largest in the DPR, has spearheaded efforts to summon the President over the sacking of Laksmiana Sukardi as investment and state enterprise minister and Yusuf Kalla as industry and trade minister. Sukardi is a PDIP member, while Kalla is a member of Golkar, the ruling party when former President Suharto was in power and currently accounting for the second largest faction at the DPR.

"Before the end of the week, PDIP will summon its members, both those who voted against and abstained, to explain their stance because it ran against the stand of the party," PDIP faction leader Arifin Panigoro said after the vote.

PDIP sources said that at least one of its members had voted against the interpellation. The great majority of those who abstained were from the military faction, which holds 38 seats at the DPR.

INDIAN EXPRESS

30 JUN 2000

Rebels to sign agreement

JAKARTA, May 4. - Indonesia and pro-independence guerrillas in Aceh province will sign a ceasefire agreement this month.

The move raises hopes of a peaceful solution to the long-running conflict which has left thousands dead, disrupted the province's lucrative resources industries and raised fears of a domino-effect that could lead to the break-up of Indonesia. The rebels, however, said they would not abandon their struggle for independence in the resource-rich province. - Reuters

THE STATESMAN

MAY 2 000

5 MAY 2 000

Indonesia to sign ceasefire pact with Aceh rebels

Jakarta, May 4

INDONESIA WILL sign a ceasefire with pro-independence guerrillas in troubled Aceh province next week, Human Rights Minister Hasballah Saad said today.

The move raises hopes of a peaceful solution to the long-running conflict which has disrupted the province's lucrative resources industries and raised fears of a domino effect that could lead to the break-up of Indonesia.

Saad said the government and Free Aceh Movement rebels would sign a memorandum of understanding in Geneva on May 12.

"The main agreement is not to continue the violence and to put down the weapons," he told reporters.

Pro-independence passions in Aceh have been fuelled by widespread human rights abuses by the military.

Many Acehnese also accuse the Central Government of siphoning off the province's resource wealth and giving nothing in return.

Thousands, mainly civilians, have died in the conflict. (Reuters)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 5 MAY 2000

Jakarta, Aceh rebels set to sign accord

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MAY 12. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, said in Jakarta today that an agreement on the cards between his Government and the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM in local parlance) would not confer any status on the rebel group as a representative of a potential sovereign territory.

The memorandum of understanding, scheduled for signature at a venue in Geneva later in the day, was described by the President as a "humanitarian document".

The GAM activists and other radical Islamist rebels have been fighting for the secession of the resources-rich Aceh from the Muslim-majority Indonesia in a context dominated by accusations of human rights violations by Jakarta's armed forces in that province. The progress towards

an accord was made possible by informal contacts between the two sides in recent months. Although the document might not contain a specific provision for a ceasefire, the President expressed the hope that the "humanitarian" complexion of the accord would be significant. He claimed "executive prerogative" for seeking to sign the MoU in Geneva rather than in Indonesia.

Mr. Wahid made it clear that there would be no recognition of either the GAM as a juridical entity or Aceh as a territory with prospective attributes of sovereignty.

While he did not want to lower guard against a possible domino effect of the recognition of separatist sentiments in Aceh, the President said the MoU, being facilitated by some external help too, was so drafted as to serve as a breakthrough for restoring peace in Aceh.

THE HINDU

13 MAY 2000

Wiranto quits Cabinet

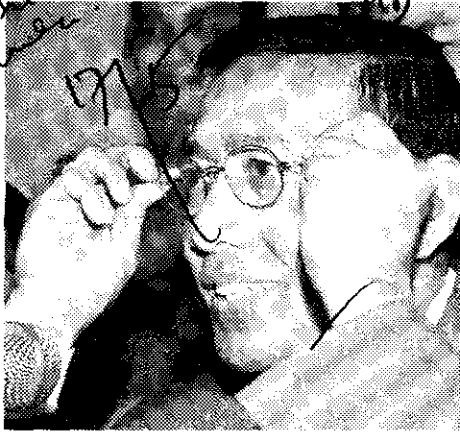
By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MAY 16. The former Chief of the Indonesian military forces (TNI), Gen. Wiranto, today resigned from the Cabinet of the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid. Gen. Wiranto, who recently retired from the TNI, had earlier been "suspended" as the Senior Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security Affairs.

Today's development is a sequel to the interrogation of Gen. Wiranto by the Attorney General's Office in Jakarta in regard to allegations that he was responsible for the post-referendum carnage in East Timor last year by his acts of omission and commission. Gen. Wiranto's reasoning for his resignation was that he did not want to be seen as an obstacle to the investigation of the East Timor crisis by staying on in the Cabinet, even if only as a decommissioned Minister.

The political irony is that Gen. Wiranto, who had refused to budge from his Cabinet post when Mr. Wahid repeatedly called for his resignation, has now chosen the same course at time not chosen by the President. This appeared to have suited both the President and Gen. Wiranto if only because Mr. Wahid had by now defanged the former TNI chief by first suspending him from the Cabinet and later ensuring that he bowled out of the Army as well. However, there is more to the timing of Gen. Wiranto's resignation than meets the eye. He has resigned soon after the "historic" accord on Aceh.

The accord between Jakarta and the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) on what was described as a "humanitarian pause" has been hailed by the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, as she received the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr. Alwi Shihab.



Gen. Wiranto addressing newsmen in Jakarta on Tuesday. — AP

Ms. Albright called for a transformation of the "pause" into a permanent arrangement for truce and peace. Mr. Alwi indicated that the accord could serve as first step towards a resolution of the problem of separatist violence and the military counter-action alleged to be violative of the human rights of the people of the province.

International attention has zeroed in on Aceh and the suspicions of the TNI's involvement of a negative kind there following signs of a stabilisation of the situation in East Timor. Gen. Wiranto's resignation could also be seen as an action designed to give the Wahid administration a free hand to investigate the role of the TNI in Aceh. On a separate front, the former Indonesian President, Gen. Suharto, has once again been interrogated at his Jakarta home by the Attorney General's Office.

THE HINDU

1 MAY 2000

17 MAY 2000

DEFUSING THE ACEH CRISIS

UNDER THE PRESIDENT, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid's initiative, there have been two positive signals from Indonesia. A week ago, a ceasefire agreement was clinched in Davos between Jakarta and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Later, varying sentences have been handed down to 24 soldiers in connection with the massacre of 58 civilians in the troubled province last year. By themselves, these two steps cannot deliver peace or a movement forward in reconciling differences between the Indonesian Government and rebels in Aceh. They must be seen as part of a larger initiative by the President to reassure the Acehnese people that the days of intimidation, massacre and the writ of the army are over. The Wahid administration, in its desperate bid to prevent the secession of Aceh (after East Timor voted for independence last year), is trying to salvage the situation and provide greater political space to the provinces. A Constitutional amendment is also in place to delegate greater political and financial powers to the provinces and encourage them to remain part of the Republic. How far Mr. Wahid succeeds in this effort will depend both on how his Government implements the promises and on how the people of the troubled regions such as Aceh and Ambon respond to these measures. It should not be a case of too little, too late.

The ceasefire deal signed in Davos, with the exiled separatist leadership of GAM, provides for a three-month cessation of hostilities and the setting up of two committees with representatives from the Government and Aceh. One group will look at development projects and the other evolve security modalities to keep the controversial armed forces out of the way of the embittered Acehnese. In these three months, there will have to be visible progress on all fronts to inspire confidence and carry forward the reconciliation process. Similarly, the sentencing of 24 soldiers tried by a special

court in Banda Aceh sends out a strong signal to both the armed forces and the people — that such atrocities will not be condoned. But the Acehnese and the families of the victims are not satisfied with this verdict. They feel that the real culprits — the senior army officials who ordered the massacre — have gone scot free and the poor soldiers who carried out the instructions were made scapegoats. The soldiers will go on appeal and the last word on this trial has not been said. Its final outcome will determine how genuine the trial was.

On another front, the former chief of the armed forces, Gen. Wiranto, who was suspended a few months back as Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, has resigned. This may well be an acceptance of the inevitable by a top military official who was all powerful till a year ago. Ever since the President called for his resignation and then suspended him when that was not forthcoming, there has been speculation in Indonesia of a coup. Some senior military officials, perhaps with skeletons in their cupboards, were probably assessing such a possibility. But they must have realised that the Indonesians, even if they are not too happy with their lot, will never tolerate or accept another coup in the archipelago. On the contrary, they want the powers of the military to be curbed even more, so that it is confined to looking after the security and defence of the country, without interfering in its socio-political processes — a role that the former President, Mr. Suharto, granted to the armed forces. The rest of Southeast Asia and the international community must strengthen the hands of Mr. Wahid and assist him in sorting out these major problems in Indonesia, so that he could get on with the much-needed economic, political and constitutional reforms. Economic recovery and political stability are the need of the hour.

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25 MAY 2000

Suharto interrogation to be expedited

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MAY 29. The Indonesian authorities today placed the former President, Gen. Suharto, under "house arrest" in Jakarta for expediting his interrogation in connection with allegations that he had amassed wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income as the country's chief executive for 32 years until May 1998 when he resigned in the face of an uprising against his rule.

The word in political circles was that the decision was made during a meeting that the Attorney General, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, held with the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, in the Indonesian capital today.

The initial indication was that

Gen. Suharto would be confined to his residence for 14 days from today, and this period would be coterminous with the extended duration of his "city arrest." Under that previous order, Gen. Suharto could not leave Jakarta so that he could be thoroughly questioned by the Attorney General's prosecutors in regard to allegations of wrong-doing concerning some charitable trusts.

Today's move was a sequel to the latest upsurge in student protest, sometimes violent, in support of the demand that Gen. Suharto be brought to trial quickly.

With the former President declining to travel to the Attorney General's Office for interrogation, the investigators have been going

to his residence, the latest such exercise taking place shortly before the order regarding his "house arrest." Today's interrogation too was halted after the doctors, present during each such session, noted that Gen. Suharto's blood pressure rose considerably at one stage during the exercise.

Another major development on the Indonesian front today was a bomb blast at Medan in Sumatra for the second successive day. The violence was suspected to be of a sectarian nature and several injuries were reported.

In the province of Aceh at northern tip of Sumatra, a fresh burst of violence was said to have left four persons dead.



The former Indonesian President, Gen. Suharto, at the wedding party of his granddaughter in Jakarta in this March 28 file photo.

30 MAY 2000

Wahid wants ban on communism to go

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MARCH 31. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today set himself on a collision course with political and religious leaders by asserting that a 34-year-old parliamentary decree banning communism must be revoked. On a separate front, he bowed to mounting public pressure and backed away from imposing a fuel price hike. He ordered that the move be deferred.

The Indonesian authorities had reaffirmed last night that the planned fuel price hike would be carried out even in the face of a public protest that began yesterday and as students, as also others, threatened to launch a mass campaign from April 1 on this politically emotive issue. An agitation against fuel price increases in 1998, in the context of certain prescriptions for Indonesia by the International Monetary Fund, had snowballed into a popular uprising that led to the resignation by the then President, Gen. Suharto.

Today's move in Jakarta by Mr. Wahid to hold off fuel price increases was, however, punctuated by a controversial decision to raise the salary structures of higher civil servants by what the President's critics described as astronomical proportions.

The Wahid administration has been so preoccupied with this economic issue as also the legal question of communism in the context of civil liberties that Mr. Wahid answered questions on Indonesia's domestic agenda of concern to the IMF while addressing a press conference along with the visiting Pakistani Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

Coincidentally for the Musharraf visit to Jakarta, the Indonesians carried their new democratic fervour to the streets, on one side, as on the issue of fuel price hike and to the political centrestage as on the question of communism. The Indonesian

Communist Party was banned in the context of an abortive coup attempt in the 1960's and a fiercely violent version of McCarthyism was unleashed against the suspected practitioners of that ideology.

After attending prayers at a mosque in Jakarta, Mr. Wahid asserted today that the prolonged ban on the Communist Party must go. He said: "This is related to legal and political rights development. The (old) decree (banning communism in Indonesia) eliminates the political rights of the people."

Mr. Wahid called upon the anti-communist Islamic clerics and scholars to pause and ponder whether it was right to have extended the sanctions of the Indonesian State against even the children of suspected members of that outlawed party. He was particularly aghast that the label of "ex-political detainee" was affixed to the identity cards of even the relatives of suspected communists. Mr. Wahid said: "If we do not agree with (propagators of) communism, we must teach the people. That is all."

Pointing out that Islamic theologians were looking at the communism question from their own standpoint of opposing an anti-religion ideology, Mr. Wahid, himself a cleric in the past, said it was incumbent on him as President to uphold the country's 1945 Constitution which had not either identified or banned the communists.

Reacting to Mr. Wahid's move to restore the political rights of the communists, the Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Mr. Amien Rais, said the country might face a danger if the President's call in this regard were to be heeded. A provisional MPR had passed a decree in 1966 proscribing the propagation of communism in Indonesia. Mr. Rais wanted Mr. Wahid to consult the "ulemas" on this issue.

THE HINDU

- 1 APR 2000

Islamists again call for 'crusade'

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 6. Radical Islamists of Muslim-majority Indonesia have raised a war cry once again in Jakarta against the minority Christians in the country's Spice Isles. The President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, has frowned on the call for a crusade and vowed to protect the minorities.

On a different front, the United Nations announced plans to transform its existing Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) into a dynamic "civil" structure in that enclave, now under the world body's tutelage pending complete independence in a few years. The UNTAET's latest plans were unveiled in the territory's capital by the head of the Transitional Administration, Mr. Vieira de Mello.

For the predominantly Chris-

tian half-island of East Timor, until recently a disputed province of Muslim-dominant Indonesia, the U.N. would now set up "district advisory councils" that would function under the overall supervision of the National Consultative Council.

The idea, according to Mr. de Mello, was to enhance the recruitment of native East Timorese into the top echelons of civil service and strengthen grassroots administration.

The recruitment and training of East Timorese as judges, too, were being addressed on a priority basis.

The "Spice Isles," an undisputed integral part of Indonesia, are home to the country's Christian minority, and the latest protest in Jakarta raised the political temperature in regard to the politics

of religion. The latest rally in Jakarta, organised by a radical outfit identified as Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah forum, was featured by strident calls to over an estimated 2000 militants, some of them armed as well, to carry out a "jihad" against the alleged "Christian insurgency in Maluku" in the Spice Islands. A "war commander" asked the Government to end at once the alleged killings of Muslims in Maluku.

Later, some representatives of the protesters were allowed to enter the presidential palace in Jakarta to convey their views to Mr. Wahid. In the event, though, the protesters could not convey their sentiments to the President as the latter became furious over the agitation itself, according to a version in the political circles in Jakarta.

SEE HINDU

7 APR 2000

Protests in Jakarta

JAKARTA POST ✓

ASIA NEWS NETWORK ✓

JAKARTA, April 8. ✓

Thousands of Muslims took to the streets yesterday in Jakarta to protest against President Abdurrahman Wahid's plans to revoke a ban on Communism and resume trade ties with Israel. ✓

About 5,000 protesters of Indonesian Islamic Front demanded that the President give up his plans to abolish the decree of the People's Consultative Assembly that bans the spread of Communist ideology. The demonstrators included teachers, preachers and students. ✓

The protesters held a rally in front of Merdeka Palace after attending Friday prayers at a mosque nearby.

The demonstrators, who denounced Zionism as the "root of Communism", burnt an Israeli flag in front of the presidential palace.

THE STATESMAN

23 APR 2000

9 APR 2000

10-12
9/19

Jakarta to cooperate on E. Timor cases

S. S. Asia
Indonesia

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 8. The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the Indonesian Government have signed an accord on judicial cooperation in respect of the cases involving human rights violations in that territory, which is now under the world body's tutelage as a prelude to complete independence in a few years. East Timor was, until recently, a disputed province of Indonesia.

Welcoming the accord, the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, drew attention to the limited scope of the cooperation, namely investigation and prosecution of those responsible for only last year's violence in East Timor.

The agreement provides for the transfer of people from the jurisdiction of one side to that of the other for cooperation in regard to the following aspects: the provision of information as also evidence, the participation in actual legal proceedings, besides the pre-trial exhumation of bodies of suspected victims of violence that took place before and after East Timor voted for independence from Indonesia last year.

The other key aspects pertain to a pledge by Indonesia and the UNTAET to transfer persons detained by one side to the other for eliciting evidence. Cooperation is pledged in regard to searches and seizures as also the arrest of suspects living under the jurisdiction of either side. The two will assist each other in carrying out investigations and in the transmittal of judicial documents.

On a different front of relevance to East Timor, three persons were reported killed and two others

seriously wounded as a result of a gunfight in a refugee camp on the Indonesian side of the border with that U.N.-controlled enclave. Indonesian officials made it clear that the unrest had nothing to do with Jakarta's recent decision to suspend aid to the refugees in the pocket now affected by violence. The refugee camp in question housed a number of East Timorese who had earlier served in the Indonesian armed forces and Jakarta had recently begun confiscating the arms held by such persons.

As for alleged human rights violations inside Indonesia itself over the past several decades, the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, is expected to discuss with the leaders of South Africa the finer points of its truth and reconciliation commission so as to ascertain whether that model could be adopted in South-East Asia's largest State.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Mr. Amien Rais and the Speaker of the House of Representatives (DPR), Mr. Akbar Tanjung, have separately expressed their opposition to the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid's plea for a revocation of an old ban on the country's Communist Party.

Their argument, acquiring importance in the context of yesterday's rally by Islamic radicals against communism, is that the revival of an anti-religion political ideology would go against the grain of "Pancasila" or the five principles of Indonesian Statehood.

The ban was imposed in the 1960s by a provisional MPR and the Communist Party of Indonesia had participated in the 1955 general election, the country's only free poll until 1999.

THE HINDU

9 APR 2000

149-17 Resentment over Wahid remarks

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 10. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, now on a foreign tour, came under political fire at home today, with some of his critics even suggesting that he was running the risk of being "impeached" by the people.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives (DPR), Mr. Akbar Tandjung, said that Cabinet Ministers should not be sacked on mere presumption of wrongdoing. The President could dismiss Ministers on grounds of corruption only if they were proven guilty of such practice. Mr. Akbar suggested, in response to Mr. Wahid's assertions, while in Pretoria, that some of his Ministers were obstructing Indonesia's economic reforms by acting in their self-interest and not the public good.

Although Mr. Akbar conceded the President's prerogative to re-

move Ministers, the Speaker cautioned Mr. Wahid that he and his Government "may face a sort of impeachment from the people if (the present) social unrest continues to escalate" at home. The social unrest in focus is the rising tide of public anger, especially from the Islamist quarters in Muslim-majority Indonesia, over Mr. Wahid's move to re-legalise the country's proscribed Communist Party (PKI).

A strand of opinion in Jakarta's political circles is that Mr. Wahid has at present sought to play the PKI card, as it were, in order to put pressure on the U.S. and the International Monetary Fund to extend economic help to Indonesia. However, this (suspected) tactic was only alienating the Muslims besides being contrary to Indonesia's State principles, according to Mr. Wahid's critics.

As for Mr. Wahid's latest hint, in remarks made in Pretoria, about

the possibility of some Cabinet changes, a view among his political opponents was that the President might effect the shuffle while still being abroad at this time in much the same way as he had, during a previous long foreign tour, asked Gen. Wiranto to resign from the Cabinet. In the event, Gen. Wiranto was suspended from the Cabinet, not sacked, after Mr. Wahid returned to Jakarta on that occasion. The President's critics have now argued that he could similarly "decommission" Ministers suspected of corruption until they could be proved either guilty or innocent in a due judicial process.

The main thrust of Mr. Wahid's anger with some of his Cabinet Ministers, especially those dealing with economic portfolios, is that they have not done sufficient work to secure the release of suspended aid from the IMF.

On the positive side for Mr. Wa-

hid at this time, he won assurances from his South African hosts about help in organising an Indonesian truth and reconciliation commission. This idea went down well with some of Mr. Wahid's critics including Mr. Akbar.

The Attorney General's Office today went to the residence of the former President, Gen. Suharto, in Jakarta to pick up the threads of interrogation from where these were left during a previous such visit by State prosecutors to his house.

Gen. Suharto, now under preliminary scrutiny for his alleged accumulation of ill-gotten wealth through charitable foundations linked to him and his family, did not respond to summons from the Attorney General's Office for questioning. As his lawyers cited the failing health of the former President for this, the new practice of interrogating him at his residence is being resorted to.

THE HINDU

11 APR 2000

East Timor: Indonesia, UNTAET sign accord on coordination

By P. S. Suryanarayana 10-10
SINGAPORE, APRIL 12. Indonesia and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) have signed a new memorandum of understanding on 'military tactical coordination' between the two sides to 'maintain a stable and secure border region.' The MoU was signed by the commander of the UNTAET's peacekeeping wing, Lt. Gen. Jaime de los Santos, and a top Indonesian military officer, Maj. Gen. Kiki Syahnakri, and it was witnessed, among others, by East Timor's premier independence leader, Mr. Xanana Gusmao.

Announcing the agreement, which up-

dated an earlier MoU between Indonesia and the now-disbanded International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), the United Nations clarified that the definition of a boundary would have no implication whatsoever that the said "line is the internationally recognised border between East and West Timor." While East Timor, technically but not juridically a new State, is at present under the U.N.'s tutelage ahead of full scope sovereignty in a few years, West Timor, is an integral, undisputed part of Indonesia.

The latest accord stipulates that the U.N. military observers would be stationed at 12 'junction points' on the de-

lined dividing line between the eastern and western halves of the Timor island. These observers would facilitate meetings between the Indonesian Army personnel and the U.N. peacekeepers as and when required.

Neither force would be allowed to carry weapons across this definitive technical border and the two sides pledged to cooperate in reporting as also investigating military incidents across this boundary. This provision acquires importance in the latest context of allegations by the Indonesian side about the violation of its airspace by the UNTAET planes and the latter's dismay over the accusations. A

military vigil on both sides of the east-west dividing line in Timor is considered necessary not only to maintain peace in the normal course but also to prevent alleged incursions by pro-Jakarta militias of East Timorese origin into the U.N.-controlled territory. The facilitation of a return of East Timorese refugees to their homeland from the western side is another issue in focus.

It was against this background that Maj. Gen. Kiki deplored what he saw as the U.N.'s lack of enthusiasm for coordinated border patrolling by the two sides. These steps could bring to an end the constant refrain of allegations that the In-

donesian military was aiding and abetting illegal incursions into East Timor. Meanwhile, the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, now attending the South Summit in Havana, reaffirmed his resolve to uphold the 1945 Constitution and seek national reconciliation by renewing his call to the People's Consultative Assembly to revoke decades-old ban on the country's Communist Party.

The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), led by Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, concluded its latest congress without categorically backing Mr. Wahid's call for direct presidential elections in the future.

THE HINDU

13 APR 2000

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Wahid rides the waves

IT IS once again a political crunch for the Indonesian President. Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid. As on the several occasions since he assumed the presidency last October heralding hopes of a democratic resurgence, Mr. Wahid has been able to hold the initiative firmly without getting buffeted by the swirling political winds on the domestic front.

However, the task of enthrusting the International Monetary Fund to deliver some goodies, no gift-wrapped ones though, to a financially-eroded Indonesia has not yet been accomplished. During his latest round of foreign tours, Mr. Wahid was able to gain pledges of economic help from Japan, but the fact remained that the IMF would not be easily impressed by Jakarta's economic diplomacy of promises. The question of a fuel price hike, linked to the IMF's view of Indonesia, may yet test Mr. Wahid's ability to carry the people with him.

While the larger issue of a clean-up of Indonesia's economic house remains to be addressed, be it the restructuring of the banking system or the reform of the capital market, Mr. Wahid continues to face a prime reality check on the political front. The latest challenges relate to a twist in the tale of the military's role in politics, a storm of protest over the elasticity of civil-political liberties, and the doubts over the limits to accountability in public life.

New nuances of power-play have come to define the equation between the military and the civilian elites following the latest confirmation of the retirement of Gen. Wiranto. Although he had, as the overall commander of the military forces (TNI), acted in a democracy-friendly manner during last year's historic elections that marked a return of political pluralism, he has also shrouded himself in several controversies.

The relatively-new TNI commander, Admiral A. S. Widodo, originally picked for that post by Mr. Wahid in consultation with Gen. Wiranto, affirmed in Jakarta on April 20 that the military would disengage itself from active politics. There was no less salience in a parallel statement by the Army Chief, Gen. Tyasno Sudarto, that the TNI "had merely expressed concern over the present situation" and that there was "no intention" to play politics. The two echoed each other's views but the difference was that Gen. Sudarto was seeking to defuse a crisis sparked by the perception that he had pledged the army's support for Mr. Wahid in the event of the President's civilian political critics launching a bid to topple him.

Given Indonesia's experience of military dominance in civilian politics, the very notion of an army prop for the President has become anathema to Mr. Wahid's foes and friends alike in the present climate of opinion in favour of sustainable democratic ethos. The latest focal point in the tale of a military-civilian co-existence is that there is

As on several occasions since he assumed Indonesia's presidency, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid has been able to hold the initiative firmly without getting buffeted by the swirling political winds. P. S. SURYANARAYANA reports.

through civilised debates and persuasive campaigns. His critics have not so far agreed to yield ground on this issue, citing the unique circumstances in which the ban was imposed in the world's largest Muslim-majority state.

However, Mr. Amien had played a pivotal role in the election of Mr. Wahid as President when he faced heavy odds in overcoming the challenge of Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri. Not surprisingly, the MPR Chairman has now indicated that he and Mr. Wahid have agreed to criticise each other in bid to strengthen Indonesian



Indonesia's President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, with his deputy, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri... staying one step ahead of his detractors.

political resistance to the idea of a protective military umbrella for the President in the stated defence of democracy itself.

Leaders such as the Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly, Mr. Amien Rais, and others were quick to protest against the perceived possibility of a military intervention in the name of shoring up the political position of a new messiah of democracy.

Prior to this alarm over the army's suspected agenda of drawing a cordon around even a democratic president, Mr. Wahid had sparked the ire of Mr. Amien and others of his line of thinking by proposing that the MPR should lift the ban, imposed in the 1960s, on the Communist Party of Indonesia. Mr. Wahid's reasoning was that it would be a travesty of civil-political liberties if an ideology were to be proscribed instead of being thwarted

democracy. This was in keeping with the "fairy tales and familiar talks" that are known to characterise the "politics of consultation" in East Asia.

On a related front, there is a new twist to the "fairy tale" of Ms. Megawati accepting to serve as Vice-President under Mr. Wahid after having lost the presidential race to him in a transparent but indirect election last year. She has now remained cool to the idea of a direct presidential election as proposed by Mr. Wahid at a recent convention of her party, while he appeared to test her political will by saying that he would relish a contest with her in a direct poll next time.

Mr. Wahid had not yet been able to resolve the case of the former President, Gen. Suharto's alleged corrupt practices in the light of transparent accountability norms. For Mr. Wahid, it is still a question of translating his democratic Government into actual governance.

UN troops fire at protesters

Wahid in landmark visit to East Timor

FROM HEATHER PATERSON

Dili, Feb. 29 (AP) UN troops fired two warning shots today after protesters tried to block a motorcade carrying Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, who is on a landmark reconciliation visit to the devastated territory.

The President and his party were not affected by the brief incident, and the head of state was cheered by a crowd of about 12,000 East Timorese when he drove up to UN headquarters a few minutes later.

Wahid, a democratic reformer, arrived in East Timor in a historic attempt at reconciliation with a nation destroyed by Indonesia's military during its savage, 24-year occupation.

He was met at Dili airport by Jose Alexandre "Xanana" Gusmao, the territory's main independence leader, Nobel laureate Jose Ramos Horta, UN chief administrator Sergio Vieira de Mello, and other senior officials running the world body's transitional authority in East Timor.

Protesters demanding to know the fate of resistance fighters captured by Indonesian troops after their 1975 invasion, attempted to block the road but were pushed back by Portuguese UN soldiers who fired into the air to calm the crowd.

Gusmao welcomed Wahid saying the visit was important for both countries. "You are a symbol of the universal principle of peace, justice, and democracy," Gusmao said. "You bring hope to East



Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid (left) with East Timorese independence leader Xanana Gusmao in Dili. (AFP)

Timor because in your country you can create (conditions) for future dialogue and democracy."

Before being ushered into the building for talks with independence leaders and UN administrators aimed at improving ties between East Timor and its former master, Wahid briefly addressed the crowd in the local Tetum dialect.

"I feel I am still in my homeland because Indonesia and East Timor cannot be separated," he said. "We are also people who have suffered."

Wahid was also expected to open an Indonesian representative office in Dili and lay wreaths at an Indonesian military cemetery and the adjacent Santa Cruz graveyard where Indonesian troops massacred 200 unarmed

civilians in 1991.

His trip comes as Indonesian prosecutors prepare to lay charges against military officers and militia members for the murder and destruction that gripped the territory in the aftermath of the August 30 independence vote.

Before Wahid's arrival, hundreds of armed peacekeepers lined the seven-km route from the airport to the centre of town.

Though there is much resentment among the East Timorese towards Indonesia, independence leaders have called on their people to give Wahid a warm welcome. "I am here because I want Wahid to say sorry," said Huanita da Costa, a Dili housewife.

THE TELEGRAPH
1 MAR 2000

Wahid 'sorry' for E Timor wrongs

45-5 113 56
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DILI, Feb. 29 — Seeking to make amends for 24 years of brutal occupation, the Indonesian President today solemnly apologised for past human rights abuses that his country inflicted on the small predominantly Christian territory of East Timor.

Mr Abdurrahman Wahid is Indonesia's first head of state to visit the region since it broke away from the world's largest Muslim nation last year, triggering a wave of violence and devastation. He laid a wreath at the Santa Cruz cemetery next to the graves of about 200 East Timorese civilians slaughtered by Indonesian soldiers in 1991. He then paid homage to Indonesian soldiers buried in an adjacent field.

Overall, Mr Wahid was warmly welcomed by East Timor's long suffering people. But his landmark attempt to foster reconciliation was marred when UN peacekeepers fired shots over the heads of a noisy group of anti-Indonesian protesters. "I would like to apologize for the sins that have happened in the past, to the victims or the families of Santa Cruz and those friends who are buried in the military cemetery," he said. "These are the victims of circumstances that we didn't want."

Mr Wahid's trip is being labeled as symbolic and sets the tone for future relations between East Timor and its former master. It comes as Indonesian prosecutors prepare to lay charges against military officers and militia members blamed for the mayhem.

Indonesian troops withdrew from East Timor last October, bringing to an end their occupation of the former Portuguese colony. Human rights groups estimate that more than 100,000 people were killed during that period.

Although security in Dili was tight with armed UN troops lining the streets and sharpshooters posted on buildings, an angry mob attempted to block Mr Wahid's motorcade on the road from the airport. The demonstrators, demanding to know the fate of resistance fighters captured by Indonesian troops after their 1975 invasion, were pushed back by Portuguese soldiers.

Mr Wahid and his party were unaffected by the brief incident, and the President was cheered by a crowd of 12,000 East Timorese as he arrived at the UN headquarters.

THE STATESMAN

- 1 MAR 2000

Not responsible for carnage: Wiranto

By P.S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MARCH 1. Even as the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today discounted suggestions that he had masterminded the latest shakeup of the military hierarchy, the former chief of the armed forces (TNI), Gen. Wiranto, testified before a parliamentary panel in Jakarta that he could not be held accountable for the carnage that occurred in East Timor last September.

Mr. Wahid, speaking in Jakarta after a fence-mending visit to East Timor, said he had only recommended that Maj. Gen. Agus Wirahadikusumah, a field commander, should be shifted to the capital because he is a 'thinking' soldier. He was, however, not associated with the decision that Maj. Gen. Agus be made the chief of the Army Strategic Reserve Command (Kostrad), a fulcrum position within the TNI.

The man being replaced by Maj. Gen. Agus, Lt. Gen. Djadja Suparman, was generally regarded as an ally of Gen. Wiranto, who was recently suspended by Mr. Wahid from his presidential Cabinet, pending an official scrutiny of the former TNI chief's alleged responsibility for acts of omission and commission that had either sparked or sustained the East Timor mayhem last year.

Lt. Gen. Djaja is now reported to be angry that he was not even informed of his shift by his superiors ahead of the announcement



Gen. Wiranto

by the military spokesman.

The replacement of Lt. Gen. Djadja by Maj. Gen. Agus, a reformist known for his criticism of the TNI's creed of "dwifungsi" or the duality of roles as a sentinel of the State and as an architect of State policy, was the highlight of the latest military revamp.

The reformation of the TNI is now expected to cover a more intensive civilian auditing of the businesses run by the military, while the Attorney-General and a parliamentary panel will seek to complete their separate investigations of the alleged responsibility of Gen. Wiranto and six other TNI generals for the anti-independence violence in East Timor last year.

THE HINDU
- 2 MAR 2000

Megawati functions as PM: Wahid

THE JAKARTA POST
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

JAKARTA, March 2 — Indonesian President Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid emphasised on Wednesday his determination to give Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri a significant part in government, and even likened her role to that of a Prime Minister.

Speaking to reporters after chairing a Cabinet meeting at Bina Graha presidential office, Mr. Wahid said Ms. Sukarnoputri was constantly involved in decision-making.

Mr. Wahid stressed that he also conveyed his wish for Ms. Sukarnoputri's involvement directly to the Cabinet so there would be no apprehension from the ministers.

"I need to emphasise here that in the Cabinet, I pointed out that Vice President Megawati also functions as Prime Minister, I say again she also acts (as Prime Minister)."

The President, popularly known as Gus Dur, said his remarks were also a reaction to suggestions from several legislators of the need for him to appoint a Prime Minister.

Mr. Wahid conceded that due to his failing eyesight, Ms. Sukarnoputri practically reads most of Cabinet meetings already. "She asks and asks issues directly with the minis-

ters during the Cabinet meeting. You know why? Because as you get old, you cannot see, therefore I do not know much about details," the President said.

Since their election in October, Mr. Wahid has made it clear that he would stray from tradition and empower the Vice President with more responsibility rather than just being a figurehead.

On Friday, he suggested that she should have been the one seated as President as her party, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, won the most votes.

Mr. Wahid said it was only by a quirk of fate and the insistence of People's Consultative Assembly Speaker, Mr. Amien Rais, that he became President. "I was lucky with Mas Amien otherwise I would never have become President," he joked.

But it is unclear whether Mr. Wahid's reference to Ms. Sukarnoputri as a Prime Minister holds any legal basis or is a mere outburst of emotion.

Wiranto testimony: Former chief of the Indonesian military Gen. Wiranto spoke powerfully in a House of Representatives hearing on Wednesday, trying to convince legislators of his innocence in last year's East Timor violence.

THE STATESMAN

- 3 MAR 2000

Aceh: Mahathir's offer to Jakarta

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MARCH 9. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, today offered to help Indonesia resolve the crisis in Aceh if asked by Jakarta to do so. Kuala Lumpur firmly believed that the restive Aceh province must remain a part of Indonesia, he said after holding talks with the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, in Jakarta.

Dr. Mahathir's current visit to Jakarta was widely viewed across South-East Asia as a major new effort by the two countries to strengthen bilateral ties in a context in which the two leaders themselves were seen as being poles apart on the primacy of the Western model of globalisation as a sine qua non for economic growth in the developing bloc.

While Mr. Wahid is known for his politics of the unconventional kind in a South-East Asian context and for his orthodox economic policies of the pro-West type, Dr. Mahathir's brave new world of economic nationalism is seen by his critics to have no parallel dimension of 'liberal' politics.

On the thorny political issue of separatism in Aceh, a territory bordering India's eastern maritime flank, Dr. Mahathir reas-



The Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (left), and the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, with their wives in front of the Presidential Palace in Jakarta on Thursday. Dr. Mahathir is on a two-day State visit to Indonesia. — Reuters

sured his Indonesian hosts that his country had no intention of stoking those tendencies. Dr. Mahathir said that he had held talks with some religious leaders of Aceh in Malaysia and impressed on them the need to keep that territory as an integral part of Indonesia. If the disaffected Acehnese leaders wanted autonomy, it was upto them to 'negotiate' that with the Indonesian leaders, he maintained. However, Malaysia 'at the moment' could be of 'some help'

to Jakarta in resolving the Aceh issue 'if asked' by Indonesia.

On the pan-regional issue of a renewed threat of haze spreading from the land-clearance forest fires of Indonesia, Mr. Wahid said that he was being given 'different accounts' of the reasons for the fires. Expressing Jakarta's political will to stem this problem, he thanked Malaysia for offering to "help monitor the (Indonesian) preparations to combat the fire."

Building democracy

17/3/00-17

A pivotal aspect of the U.N.'s agenda in East Timor is to hold a general election before it can be granted sovereign statehood.
P. S. SURYANARAYANA
on its transition to democracy.

EAST TIMOR is fast turning into the playground for new ideas on "globalising" a model being designed to put a hapless people through their paces towards self-governance. Not surprisingly, the United Nations, which has begun to do some soul-searching on the more traditional peace-keeping operations across the world, is facing the challenge of playing the good samaritan of democracy in East Timor.

East Timor, under the U.N. tutelage at present ahead of full independence in two or three years, has already received some recognition for the perceived talent of the native people to manage their affairs step-by-step. One example of this is that the U.N. seems willing to consider allowing East Timorese to participate in the prosecution of those responsible for suspected crimes against humanity last year during Indonesian rule. This contrasts with the hesitation of the U.N. to allow the Cambodian lawyers and judges to prosecute Khmer Rouge leaders for the genocide in the 1970s.

This does not, however, mean that the U.N. does not face a struggle in framing a coherent message for not only the East Timorese but also all those, across the world, looking for some form or other of Wilsonian self-determination. Moreover, given the reality that the U.S. breathes down the neck of the U.N. whenever it suits it, the relevance of East Timor to Washington's long-term geostrategic calculus is a factor in assessing the world body's performance in the territory.

There is nothing new about the overwhelming strategic presence of the U.S. across East Asia, including in particular the south-eastern segment. Some diplomat-turned-authors such as Mr. Bryce Harland have argued that the U.S. could hope to avoid a possible collision course with East Asia only by resisting



The East Timorese leader, Mr. 'Xanana' Gusmao, and the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in Dili... aiming for a smooth transition.

the temptation of remaking Asia in Washington's own image. Varying images of a red star over China and an eagle against the sun, the latter one being a perception of the tussle between the U.S. and Japan, have also provided period-specific descriptions of the East Asian situations for Washington's strategic gamesmanship. If, against this background, East Timor has a relevance, the reason is not complex as it might appear *prima facie*.

A somewhat maverick view among the community of strategic analysts is that East Timor's location is its main attraction under Washington's prism. Lying somewhere between Hawaii and Diego Garcia, East Timor can, in the hands of a U.S.-friendly regime, be of obvious strategic significance to Washington. So runs the argument which, in some ways, will serve as a context for assessing the U.N.'s agenda in East Timor, at least in the reckoning of forces wary of the American mood and methods.

A pivotal aspect of the U.N.'s agenda in East Timor, as outlined by its Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, is to hold a general election in that formerly disputed province of Indonesia before it could be granted sovereign statehood. The idea, according to him, is to identify East Timor's first leaders in a

democratic process. As the premier leader of East Timor's struggle for freedom from Indonesia, Mr. Xanana Gusmao tops the popularity charts. Given the presence of Mr. Jose Ramos Horta and Bishop Carlos Belo, the tiny enclave is not short of leaders, and the three have been writing themselves off for the future stakes.

Their levels of self-effacement in doing so may carry different degrees of conviction before an international audience, but that is not the central theme of democratisation there.

For the present, though, the future vision of a democratic polity can become real only if peace can be fully established in the first place and the basic needs of the people are taken care of in the short run. The initial step in this direction was the latest transfer of power from the Australia-led international force for East Timor (INTERFET) to a U.N. peacekeeping outfit.

It was certainly not as if the INTERFET had failed and impelled the U.N. to field a separate peace force. The INTERFET, which was mandated by the U.N. itself as an expeditionary as also an interventionist force under Chapter 7 of the world body's Charter, has come in for much commendation for having restored peace in the wake of the carnage of last September. However, the choice of a head

for the U.N. peace force is quite instructive for two reasons.

First, Australia's extraordinary activism in visualising and leading the INTERFET, although carrying conviction with the U.N. all the time, has ruffled Indonesia in more ways than one.

The choice of a non-Australian for heading the new peace force has obviously pleased Jakarta. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, has lost no time in this context for not only travelling to East Timor but also apologising to its people for the sins that Jakarta was suspected to have committed.

The second message was evident in the fact that a Filipino, not a Malaysian who was also in the unorganised "race," was chosen to head the new peace force.

The Philippines has recently revived an old strategic equation with the U.S., although the parameters this time are not as intrinsically militarist as in the past.

Malaysia, on the other hand, has been wary of the U.S.'s intentions for some time without, of course, treading on its strategic toes. Indonesia, known for its relative strategic independence in the past, has been quick to recognise this by seeking to make its presence felt in East Timor in some positive light.

Wahid raises coup spectre

HD-19
1573

S. B. Anwar
- 9/2/2000

By P. S. Suryaparayana

SINGAPORE, MARCH 14. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today alleged that a regional army commander was mobilising forces for possible action against civilian authority. He, however, did not identify the commander.

The President, who disclosed the possibility while participating in a breakfast programme over State television in Jakarta, said he had nothing to fear as he derived his political authority directly from the people. He also spoke of a plurality of military commanders gaining strength in posing a possible challenge to the civilian rule.

Mr. Wahid's sudden comment came weeks after the speculation of a possible military coup against him had died down even as he suspended from his Cabinet a key military figure, Gen. Wiranto, and stripped him of the post of Senior Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security Affairs. Gen. Wiranto is now under the scrutiny of the Attorney-General, who will have to decide whether this former military chief, whose formal tenure with the Army will expire on March 31, should stand trial for alleged complicity in actions that either caused or sustained a carnage in East Timor last year.

Suharto examined

Another key figure of the past in the Attorney-General's watch-list at this time is the former President, Gen. Suharto. On the Attor-

ney-General, Mr. Marzuki Darusman's directive, Gen. Suharto was last night examined by independent doctors to assess whether he was in a stable physical and mental condition to be interrogated in connection with cases of alleged abuse of authority and corrupt practices in regard to charitable foundations linked to him and his family.

Mr. Wahid today defended his decision to grant clemency to Gen. Suharto in the event of the latter being found guilty in a court of law following the Attorney-General's current investigations. According to Mr. Wahid, the offer of a presidential pardon was designed to induce the former supreme leader of Indonesia to cooperate in carrying the due process of law forward in regard to the allegations against him.

Mr. Wahid expressed a personal preference, too, for a proper probe of the mass killings of suspected communists in the 1960s. But he said, he had already pardoned, in a moral sense, all those who were responsible for such killings.

In East Timor, the premier independence leader, Mr. Xanana Gusmao, is reported to have expressed the view that the U.N. transitional administration there should co-opt natives, too, for security and other duties, despite their unfamiliarity with English, so that the territory's switch to full statehood, under the guidance of the world body, could become more meaningful.

THE HINDU
15 MAR 2000

Suharto fit to face questioning

REUTERS

JAKARTA, March 23. — Indonesia's former President Suharto is fit enough to face questioning in connection with a corruption probe, the Attorney-General said today. "It is possible medically to call Suharto," Mr Marzuki Darusman told a news conference, commenting on the results of a medical examination of the ailing former strongman.

Mr Suharto, who was twice hospitalised last year after a stroke, is under investigation over alleged corruption at charities he formerly controlled.

Mr Darusman said Mr Suharto's family would be informed about the result of the investigation and a subpoena would soon be issued to continue the investigation.

When asked when the investigation would begin again, Mr Darusman said, "some time next week because there are still some technical considerations."

THE STATESMAN

24 MAR 2000

INDONESIA / RIGHTS PANEL SUBMITS REPORT

Wiranto named in probe

By P. S. Suryanarayana ^{HD-14}

SINGAPORE, JAN. 31. Gen. Wiranto, formerly the overall commander of Indonesia's military forces (TNI) and Senior Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security Affairs, was today formally cited by the National Human Rights Commission as the officer whose "failure" to ensure security in East Timor in the wake of its independence vote last year had "directly or indirectly" resulted in a situation in which "crimes against humanity" took place there.

But Gen. Wiranto was not legally implicated or indicted in the sense that the commission, known as "Komnas HAM" in local parlance, recommended that his conduct as also that of five other Generals during the relevant period should now be investigated by the Indonesian Attorney General's Office.

The findings of a panel under Komnas HAM, namely "KPP-HAM" which had interrogated these Generals and others on allegations of rights abuses in East Timor, were submitted by the national commission's Chairman, Mr. Ioko Sugianto, to the Attorney General, Mr. Marzuki Dariusman, in Jakarta today.

While the findings were in consonance with the spirit of the new democratic times in Indonesia where the TNI had for long played a pivotal role in politics, "Komnas HAM" left the final word to be said only after a detailed investigation that had now been suggested.

Today's unprecedented denouement preceded the anticipated comments by the U.N. Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on the findings of a panel that he had constituted to investigate the circumstances of the carnage in East Timor.

Mr. Sugianto and the "KPP-HAM" Chairman, Mr. Albert Hasibuan, indicated that the primary finding was that Gen. Wiranto was aware of the worsening human rights situation in East Timor both before

and after the U.N.-sponsored "popular consultation" there last August. Further investigation under the Attorney General's auspices was, therefore, recommended, especially because, as analysts and observers noted, the present evidence had not led to any conclusion about whether or not Gen. Wiranto or others had indeed orchestrated or directed the anti-independence violence. "Komnas HAM" suggested detailed investigations in respect of 40 people, including the six TNI officers. Some of them are said to belong to the pro-Jakarta militias of East Timor. The latest findings, which could still ruffle the

TNI's feathers, came in the wake of affirmations by top military officers that there was no room for speculation about a coup against Mr. Wahid during his current absence from the country. According to the present TNI commander, Admiral Widodo, the President's foreign tour was itself a testimony to his faith in the military.

Referring to Mr. Wahid's recent comment that he could count on the loyalty of at least 90 per cent of the TNI cadre, Adm. Widodo said the observation should spur the military to strengthen its unity. The Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Tyasno Sudarto, said he would "guarantee" that "there will be no coup."



Gen. Wiranto

Aceh MP found dead

AFP reports:

An Indonesian Member of Parliament hailing from Aceh, who had campaigned for the prosecution of military officers guilty of rights abuses in the troubled province, has been found dead, the official Antara news agency said today.

Mr. Nashiruddin Daud, 58, vice-chairman of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into rights abuses in Aceh, was found dead last week in the north Sumatra capital of Medan. His body bore severe wounds.

THE HINDU
- 1 FEB 2000

Wiranto defies Wahid, attends Cabinet meeting

FROM GEOFF SPENCER

Jakarta, Feb. 2 (AP) — A standoff between Indonesia's President and the military over human rights abuses in East Timor intensified today when the powerful security minister attended a Cabinet meeting despite the President's demand that he quit.

Although concerns grew about the direction of Indonesia's new-found democracy, a military spokesman discounted lingering coup rumours.

The conflict highlights the simmering power struggle between democratic reformers in the three-month-old government and army hardliners linked to authoritarian ex-President Suharto.

Security and political affairs minister Gen. Wiranto showed up at the presidential palace for a weekly Cabinet discussion held while President Abdurrahman Wahid visits Europe on an official tour.

Wiranto smiled at reporters but did not comment as he strode into the Cabinet room. Later, some ministers expressed sympathy for his stand.

From Europe, Wahid has insisted repeatedly that Wiranto must quit because a government report holds him ultimately responsible for the killing and destruction that broke out in the territory of East Timor last year after its people voted to break free from Indonesia.



General Wiranto prepares for the Cabinet meeting. (AFP)

Wiranto, who was military commander at the time, denies any wrongdoing and shows no sign of resigning.

In East Timor, UN officials said today they dug 10 bodies from a grave believed to contain the remains of up to 60 people killed by anti-independence militias backed by Indonesian troops.

UN spokesman Manoel de Almeida de Silva said the bodies were recovered near the border town of Pasabe, in the isolated enclave of Oecussi.

Human rights groups and East Timor's independence leaders want the UN security council to set up a tribunal to try those responsible for the violence.

But UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, the US, and other countries have backed Wahid's position that Indonesia should be allowed to prosecute the culprits.

Speaking in London yesterday, Wahid warned that if Wiranto refuses to quit, he will "remove him from office" when he returns home on February 13.

Wahid has instructed defence minister Juwono Sudarsono to ask Wiranto to step down immediately. Wahid dismissed speculation that a coup could be launched in his absence.

Juwono was ill today and did not attend the Cabinet meeting with Wiranto.

Other ministers declined to comment on the impasse, though one suggested that Wiranto should be given more time to step down.

"It would be fair and good for Wiranto," said human rights minister Hasballah Saad.

Attorney-general Marzuki Darusman said he would need three months to decide whether to file charges against Wiranto and five other generals.

Wiranto and his lawyers have slammed the report and its authors as biased against the military.

Military spokesman air vice-marshal Graitto Usodo dismissed the possibility that the army might stage a coup in support of Wiranto, saying the military would respect Wahid's decision.

Wiranto tells Cabinet to ignore inquiry ^{HF-12}

Jakarta, February 2

INDONESIA'S GEN. Wiranto today asked Cabinet colleagues to ignore that he was under investigation over violence in East Timor, a minister said.

"We discussed the security situation. No one questioned him (Wiranto) about what he is going to do," the minister said.

Overnight in London, President Abdurrahman Wahid demanded that Gen. Wiranto resign immediately after he was named in an Indonesian inquiry into the mass violence in East Timor last September. Wiranto, who was the armed forces chief, refused.

Gen. Wiranto still holds the Cabinet post of coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs. Another Cabinet Minister

said he believed Gen. Wiranto wished to discuss the resignation call with Mr Wahid directly.

"Wiranto needs time to consider. I think there has been no direct instruction. He wants to meet the President to make sure about the instruction," Human Rights Minister Hasballah Saad said.

Attorney-General Marzuki Darusman, whose department will investigate 33 people named in the report, said the issue of Wiranto's resignation was not immediately relevant to his inquiry.

Meanwhile, medical workers in eastern Spice Islands have called for immediate military reinforcements to protect thousands of Muslim refugees. In Aceh, at least two people were killed in a shootout between troops and separatist rebels. (Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 FEB 2000

Lawmakers press Wiranto to quit

REUTERS

JAKARTA, Feb. 3. — Leading Indonesian lawmakers today pressed embattled senior minister General Wiranto to quit for the good of the country and its fledgling democracy.

The parliament Deputy Speaker, Mr Muhaimin Iskandar, said Gen Wiranto must follow President Abdurrahman Wahid's order and give up his ministerial job after an inquiry linked him to abuses in East Timor, in the "spirit of patriotism".

"The willingness of Gen Wiranto to step down would be a great contribution towards an effort to build fair and civilised legal processes," Mr Iskandar, secretary-general of Gen Wahid's Nation Awakening Party, told reporters at a news conference by several legislators.

Gen Wiranto himself has disappeared from public view, leaving the country guessing whether he will bow out gracefully or fight to keep his post as coordinating minister for politics and security affairs.

Indonesia's financial markets continued to shudder at the thought of a scorned general on the rampage.

The uncertainty sent the rupiah to its lowest since Mr Wahid won power last October — 7,600 against the dollar. The stock market was also nervous and volatile though it edged up in thin trade.

But political analysts — and the military itself — dismissed fears troops might mount a coup against Gen Wahid, who is currently out of the country.

"It's fantastic to even contemplate such a possibility," retired General and political analyst, Hasnan Habib, said.

Mr Wahid, speaking in Paris yesterday, insisted he was in control of the country and that he did not have personal enemies.

He has made no public comment since a Cabinet meeting yesterday where he refused to step down. A palace official today said no resignation had been received.

Mr Wahid has come under domestic criticism for the way he dismissed Gen Wiranto — in an interview with a television channel during an overseas tour — but analysts said the General could do little more than try to salvage a little dignity.

He was told to go after an official report linked him and five other Generals to the internationally-condemned violence in East Timor after the territory voted for independence in August.

"Gen Wiranto has nowhere else to go. It's the end of the road. He'll just wither away," said analyst Wimar Witoelar.

Some also questioned whether Gen Wiranto carried enough loyalty within the military.

THE STATESMAN

- 4 FEB 2000

Wahid warns generals to fall in line

THE HAGUE, FEB. 3. Speaking from The Netherlands today, the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, warned his country's restless armed forces not to cause him any trouble.

He was responding to the refusal by the former armed forces chief, Gen. Wiranto, to resign from his Cabinet post as Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security Affairs. Mr. Wahid had called for the resignation after a human-rights inquiry blamed Gen. Wiranto for brutality and killings in East Timor.

Mr. Wahid said he understood there had been a meeting of the generals in Jakarta yesterday.

"We have made it clear to them that they had better be careful. We have the situation under control," he said after a meeting with the Dutch Prime Minister, Mr. Wim Kok, to discuss a major Dutch aid programme to advance Indonesia's reforms.

A former Dutch Prime Minister, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, rejected overnight Mr. Wahid's appeal to act as a mediator between Christians and Muslims in the Spice Islands. Mr. Lubbers said he did not see how he could help because there were no clearly defined opposing sides in the disorder.

Pressure on Wiranto

In Jakarta, leading Indonesian lawmakers today pressed Gen. Wiranto to quit for the good of the country and its fledgling democracy.

The Parliamentary Dy. Speaker, Mr. Muhaimin Iskandar, said Gen. Wiranto must follow the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid's order and give up his ministerial job after an inquiry linked him to abuses in East Timor, in the "spirit of patriotism".

"The willingness of Gen. Wiranto to step down would be a great contribution towards an effort to build fair and civilised legal processes," Mr. Iskandar, secretary-general of Mr. Wahid's Nation Awakening Party, told reporters at a news conference by several legislators. Gen. Wiranto himself has disappeared from public view, leaving the country guessing whether he will bow out gracefully or fight to keep his post.

But political analysts — and the military itself — dismissed fears troops might mount a coup against Mr. Wahid. "It's fantastic to even contemplate such a possibility," said retired general and leading political analyst, Mr. Hassan Habib.

Mr. Wiranto has made no public comment since a Cabinet meeting yesterday where he refused to step down. A palace official today said no resignation had been received.

Gen. Wiranto, who says he did nothing wrong in East Timor, insisted he won't step down from the Cabinet without a direct order from the President. — Reuters

President's order to quit served on Wiranto

JAKARTA, FEB. 4. The Indonesian Defence Minister, Mr. Yowono Sudarsono, said today that he had delivered an instruction from the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, to the former armed forces chief, Mr. Wiranto, who is now a Minister for Security, to resign from the Cabinet.

Mr. Sudarsono said he told Mr. Wiranto yesterday of the order from Mr. Wahid, who is on an extended overseas trip, but there was no response from the General.

"Yesterday morning, I fulfilled (the) President's instruction to convey to Mr. Wiranto that he should resign," Mr. Sudarsono, a civilian, said at a press conference in his office in the Ministry of Defence.

"I have already carried out the task to deliver the message," he said. "There was no response (from Wiranto)... We have agreed to wait for Mr. President. I urge all of us to wait patiently until Mr. President returns home on February 13," he said.

Gen. Wiranto has so far refused to budge from office, though many analysts say that although the military is unhappy with the treatment meted out to him, it lacks the strength and the will to launch a coup and that the once-powerful General's days in politics appear to be numbered.

Rumours of a possible coup lingered in Jakarta today, a day after Mr. Wahid accused some army Generals of holding secret meetings while he was overseas.

Speaking in the Hague, the Netherlands, Mr. Wahid said a group of army Generals had met in the Chinatown district of Jakarta, not far from the presidential palace.

"We fully control the situation, so they have to be careful about what they are doing," Mr. Wahid said during a joint news conference with the Dutch Prime Minister, Mr. Wim Kok.

The President said he had ordered the armed forces head, Adm. Widodo Adisutjipto, and the national police chief, Gen. Rusdihardjo, to crack down on any attempt to disrupt public order.

Meanwhile, speaking on condition of anonymity, an army General, among several senior officers co-accused with Gen. Wiranto, denied any meeting of Generals had taken place.

The military's top spokesman, Air Rear Marshall Graito Usodo, also denied it. — Reuters, AP, AFP

Situation becoming dangerous, says general

Wahid threatens to fire defiant Wiranto

FROM SLOBODAN LEKIC

Jakarta, Feb. 4 (AP) — Indonesia's President will deal with his intransigent, powerful security minister when he returns from an overseas trip later this month, a senior official said today.

Wahid has threatened to fire Wiranto if he does not quit before the President's return from a European and Asian tour on February 13.

Today defence minister Juwono Sudarsono told reporters he had personally conveyed the President's request to Wiranto.

But Wiranto did not react to the order, he said.

"Let us be patient and wait until the President returns," Sudarsono said.

The military top brass denied lingering coup rumours, but one general warned that the situation was "now becoming dangerous".

President Abdurrahman Wahid is in a deepening power struggle with Gen. Wiranto, a former military commander accused by government investigators of allowing pro-Indonesia militias to devastate East Timor after the territory's August referendum for in-

dependence.

Wiranto, who led the armed forces at the time, denies any responsibility for atrocities committed. He has ignored repeated calls this week from Wahid to resign from the Cabinet.

An Indonesian government report condemning Wiranto and five other senior generals echoes the findings of a UN inquiry. The attorney-general will decide whether to prosecute or not within three months.

Attempting to dispel persistent rumours that commanders loyal to Wiranto might try to overthrow the President, army chief of staff Gen. Tyasno Sudarto pledged support for Wahid today.

"I guarantee as an institution the Indonesian army will not launch a coup," Sudarto said. Later the Antara news agency quoted him as saying: "In principle, the situation now is becoming dangerous, (it is) uncertain."

Wahid assumed office in October as the first freely elected head

of state in 44 years. He has antagonised the military elite by whittling away at their position and power.

Wahid has replaced Wiranto as armed forces chief and has insisted that he become a civilian.

Many analysts say the military is too divided to stage a coup and that sections within it — particularly the air force and navy — strongly support Wahid's democratic reforms.

In The Hague, Wahid said yesterday that a group of army generals had met in the Chinatown district of the Indonesian capital, not far from the presidential palace.

"We fully control the situation, so they have to be careful about what they are doing," Wahid said.

The President said he ordered armed forces head Adm. Widodo Adisutjipto and national police chief Gen. Rusdihardjo to crack down on any attempt to disrupt order.



Wahid: Cracking down

Whiff of promise in Wahid visit

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 5. — When President Abdurrahman Wahid of Indonesia makes a brief visit here on 8-9 February, India would hope that it results in much more than the routine expressions of goodwill. Extracting the bilateral relationship from the lethargy of the past few years is what South Block is aiming at.

The changed political climate in that country, according to the Indian perception, has created conditions that could facilitate a return of the bilateral cooperation and interaction to some where akin to what prevailed in the Sukarno days. Even though it is

admitted that the spirit of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which both nations were founder-members, has clearly waned.

Though no real disputes were evident during the Suharto era, India had seen Indonesia as placing more emphasis on its interaction with the developed nations of the west, at the cost of its regional ties. President Wahid has declared a policy shift, and mentioned India, China and South Korea

as countries of importance in his scheme of things.

New Delhi would be more than happy to respond. It has been talking about a "look East" policy and would view Indonesia as an important element in that equation. Though that country does have domestic problems, the turnaround in regional economic fortunes would make the time opportune for revitalising the ties — the formal mechanisms are

already in place for a range of bilateral activity.

Of much importance is the need to boost economic ties, which like political links, have tended to stagnate. President Wahid will be visiting here on his way back home from

Davos, a large business delegation is accompanying him. Their meeting with Indian business leaders, it is felt, could help break new ground.

President Wahid's having requested for a meeting with the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr GMC Balayogi, is being interpreted here as a sign of Indonesia's looking to the Indian experience in the working of democratic institutions. A happy augury in South Block's estimation.



Mr Abdurrahman Wahid

THE STATESMAN

- 6 FEB 2000

ASS-7
9/12

Wiranto hits back at rights panel

S. S. S. S. S. S. S.

JAKARTA, FEB. 8. Indonesia's former military chief, Gen. Wiranto, has broken his week-long silence to hit back at a National Human Rights Commission which implicated him in atrocities in East Timor.

In an interview with *The Straits Times* in Singapore published today, Gen. Wiranto said he would not accept personal or legal responsibility for any crimes committed by his troops.

He has resisted pressure from the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid — who is on an overseas tour — to resign from the Cabinet after the panel, set up to probe the violence that flared in the former Indonesian territory in September 1999, implicated him in the terror.

He cited as an example the infamous My Lai massacre of inno-

cent villagers in Vietnam by U.S. troops.

"When one of the U.S. officers in Vietnam during the war killed a number of innocent villagers, the My Lai incident, I don't think the commander-in-chief of U.S. troops in Vietnam, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked to be legally responsible," he said.

A U.N. commission of inquiry has also implicated Gen. Wiranto in crimes against humanity in East Timor and called for an international tribunal to try him and five other Indonesian generals.

But Gen. Wiranto insisted the buck did not stop at the top where unlawful activities by soldiers were concerned, but with their immediate platoon or company commanders. — AFP

THE HINDU

9 FEB 2000

Wahid promises pardon for Wiranto if found guilty

REUTERS

LISBON, Feb. 7. — The Indonesian President, Mr Abdurrahman Wahid was quoted today as saying that he would pardon the Cabinet minister and former armed forces chief General Wiranto if he were found guilty of rights abuses in East Timor.

But he said in an interview with Portugal's *Diario de Noticias* there would be no such amnesty for other military chiefs, soldiers and militiamen involved in the killings and destruction that followed last August's vote for independence in the former Portuguese colony.

"The armed forces chief, however guilty he is, however wrong he has been, was the supreme commander and we will respect him," Mr Wahid said.

"He will be given an amnesty, pardoned, after being judged guilty," he told the newspaper during a recent visit to Rome.

Mr Wahid has tempered

demands for his intransigent security minister to quit by praising his character and revealing that the general once saved him from an assassination plot, adds AP from Jakarta.

In a weekend speech to Indonesians living in Rome, President Abdurrahman Wahid said, in the mid-1990s General Wiranto, now blamed for murder and destruction in East Timor, tipped him off about a military plan to kill him and Megawati Sukarnoputri, now Vice-President.

The disclosure was widely reported by Indonesian newspapers today but was subsequently denied by a former military commander allegedly involved in the plot.

It was the latest twist in a drawn-out and bizarre power struggle between Mr Wahid and Gen Wiranto, who like many Indonesians uses only one name.

Last week, Mr Wahid, who is on an official European tour, repeatedly asked Wiranto to

resign from the Cabinet over the East Timor tragedy.

A government investigation held Wiranto responsible for violence and destruction after the territory voted for independence from Indonesia last year. Gen Wiranto has denied any wrongdoing and ignored Mr Wahid's calls to step down.

Although at loggerheads, both men and the military have denied coup rumors fueled by the impasse.

In what appears to be a softening of his stance, Mr Wahid said in Rome that he trusted Wiranto. He did not believe, he said, that the four-star general would move against his new reformist government, which is eroding the military's once-unchallenged power.

Gen. Wiranto telephoned him recently to deny that a coup was planned, the President said.

The newspaper *Kompas* quoted Mr Wahid as saying that if Gen Wiranto "were found guilty by a court, then I would forgive him."

THE STATESMAN

- 8 FEB 2000

119-10

THE INDONESIAN TANGLE

WHILE ON A foreign tour, the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, was forced to handle an explosive politico-military problem back home. Both a U.N. panel and a national Human Rights probe held the former chief of the armed forces, Gen. Wiranto, along with a team of senior officers, responsible for the atrocities in East Timor after the people in that former Portuguese colony voted for independence from Jakarta. There was a specific recommendation that Gen. Wiranto and the top army brass be investigated for their role in the orchestrated violence in East Timor last year. The former armed forces chief is now the Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security Affairs. The President, who met international investors at Davos and is currently on a visit to some European States, announced that he would call for the resignation of Gen. Wiranto from his Cabinet, so that he could be investigated. This message from Mr. Wahid was subsequently conveyed to the General through the Defence Minister. But Gen. Wiranto refuses to budge. He will probably wait for the President's return before announcing his plans. It has been his argument that the army, under him, was responsible for the peaceful conduct of the 'popular consultation' on the status of East Timor. The violence that erupted after the vote was spontaneous.

Unfortunately, mass graves have been unearthed in both East and West Timor. U.N. investigators have found evidence of the atrocities of the pro-Jakarta militia in East Timor and alleged that these groups enjoyed the backing of the Indonesian armed forces. What is worse, till the arrival of the multinational peacekeepers, the army did precious little to contain the violence or protect the innocent East Timorese from the militia. But the question is what was the Government in Jakarta and the then President, Mr. B. J. Habibie, doing? If it was a lame duck regime whose writ did not run in the coun-

try, then the armed forces were the only authority in command. But if Gen. Wiranto and his colleagues can provide evidence of any instructions from the then President or his Government, it can alter the picture. A fair and detailed investigation is certainly called for. But the international community must remember that anything that can undermine the authority of the new President or create conditions for a military coup must be avoided at this juncture. The military is too powerful to be antagonised. The U.N. has done well to decide against an international tribunal, so that Jakarta can handle the problem on its own. Mr. Wahid must return to the country and deal with the crisis in person.

On his way back from Europe, the Indonesian leader will visit India. Soon after assuming office last year, Mr. Wahid mooted the idea of an 'Asian five' league, which will include India and China. Having visited the U.S. and China already, and now parts of Europe, he will be in New Delhi to forge a new equation between two of the four most populous countries of the world. Despite a warm and personal rapport between late President Sukarno and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, ties between India and Indonesia have remained lukewarm since the mid-1960s, when Mr. Suharto took over. Indonesia may be in turmoil now and will take a few years to stabilise. But now is the time for India to build a new and strategic partnership with Jakarta. Both Mr. Wahid, and his Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, have sent out the right signals for forging such an equation. During this week's visit by Mr. Wahid, both the Centre and Indian industry must initiate the first step to build a new relationship and follow it up through meaningful measures that can drive home the message. New Delhi needs a political, economic and military partnership with Indonesia as it strives to rebuild its polity and economy.

THE HINDU
- 8 FEB 2000

Wahid rules out possibility of Wiranto staging coup

Jakarta, February 7

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT Abdurrahman Wahid said he was sure a coup would not be staged by Cabinet Minister and former military chief General Wiranto, who is refusing orders to resign, local newspapers said today.

They quoted Mr Wahid, touring Europe, as telling a gathering of Indonesians in Italy that Gen Wiranto had saved his and Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri's lives when they were Opposition figures under former President Suharto's rule. "I trust Gen Wiranto," Mr Wahid said.

He said the General, then head of the Kostrad Strategic Reserve, called him in 1997 to say he had received an order to "terminate" Mr Wahid and Mr Megawati.

"Gen Wiranto was told that the order had come from the top," Mr Wahid was quoted as saying.

"Gen Wiranto said he checked with Mr Suharto about the order, and Mr Suharto said he never gave it." President Wahid last week ordered Gen Wiranto to resign from his Cabinet post of Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, after an official investigation into last year's violence in East Timor

implicated the former military chief.

But a defiant Gen Wiranto appears ready to hang on to his post until Mr Wahid returns from his overseas tour on February 13.

With relations between the Government and military deteriorating, some observers have warned of the possibility of a military coup.

President Wahid has repeatedly said he sees no chance of a coup, although he has conceded not all the military is loyal to him.

"Of course there is a rogue element in the military which is not happy. They want to break out, but have no guts. But if there is a generalisation that the military is to stage a coup, then that is not true," the Kompas daily quoted Mr Wahid as saying in Italy.

The Jakarta Post reported that Mr Wahid also said he would "forgive" Gen Wiranto if he was found guilty of wrongdoing over East Timor. "If Gen Wiranto is judged guilty by a court, I will forgive him," Mr Wahid was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, nine persons have been killed in separatist and communal violence in Indonesia during the weekend, officials said today. The deaths came despite repeated assurances from the government that it would soon secure peace.

(Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 8 FEB 2000

Wiranto bad for economy: Wahid

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL, Feb. 10. — Indonesia stands no chance of an economic recovery if its security minister persists in his refusal to resign, President Abdurrahman Wahid said today.

The minister and former armed forces chief, General Wiranto, was undermining Indonesia by his refusal to step down over human rights violations by the military in East Timor, the President said.

"It is because of him, his refusal to step down, to resign voluntarily, that the country will lose the opportunity to have investors, the chance to have an economic comeback," Mr Wahid said during an overnight trip to South Korea.

Downplaying fears of a coup, he said an assistant in Jakarta told him by telephone today that several military generals had expressed their support for him. He said the generals also planned to ask Gen. Wiranto to resign.

Indonesia was hardest hit by the Asian currency crisis that swept the region in 1997, and

economic upheaval led to the downfall of former authoritarian President Suharto and free elections.

Mr Wahid's trip to South Korea, one of the world's largest economies, has been largely devoted to fostering business.

Indonesia's path toward democracy has been turbulent, and Gen. Wiranto's intransigence shows how uncomfortable politics can be in a nation where the military had long dominated the government.

Recently, an Indonesian government investigation held Gen. Wiranto, as military commander, ultimately responsible for the mayhem that engulfed East Timor last year when the territory voted to break away from Indonesia in a UN-supervised ballot.

General Wiranto has said he will not address demands for his resignation over the carnage in East Timor until the President returns home on Sunday.

Mr Wahid has indicated Gen. Wiranto will be treated gently if he resigns.

THE STATESMAN
11 FEB 2000

Quit immediately: Wahid to Wiranto

Seoul, February 11

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT Abdurrahman Wahid said in an interview published today that former military chief Wiranto should resign from the cabinet immediately or face a temporary suspension.

"I believe it would be in General Wiranto's best interest to resign as soon as possible," Wahid told the Korean-language Chosun Ilbo newspaper in an exclusive interview.

"I have a plan, in case Wiranto does not step down upon my return. I can apply a regulation that suspends him of his duties temporarily," he said.

Wahid said 'ad interim' rules allow a minister to be suspended during an investigation, a trial or for any suspected wrongdoings.

The Indonesian President, locked in a showdown with Wiranto, arrived in South Korea yesterday on a two-day state visit aimed at expanding economic and political ties.

Wahid, Indonesia's first democratically elected leader, is on a 13-



nation tour that has sparked controversy amid political and separatist crises at home.

Wiranto has repeatedly refused Wahid's order to quit the Cabinet after an official inquiry implicated him in last year's violence in East Timor.

His refusals have sparked fears of a coup while Wahid was on his foreign tour, but many analysts say it has more to do with the General trying to bargain immunity from prosecution.

Pro-Jakarta militias went on the rampage in East Timor last year after the former Portuguese colony voted for independence from more than 20 years of often brutal Indonesian rule.

Wahid is scheduled to return to Jakarta on Sunday.

He met South Korea's President yesterday and was scheduled to meet business leaders and visit a KIA motors auto assembly plant on Friday.

(Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
12 FEB 2000

The general's last battle?

The Wahid-Wiranto tug-of-war is for the present going the Indonesian President's way, writes P. S. SURYANARAYANA.

THE SHOWDOWN between Indonesia's unorthodox civilian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, and the former military supremo with a new civilian job, Gen. Wiranto, has acquired several complex dimensions. While Mr. Wahid, better known as "Gus Dur" or "Elder Brother", is the undisputed champion of Indonesia's emerging new pluralist politics, Gen. Wiranto has been staking claims to the role of a futurist leader with the mind of a "democrat" and the heart of a quintessentially-disciplined military man.

Even as Gen. Wiranto has remained firm in refusing to quit as Senior Minister for Politics and Security Affairs, Mr. Wahid has remained relentless in pressing for his resignation. In one sense, it is an irony, suited though to the emerging new democratic ethos, that Mr. Wahid should demand Gen. Wiranto's resignation for suspected culpability in alleged crimes against humanity in East Timor. It must, however, be said to Gen. Wiranto's credit that he is not citing in his defence any notion of the relative unimportance of East Timor to a democratising Indonesia.

A human rights panel, sponsored by the Jakarta Government during the recent transition to democracy from Gen. Suharto's autocracy, has very recently found evidence to sustain the allegation that Gen. Wiranto's failure to ensure peace in East Timor last year, when it was still a part of Indonesia, had in fact paved the way for "crimes against humanity" in that territory. It is on the basis of this finding, which will now be investigated by the new Attorney General's Office, that Mr. Wahid has left Gen. Wiranto with the Hobson's Choice of quitting the Cabinet.

In Mr. Wahid's political calculus, the principle being sought to be upheld is more important than the person at the centre of the controversy. The idea simply is that Gen. Wiranto could be politically rehabilitated if he were to clear his name in a due legal process.

Although the latest crisis broke out even as the human rights panel made its views public during Mr. Wahid's absence from the country, the President chose not to rush back home if only to try and prove that the military would not dare strike against the new and evolving



Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid and Gen. Wiranto... at loggerheads.

democratic "order" even if he were to be away.

Now, in the new Indonesian public discourse, the part-fictionalised "Freedom Square" is slowly becoming synonymous with the struggle for democracy. "Freedom Square" has of course much to do with the events that brought Gen. Suharto to power in the mid-1960s in the context of a certain disillusionment with the earlier Sukarno era of Indonesia's first and failed experiment with political freedom. However, internal freedom, as an aspect of the present experiment in democracy, is the trophy that Mr. Wahid and Gen. Wiranto are fighting for.

Gen. Wiranto's latest words and actions are indicative of his unstated belief that both he and Mr. Wahid can be winners in this democracy game, while the President is of the view that civilian supremacy has to be first established beyond doubt. In making this clear, Mr. Wahid has not ceased to regard Gen. Wiranto as a representative of the military establishment (TNI). This is so despite Mr. Wahid's recent orders retiring Gen. Wiranto from active Army service with effect from March 31 this year. In this sense, Mr. Wahid is firm that there should be a single winner, namely the civilian establishment.

The objective is to completely do away with *dwifungsi* or the system that got entrenched under the Suharto era and gave the TNI a dual role as the country's saviour from external aggression as also internal trouble and as a decision-making participant in national political affairs.

If, however, this pristine objective has not yet won universal

acceptability in today's Indonesia, the reason has something to do with the fact that the TNI (or its earlier incarnation of ABRI) had not steered absolutely clear of politics even under the country's first leader, Sukarno. The ABRI's reasoning was that it was a national military force *ab initio* as distinct from being an institution created by the State *per se*.

Acquiring a new meaning in this context of contemporary history is Mr. Wahid's latest willingness to pardon Gen. Wiranto if and when he were to be convicted for human rights abuses.

If Mr. Wahid's agenda simply is that of civilian primacy, Gen. Wiranto has raised the stakes by citing the parallel presumption of his innocence unless proven guilty and by pointing to the democratic heart that he has been sporting on his military sleeve.

Gen. Wiranto's contention is that his catalytic contributions as a military officer to Indonesia's present democratisation and to the holding of a free vote in East Timor should also define the present power struggle.

If the TNI itself, under Adm. Widodo as its new leader, has largely favoured a proper tussle between Gen. Wiranto and Mr. Wahid, the reason is rooted in the general unpopularity of the military establishment, whose continuing actions in restive areas such as Aceh and Ambon have not done it proud. The latest wave of violence in Aceh, in particular, has been galling to the new democrats.

The Wahid-Wiranto tug-of-war, involving the language of democracy itself, is for the moment going the President's way. Mr. Wahid can sustain this ascendancy if the issues are de-personalised

Wahid lets Wiranto stay in Cabinet

579
14/2
S. B. Asin - Indonesia
ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, Feb. 13. — President Abdurrahman Wahid backed down today from his repeated demands that General Wiranto step down as security minister immediately over his alleged involvement in the bloodshed in East Timor.

The Cabinet Secretary, Mr Marsilam Simanjuntak, said the President had ordered the Attorney-General to launch a formal investigation of Gen. Wiranto's role in the violence that shook the former Indonesian province last September. Pending the outcome, the former military chief will retain his Cabinet post.

"Wiranto will remain at his present position until the President makes a decision after reviewing the report of the team," Mr Simanjuntak told reporters at the presidential palace. He added that the probe would probably be completed within a month.

Gen. Wiranto met with Mr Wahid just hours after the President returned from a 16-day foreign tour. The trip was largely overshadowed by Mr Wahid's long-distance public

row with the defiant general who has been accused by Indonesian and UN human rights panels of overseeing violence in East Timor in his former role as armed forces commander.

Mr Wahid's latest flip-flop has forestalled a showdown between him and army hard-liners linked to Indonesia's former dictator Suharto. "I asked (Wiranto) to resign, but he said he preferred to be investigated by law and I said 'Okay,'" the President told reporters after the meeting.

"I have ... the right to change my ministers," he added. "After he is inspected by law, then I will exercise my prerogative."

"The President agreed today to let the Attorney-General form a special team to investigate Gen. Wiranto's case," Mr Simanjuntak said.

Mr Wahid "will not take any decision about Wiranto before the team reports the results of the investigations to the President". During his overseas trip, Mr Wahid continually emphasized that Gen. Wiranto must either resign or be sacked from the Cabinet for his role in last year's bloodshed, which

wracked the former Indonesian province following an overwhelming vote for independence.

The UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, who yesterday briefly met Mr Wahid on the sidelines of a Unctad conference in Bangkok, said he was following "very closely" the discussions between Mr Wahid and Gen. Wiranto.

Mr Annan told a press conference in the Thai capital he would have a "long session" with Mr Wahid when he visits Indonesia this week.

Two weeks ago — after Mr Wahid had left for Saudi Arabia on the first leg of his tour — a government-sponsored human rights probe into the crisis in East Timor recommended that Gen. Wiranto be formally investigated by state prosecutors.

Soon after the report was made public, Mr Wahid announced he would suspend Wiranto. But Gen. Wiranto has defied repeated calls to step down.

He denied any wrongdoing and insisted he would present his case to the president in person.

THE STATESMAN
14 FEB 2000

Wiranto stays for now

JAKARTA, FEB. 13. The Indonesian president, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, has today apparently backed down in a two-week battle of wills with the former military chief, General Wiranto, allowing him to keep his cabinet job — at least for now. Gen. Wiranto, who has repeatedly rejected Mr. Wahid's demands to resign, will remain in the cabinet until the special probe of last year's violence in East Timor is complete, a government official said.

Asked whether Gen. Wiranto would remain Co-ordinating Minister for Politics and Security Affairs while the investigation was being carried out, the Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Marsilam Simanjuntak said: "yes." His statement contradicted Mr. Wahid's assertion yesterday that Wiranto would be removed from his cabinet post if he persisted in his refusal to resign.

Mr. Simanjuntak said, though, that Mr. Wahid had not changed

his opinion that Gen. Wiranto should resign. But following a three-hour meeting between Mr. Wahid, Gen. Wiranto, the Vice President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, and the Attorney-General, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, it appears a compromise may have been reached allowing Gen. Wiranto to stay in cabinet for now.

"There is an agreement that there will be an opportunity for the Attorney-General to conduct a deep investigation, and the Attorney-General will form a team to investigate," Mr. Simanjuntak added. "The result will be reported to the President on whether Wiranto should be brought to court."

Mr. Wahid, who returned from a 16-day trip abroad in the early hours of this morning, has repeatedly told Gen. Wiranto to resign after an official Indonesian inquiry implicated him in the violence that ravaged East Timor last year.

— Reuters

THE HINDU
14 FEB 2000

Flip-flop Wahid suspends Wiranto

ASSOCIATED PRESS, REUTERS and
AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

JAKARTA, Feb. 14. — In a surprise reversal, President Abdurrahman Wahid today suspended his powerful security minister, General Wiranto, from the Cabinet over his alleged role in last year's bloodshed in East Timor.

The former military chief said he accepted Mr Wahid's decision.

Mr Wahid, who met Gen. Wiranto after returning home from a 16-day overseas tour, announced yesterday that the security minister would remain in the Cabinet while the attorney-general conducted an inquiry into violence that followed East Timor's vote for independence.

But late in the night, the President — known to frequently make strong statements only to ignore them later or change his stance — told reporters that Gen. Wiranto would be suspended from the Cabinet.

"While waiting for the attorney-general's special team to investigate Wiranto, I have taken a decision to deactivate



General Wiranto at a press conference after his suspension from the Cabinet, in Jakarta on Monday. — AP/PTI

him from duty, and (appoint) Interior Minister Surjadi Sudirdja as interim coordinating minister for security and political affairs," he was quoted as saying by papers.

The Cabinet Secretary, Mr Marsilam Simanjuntak, today confirmed that the decree confirming Gen. Wiranto's suspension, pending the outcome of the new probe, had already been signed.

Gen. Wiranto accepted the President's decision. "He took a

decision and it is his right and whatever the decision we have to accept it," he told a press conference soon after attending the swearing-in ceremony of his replacement as coordinating minister for political and security affairs. He showed no apparent emotion as Mr Surjadi took the oath.

In Singapore, the UN chief expressing his pleasure said those responsible for the East Timor mayhem should be made to account for their actions.

THE STATESMAN
15 FEB 2000

110-14

INDONESIA / ARMY BACKS PRESIDENT

It's Wahid's right: Wiranto

1572
By P. S. Suryanarayana

BANGKOK, FEB. 14. The developments in Indonesia over the supremacy of the democratically elected leader took a decisive turn today in Jakarta as the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, placed Gen. Wiranto under 'suspension' as the Senior Minister for Politics and Security and installed Mr. Suryadi Sudirya, in his place.

The development was a sequel to a decision announced by Mr. Wahid yesterday that Gen. Wiranto would be allowed to stay on in the Cabinet on the principle that he should be presumed innocent unless proven guilty of the allegations that his acts of omission and commission had led to a carnage in East Timor last year. It was also said then that Gen. Wiranto would first be investigated by the Attorney-General, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, in that regard before the President could exercise his 'prerogative' to either retain or send out the Senior Minister.

In reversing that step today, Mr. Wahid and his associates maintained that there had been no U-turn if only because Gen. Wiranto would still be left with the opportunity to clear his name. The door for Gen. Wiranto's political rehabilitation in one form or other was still being kept open in the event of his innocence being proved in the inquiry. Gen. Wiranto's "suspension" as a Senior Minister with responsibilities for salient aspects of State policy would also enable the Attorney General and his Office to not only act in a neutral manner but also appear to be doing so while carrying out the probe, it was argued.

It was against this background that Gen. Wiranto, too, attended today's ceremonies for the swearing in of Mr. Suryadi. The presence of the President as also the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, and the present commander of Indonesia's collective military establishment (TNI), Adm. Widodo, also sig-

nalled that there was at this moment a certain degree of cohesion and unity of purpose in giving the new democratic order a chance to succeed.

Reuters, AFP, AP report from Jakarta

Gen. Wiranto said he accepted Mr. Wahid's decision. "He took a decision and it is his right and whatever the decision we have to accept it," he told a news conference.

Gen. Wiranto was talking shortly after attending the swearing-in ceremony of Mr. Sudirya. He showed no apparent emotion as Mr. Sudirya took the oath.

"When the President was abroad, he asked me to resign but I needed time to give the President a clear explanation about my case," he said. "I explained about my position including about the human rights violations in East Timor and he took a decision."

Earlier, the military chief, Adml. Widodo Adi Sutjipto, said the military backed Mr. Wahid's decision. "All the TNI are loyal and are going to safeguard that decision so it can be implemented," Adml. Widodo said. "We are all convinced that Mr. Wiranto with his wisdom will accept and follow what has been decided by the President."

The East Timorese leader, Mr. Jose Ramos-Horta, applauded Mr. Wahid's decision

Mr. Ramos-Horta said the credibility of Indonesia and Mr. Wahid would be strengthened by the seriousness about handling allegations of crimes against humanity "perpetrated by senior Indonesian officers including Wiranto."

In Singapore, the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan today welcomed the suspension of Gen. Wiranto saying those behind the mayhem in East Timor should be made accountable for their actions.

THE HINDU

15 FEB 2000

Wiranto was suspended after Wahid learnt he had military's support

By Harvey Stockwin
The Times of India News Service

HONG KONG: In armed forces chief of staff Admiral Widodo's statement one can possibly find the reason for Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid's amazing volte face, when he suspended former armed forces chief General Wiranto as a cabinet minister and swore in a replacement. The president it appears had given into General Wiranto till he found out that he had strong support within the military.



A. Wahid

The general was suspended within hours of Mr Wahid acquiescing to his refusal to resign. In the wake of that reversal, Mr Wahid's aides and supporters spent a few uncomfortable hours trying to explain to the global media, for the most part unsuccessfully, the President's apparent backdown in the face of Gen. Wiranto's obstinacy.

However, a few of them did venture to suggest that Mr Wahid remained consistent with his views expressed in Bangkok on Saturday when he said he would reform his cabinet if necessary. The minister of home affairs Surjadi Soedirdja was sworn in on Monday as Gen. Wiranto's interim replacement as

coordinating minister for political affairs and security in a ceremony attended by both Mr Wiranto and Mr Wahid. Swiftly thereafter, Mr Wiranto accepted his removal admitting that he was disappointed but said "the President took a decision and it is his right and whatever the decision we have to accept it".

Shortly after that, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff Admiral Widodo issued a politically-significant statement on behalf of himself and the chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force saying they believed "what has been decided by the President has of course been through a comprehensive process of consideration. The President's decision was

NEWS ANALYSIS

intended for the interests of the nation. All branches of the armed forces are loyal and will make sure the decision is implemented in a good manner. We are sure that Wiranto will accept and follow what has been decided by the President". This statement should finally put to rest any lingering fears that this episode might end in a military coup. The last sentence carries the distinct connotation that Mr Wiranto would be opposed by the military chiefs if he were to try and muster military opposition to Mr Wahid.

Mr Widodo's statement also suggests one possible reason for Mr Wahid's latest volte face: the President first gave in to Mr Wiranto on

Sunday until he had time to sound out other military opinion. Finding that he had strong support, he proceeded to reverse himself once again and to suspend Mr Wiranto from office.

It is tempting to assume that a tidal wave of critical comment at home and abroad also prompted Mr Wahid to change his mind. But in fact, Mr Wahid acted to suspend Mr Wiranto long before he had a chance to see Monday's newspapers in Jakarta or in the region.

Mr Wahid's most compelling explanation of his motives came, when he showed that he was well aware that many Indonesians saw Mr Wiranto's retention of cabinet rank as likely to affect the investigation of his involvement in, and responsibility for, the violence in East Timor.

"Wiranto's case is about law. We have to uphold the sovereignty of law as truly as possible." Mr Wahid reportedly said. "Therefore I did this to calm the situation and more importantly, to prevent any assumption that the attorney-general's team has been influenced by some parties." But this does not explain the circuitous and very public route which Wahid has taken to get rid of Mr Wiranto. Indicating the elite's mystification at the way in which Mr Wahid is going about his job, the *Jakarta Post* on Monday ended its editorial on a wistful note — "Hopefully (Wahid) will land on both feet again this time".

THE TIMES OF INDIA

16 FEB 2000

WIRANTO SCAPEGOAT

President Wahid had no choice

A SCAPEGOAT was needed for East Timor and General Wiranto, till yesterday minister for security and political affairs in the Wahid Cabinet, has been suspended under interim regulations that apply to members of government undergoing official enquiries. Even according to Jose Ramos Horta most initiatives in the pogroms that followed the UN referendum on Timorese independence was taken by Kopassus, the special forces created by Suharto, and not so much by regular troops, although they too were involved. Wiranto is being held responsible because he was overall in-charge of security in East Timor. This seems to have been the substance of Wiranto's defence and Wahid seemed to have taken the point, initially, when he asked Wiranto to continue till investigations were completed. Wahid probably changed his mind on the consideration that a minister, the most powerful in his Cabinet after himself and the Vice-President, to be investigated for human rights abuses by his own attorney-general would undermine his frail democratic regime and send out wrong signal to international investors and to the IMF. The latter, in particular, are interested in seeing Wahid in charge so that their prescriptions are not subverted by the corrupt crony networks that are well entrenched in the Indonesian economy, and which are responsible for Indonesia's huge external debt.

Wiranto has nothing to do with all this, but he is a symbol of the Suharto past who has to leave as part of the process of ending the army's role in civilian matters. Wahid also has to reassure Indonesia's troubled provinces, many of whom fear Timor-like situations through brutal army action. He has to tell them that Indonesia has changed, that it is ruled by law and is sensitive to people's sentiments. The army chief has issued a statement that the forces stand by Wahid. Sections of the army may be sympathetic towards Wiranto and towards the hegemonic vision that held Suharto's Indonesia together. Only time will tell if there is a reaction from that quarter. Also, Wahid will have to decide what he wants to do with Kopassus and the Kostrad, units within the old Abri that were directly at Suharto's beck and call for quasi-political missions.

THE STATESMAN

17 FEB 2000

Annan to help rebuild East Timor's economy

By P. S. Suryanarayana

BANGKOK, FEB. 17. The U.N. Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, today assured the people of East Timor during a visit to the region that the world body would help them recover from the trauma of their partition from Indonesia. East Timor was a disputed province of Indonesia until last October, when the People's Consultative Assembly in Jakarta endorsed the pro-independence vote cast by the inhabitants of that territory in the U.N.-held referendum in August 1999.

Mr. Annan, who received a tumultuous welcome from the East Timorese, pledged to help rebuild the shattered economy of that enclave. He held talks with Mr. Xanana Gusmao, the premier East Timorese independence leader, among others.

The visit by Mr. Annan, who was occasionally mobbed by people in an emotional show of gratitude, came ahead of East Timor's transfer to the protective stewardship of a peace-keeping force under the U.N.'s direct auspices. The half-island, presently under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), is being policed by a multi-national force. The International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), now being disbanded in a *de jure* sense, was mandated by the U.N. Security Council last September to bring peace to the territory in the wake of the carnage that followed its vote for independence in the "popular consultation" held under the world body's auspices.

While the INTERFET was empowered to take offensive military action if needed under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, the latest U.N. peace-keeping force, which will in a short time replace the duties of the former, will be a more conventional outfit. It will be likewise funded by the U.N., and most of the INTERFET troops will be technically demobilised, only to be absorbed as members of the prospective peace force. However, Filipino will assume duty as

the overall commander of the post-INTERFET force, while Australia, which acted as a prime mover in piecing together the old multi-national force, will no longer head the peace operations in East Timor.

It was against this backdrop that Mr. Annan travelled to Dili, the East Timorese capital, and toured other parts of the territory as well, in order to evaluate the ground realities ahead of an operation that might potentially keep the U.N. engaged for the next two or three years. It will be the first such U.N. operation of this millennium, which too lent added importance to Mr. Annan's visit, given the fact of East Timor's present state — a near-total devastation, which will require much funding to repair.

Simultaneously, the U.N. would need to oversee the establishment of civil institutions in East Timor, inclusive of a judiciary, while putting the territory through its paces towards independence over about two years' time. Mr. Annan said in Bangkok, which he visited ahead of his present tour of Indonesia and Dili, that the U.N. would organise a general election in East Timor before its formal emergence as a sovereign State of its own right.

On the question of a trial of the Indonesian military and civilian officials accused of grave human rights abuses in East Timor, Mr. Annan said he would like those responsible to be brought to justice. Mr. Annan indicated this after holding talks with the Indonesian leaders in Jakarta prior to his flight to Dili. Mr. Annan further hinted that he would, for the present at least, leave the definition of justice in this regard to the discretion of the democratically elected Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, and his Cabinet.

Ahead of Mr. Annan's arrival in Jakarta yesterday, Mr. Wahid suspended from his Cabinet Gen. Wiranto, the man at the centre of the controversy over last year's anti-independence carnage in East Timor.

THE HINDU

18 FEB 2000

Brawl at Timor reunion camp

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
MOTA'AIN, EAST TIMOR, FEB 19

INDONESIAN troops fired in the air on Saturday to halt fighting that broke out among East Timorese refugees and residents at an informal reunion at this border crossing point between East and West Timor, witnesses said.

No one was injured in the shooting, which triggered panic among some 13,000 refugees and residents crowded onto a beach in a neutral zone on the border. But an AFP photographer said at least four people were hurt by rocks thrown in the 20-minute brawl, which involved people identified as members of the pro-Jakarta militia. "People were just kind of running in all directions, and during the mayhem some families got split up," said Christopher Lom, press officer of the International Office of Migration (IOM), which arranges the reunions. "TNI (Indonesian Army troops) let off a sustained burst of fire for about 15 seconds," and although they were clearly firing in the air, people dived



An Indonesian soldier holds a rifle during clashes between pro-Indonesian refugees and pro-independence refugees while a refugee hides behind a tree at the border at Mota'ain on Saturday — AFP

into the sand at the sound, fearing they were being shot at.

Lom, who was on the Indonesian side of the border when the fighting broke out said he believed the disturbance was premeditated and designed to disrupt the reunion program. "Our feeling is that it was

something orchestrated by militia. It was premeditated. Obviously the militia's intention to disrupt the thing," Lom said. "The last thing they need is reconciliation." The reunions are aimed to enable refugees from the West to learn about the situation in the East first hand.

INDIAN EXPRESS

20 FEB 2000

Which way, brother-in-arms?

The acceptability of the Indonesian military by the people of the country has perhaps reached its lowest

point, writes **Rabindra Sen**

The evolving civil-military equation in Indonesia has for quite some time now been the subject of close scrutiny and intense speculation. The armed forces, known by the acronym ABRI, have been preeminent in Indonesia for well over three decades. But the question was, what would their role in the post-Suharto period be? Suharto's fall made the future uncertain for the armed forces. The political and social roles of the armed forces came to be re-examined and their doctrines redefined. Having lost their prestige and public trust, the armed forces are, in the words of Wiranto, at a strategic turning point. They have been driven to this point by political events.

Wiranto's initial refusal to step down from his cabinet position in spite of the repeated demands of the president, Abdurrahman Wahid, for his resignation over human rights abuses in East Timor had not only raised political temperatures, but also sharpened the focus on civil-military relations in Indonesia. There is hope for the future of democracy in Indonesia now that Wiranto has finally been suspended. But it remains to be seen how this matter affects the ongoing debate about the social and political roles of the forces.

ABRI's so-called "dual function", which in Indonesia is called *dwifungsi*, has been a principle enshrined in law and practice. It is not a rationalization, but a full-fledged ideology. It designates the military as both the guardian of national security and a key participant in the government. In short, it means ABRI is a political player. Thirty-eight seats, down from 100 at one time, are reserved for the ABRI in the 500 member Indonesian parliament. It also maintains a large representation in the nation's electoral college, which meets every five years. Officers can be found in the highest echelons of government. ABRI members also serve at all the levels of local administration.

The scale of such involvement, critics say, is an obstacle to the development of civil society. Critics maintain that *dwifungsi* gives many in the ABRI an unavoidable interest in preserving the *status quo* — wholesale reform could endanger its status and privilege. Supporters of *dwifungsi*, on the other hand, point out that without the military's close involvement in governance, Indonesia could collapse into chaos.

Long before the economic and political turmoil that toppled Suharto in 1998, the ABRI had said that change must be carried out slowly and steadily. But the military leadership took time to address the shortcomings. Its long association with Suharto, as both the instrument and foundation of his authoritarian system, tainted the service and also caused public dissent and anger to snowball, especially in the last few years of Suharto's reign. Following the change of government in 1998, the atrocities perpetrated by the armed forces were revealed.

The "dirty wars" in East Timor, Irian Jaya and Aceh, the 1984 riots in Tanjung Priok, the crackdown in Lampung in 1989, the kidnapping and torture of student protestors at Trisakti University on May 12, 1998, the violence in the capital the same month and other events shattered the prestige of the armed forces and public trust in them evaporated. It became evident that under Suharto, the armed forces had acted as if the Indonesian people were the enemy. As a result, the political role of the armed forces became unac-

ceptable to the wider public.

As the country plunged deeper into crisis, the armed forces moved cautiously towards a rethinking of their place in society. Worries about drastic reforms led to soul searching. After years of intolerance of opposition, the ABRI now tried to regain the initiative by proposing its own ideas for reform — including its own controversial role in society. It took cognizance of the ground realities and popular demands for change and accordingly changed its attitude.

The urban reforms hero and modernist Muslim intellectual, Amien Rais, said, "I see a strong will on the part of ABRI to listen to the people and heed their aspirations." Wiranto was a key figure in the ABRI's reformist orientation. Despite being a handpicked Suharto loyalist, he stood apart from the corrupt, heavy handed ways of his mentor's administration. Sympathetic to the cause of reform — as long as it proceeded constitutionally — he gave passive support to student protesters by not cracking down on them.

Though Suharto had sanctioned the use of "repressive measures" by the ABRI in March 1998, the military, by and large, held back. That, as also his telling Suharto on May 20 that it was best for him to relinquish power, ensured a relatively peaceful political transition. Long considered a political novice, he skilfully managed a volatile presidential transition from Suharto to B.J. Habibie in June 1998.

This was of crucial importance because when power finally slipped away from Suharto's grasp, the responsibility for the country's stability largely fell into the hands of the military.

After the changeover to the new administration on May 21, 1998, Wiranto started to consolidate his control over the armed forces. His departure from the old order was marked by the removal on May 21 of Suharto's son-in-law, Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto, as head of the army strategic reserve, Kostrad. Prabowo was rumoured to have had a hand in instigating unrest and in kidnapping activities. His removal was a boost for Wiranto, who did not get along with him.

Wiranto was not alone in his pro-reform leanings. However, there were internal disagreements over the pace, direction and shape of the reforms. The crucial question is how far those who have willfully taken to the path of reform are prepared to stretch themselves to meet the people's aspirations.

Perhaps at no other time in the past 30 years has the ABRI leadership been as responsive to demands for change. One reason for this change in attitude is that many of today's top ranking generals graduated from the military academy (as opposed to generations who did revolutionary service). They are, therefore, far more likely to consider the army as a strictly professional body, as a career rather than a way to influence in politics.

But does this commitment to reform mean that the military will soon retreat to the barracks? Such a thing is most unlikely to happen overnight unless pressure on the military becomes in-

surmountable. *Dwifungsi* has worked so well for the military that reform minded generals may well run into stiff resistance should they proceed faster.

The military leadership now seems prepared to loosen its grip, to allow space for change while at the same time keeping it tight enough to prevent the archipelago from fragmenting. The ABRI considers uncontrolled reform dangerous and seems to be pushing for a measured and managed change. One day, ABRI maintains, it will let go its grip on politics — but only when it thinks society is ready to take on the responsibility.

But tension remains because the social momentum for rapid, wholesale reform is strong. At the moment the popular mood in favour of democracy is at its peak and revelations of the excesses of the army during the Suharto years and afterwards have been black spots on the reputation of the armed forces that will not fade away even with the passage of time. "At this point, ABRI is the most disliked compared to any time in its history," says General (retired) Syamsuddin, who is also a member of the national human rights commission.

It is too early to say whether the winds of change in Indonesia will force the military to return to the barracks against its will or whether the military will do so of its own accord, realizing that the only way it can refurbish its battered image and become acceptable once more to the people is by submitting to the control of a legitimate government. In the meantime, it seems, the political role of the armed forces will gradually diminish.

It is not just that the armed forces do not want to abandon their social and political functions. Wahid himself announced on October 12, 1998, that his Nahdlatul Ulama supported the dual function of the armed forces. On November 9 the same year, ahead of the special session of the MPR — the people's consultative assembly, Megawati Sukarnoputri, Wahid, Rais and Sultan Hamengku Buono X met and released a statement which *inter alia* approved of *dwifungsi* over the next few years.

The problem with the military at present is that it lacks legitimacy and, therefore, its authority is at a low. Top military leaders must have learnt from past experience that power does not necessarily flow from the barrel of a gun. The possibility of a military takeover, therefore, seems extremely remote. Such a course of action will amount to pouring oil on the fire of anti-military feelings of the Indonesians and also alienate the external support the country badly needs.

THE TELEGRAPH

22 FEB 2000

“The “dirty wars” in East Timor, Irian Jaya and Aceh, the 1984 riots in Tanjung Priok, the crackdown in Lampung in 1989, the kidnapping and torture of student protestors at Trisakti University on May 12, 1998, the violence in the capital the same month and other events shattered the prestige of the armed forces and the public trust in them evaporated”

U.N. takes over in East Timor

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 23. The United Nations today took East Timor under its protective wings at a formal ceremony in Dili, the territory's capital, even as the multinational force (MNF) which restored order there under an earlier U.N. mandate was disbanded.

This transfer of power is a prelude to the U.N.'s new assignment of nursing the territory to full independence in two or three years' time. East Timor was, until recently, a disputed province of Indonesia.

Today's ceremony in Dili was featured by the lowering of the flag of the MNF, also known as the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), and a drum-beat acclamation of the advent of a new U.N. peace force, among other formalities.

On a different but related plane, Indonesian authorities indicated that talks would soon take place between the pro-independence and anti-freedom leaders of East Timor under international auspices.

For an altogether different reason of anticipated "mass demonstrations" and other forms of unrest within Indonesia, the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today told a business seminar in Jakarta that the police and other security personnel had been placed on a state of high alert.

However, Indonesia's military and civilian officials sought to play down the significance of this new alert on the ground that public and political protests have been nothing new in Jakarta for the past many months. But the President's note of caution came in the midst of unabated speculation about a possible backlash for his recent action of suspending Gen. Wiranto from the Cabinet over his alleged responsibility for the carnage that occurred in East Timor last September before it was formally allowed to secede.

Peace and security in the half-island of East Timor will henceforth be the mandate of a new peace-keeping outfit under the aegis of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East

Timor (UNTAET), a body in existence for some time now. Nearly four-fifths of the now-disbanded INTERFET are expected to be drafted for peace-keeping duties under the new outfit.

The overall commander of the Australia-led INTERFET, Maj. Gen. Peter Cosgrove, today announced that the force stood "dissolved" after it had "accomplished" the task assigned to it. He noted that peace had been restored in East Timor, which had sunk to its anarchic ebb last September, with a remarkably "low cost" of human lives on both sides — the INTERFET and the suspected merchants of violence, namely the anti-independence East Timorese militia and their alleged patrons such as "rogue elements" within the Indonesian Army.

In a farewell speech yesterday to the troops from 23 countries under his command, Maj. Gen. Cosgrove expressed satisfaction over the success attained by the force in a "complex" and "challenging" environment. The United Nations Peace-Keeping Force, which is replacing the INTERFET, will be initially drawn from 19 countries, and headed by a Filipino commander, Maj. Gen. Jaime de Los Santos, being elevated to the rank of a lieutenant general on assumption of his new duties.

The INTERFET was originally set up as a multinational force with a U.N. mandate last September ahead of the constitution of the UNTAET. The INTERFET was authorised to use force, if required, under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter in order to bring East Timor to normality. The territory had slipped to anarchy in the wake of its pro-independence voting in the "popular consultation" or referendum that the world body organised on August 30 last year.

The new U.N. peace-keeping force for East Timor will be a more traditional outfit, although its personnel too are being armed for self-defence and, apparently, certain categories of offensive action.

Wahid announces security alert in Jakarta

Jakarta, February 23

HT-12/24/2
5 h Mr Gorden

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT Abdurrahman Wahid today said Jakarta's police were on the highest level of alert against a feared protest even as security officials maintained the city was safe.

"For today, Jakarta is on number one alert by the police because there is a plan for a big demonstration," Mr Wahid told a seminar at the presidential palace. "The power is used only to monitor the situation and to guard freedom of speech and so on."

Mr Wahid, famous for his confusing and contradictory statements, did not say who was organising the protest, what it might be about, nor where it was to take place. There was no sign of increased security on the streets.

The warning follows this week's Government announcement of a

hike in fuel and electricity prices, which one union group has already said would further hurt Indonesia's impoverished masses.

The last major price increase -- in 1998 -- sparked riots shortly before the ouster of Suharto. Lt Gen. Arie Kumaat insisted the situation was under control and the capital was safe. "There is a plan for a demonstration. We are taking action to prevent it from developing into a major security disturbance," Kumaat said. "The (statement) may be a warning from the President for us to be ready. There will be no disturbance in society," he assured. There was no immediate word on who was organising the protest or where it would take place. But a senior military officer said the armed forces were responsible for declaring such an alert and had not been notified of any decision to do so. (Reuters)



Indonesian riot police rush out of the Attorney General's office to control demonstrators, in Jakarta on Wednesday. Photo: AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
24 FEB 2000

President hails army for withdrawing from Parliament

Wahid returns with reforms

FROM DANIEL COONEY

Jakarta, Feb. 26 (AP) — Indonesia's reformist President today announced sweeping changes to the bureaucratic elite and praised the military for promising to withdraw from Parliament.

President Abdurrahman Wahid abolished a range of advisory posts as well as several roving diplomatic positions created during decades of authoritarianism and corruption.

"I have abolished the appointments of our roving ambassadors because this contradicts the foreign ministry," he said at a news conference at the state palace.

Roving ambassadors are diplomats who are not posted overseas but travel the world representing

Indonesia in various issues.

Wahid said he would do away with a number of national committees, including one that was tasked with recovering money from government loans that has since been superseded by the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency.

Several advisors, who wielded influence over former Presidents B.J. Habibie and Suharto, were also made redundant.

Wahid, who is blind and has had two strokes in recent years, was diagnosed with a viral infection two days ago.

He spoke quietly and coughed frequently, but said that he was "feeling very good."

He also welcomed the statement made yesterday by armed

forces commander Adm. Widodo Adisutjipto that the military planned to relinquish all its seats in Parliament when elections are next scheduled to be held in 2004.

"Widodo's statement is good," he said. "It shows that the wish of the many political parties as well as the government is heard by the army of Indonesia."

Since taking office last October Wahid has slowly eroded the power of the military and voiced his desire to see them out of politics. For several decades the military has participated directly in the government while maintaining its responsibility for national security.

Since Suharto's 1998 resignation amid protests and riots, the 450,000-member military has

promised to become more democratic and has acknowledged that it committed past human rights abuses.

The number of seats reserved for it in the legislature has been gradually reduced over recent years from 100 to the present 38.

Nearly five months after the last Indonesian soldier withdrew from East Timor, President Wahid said today he would open an Indonesian representative office there when he visits next week.

Wahid said the purpose of the office will be to bolster relations between East Timor and its former master and to develop trade ties. Relations between Indonesia and East Timor remain troubled.

THE TELEGRAPH
27 FEB 2000

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29/2

INDONESIA / KISSINGER APPOINTED WAHID AIDE

TNI's top brass overhauled

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 28. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today appointed the former U.S. Secretary of State, Mr. Henry Kissinger, as a political adviser. In an unrelated but significant move, Mr. Wahid played a significant part in changing the complexion of the "strategic posts" in the Indonesian military establishment (TNI).

The TNI spokesman, Air Rear Marshal Graito Usodo, acknowledged that the President was, as "usual", consulted in regard to today's military shuffle. However, according to the spokesman, the shuffle involving 74 top officers across the entire spectrum of the Army, Navy and the Air Force could not be seen as a purge ordered by either the President or the military leadership. The changes would be effective from March 1.

The appointment of Mr. Kissinger as a key political adviser was announced shortly after he called on Mr. Wahid in Jakarta today. The former U.S. foreign policy wizard accepted the position in the context of his keenness to see

Indonesia sustain itself as a unified, strong and democratic State, it was stated. The immediate indication was that Mr. Kissinger would hold talks with Mr. Wahid on the political and social policies of the nation at least once a year.

Announcing the military shake-up, the TNI spokesman said it was but a "matter of technicality" and organisational improvement. It encompassed two positions at the Defence Ministry, 19 at the TNI (or the collective military) headquarters, 14 in the Army, 18 in the Air Force and 21 in the Navy. The changes affected officers ranging in rank from one-star generals to three-star generals. Institutional "dynamics" as also the "needs" of the current situation and the exigencies of retirements had caused this sweeping array of changes, it was said.

The most conspicuous of the shuffle was the promotion of an officer known for his open criticism of the TNI's traditional role in politics. This was seen in political circles as the direct result of a sleight of hand by Mr. Wahid,

who had recently observed that the anti-TNI comments by this officer, Maj. Gen. Agus Wirahadikusumah, should be seen in the context of a "clogging" of "communications" within the military hierarchy over a long period. Mr. Wahid had also said that he was not sure of the loyalty of nearly 10 per cent of the TNI top brass and the civilian overlords of the new political dispensation.

Maj. Gen. Wirahadikusumah has been elevated to the post of Chief of the Army Strategic Reserve Command, an elite corps, in the place of Lt. Gen. Djaja Supratman, an acknowledged ally of Gen. Wiranto, who was recently suspended by the President from his Cabinet.

Gen. Wiranto, whose active military service would end by March 31, was the Senior Minister for Politics and Security Affairs. The Wahid-Wiranto tussle over Indonesia's recent track record in East Timor had prompted Maj. Gen. Wirahadikusumah to demand that Gen. Wiranto, formerly the TNI's helmsman, should give up his Cabinet post in deference to the President's wishes. The comment had raised a furore within the TNI ranks but it was soon contained.

The elevation of Maj. Gen. Wirahadikusumah was seen by analysts as another manifestation of Mr. Wahid's ascendancy, despite the official line that the shuffle was apolitical. Most of the other key changes in the Army hierarchy were a question of chain reaction.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Kissinger held talks with the Defence Committee of Indonesia's House of Representatives (DPR). Mr. Yasril Ananta Baharuddin, chairman of the DPR defence panel, later said Mr. Kissinger had assured the parliamentarians that the U.S. was never supportive of the separatist movement in the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya (now, Papua). Mr. Kissinger is said to be associated with the policy planning echelons of Freeport McMoran which has a significant mining stake in Irian Jaya, and his comments acquired additional importance in this context.

On yet another front, Mr. Wahid's planned visit to Dili tomorrow has been welcomed by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the independence leaders of that territory as an opportunity for beginning the process of bringing the half-island, formerly a disputed province of Indonesia, and Jakarta together.

THE HINDU
29 FEB 2000

Wahid throws Wiranto ally out of key military post

REUTERS

JAKARTA, Feb. 25 — Indonesia's armed forces today announced the appointment of the reformist Major-General Agus Wirahadikusumah as head of Kostrad — a powerful and strategic army command.

Major-General Wirahadikusumah, an outspoken critic of the military's involvement in politics, will replace a close Wiranto ally.

The 49-year-old Maj-Gen currently heads the south Sulawesi military command and will take over the new post on 1 March, Mr Gatoto Usodo, chief military spokesman, said.

Another senior ally of Gen Wiranto would also be replaced, Mr Usodo said.

While denying that President Abdurrahman Wahid was directly involved in the appointment, the spokesman added: "There has to be a communication between the President and the military command especially for strategic positions."

Major-General Wirahadikusumah is seen as being close to Mr Wahid and reflects his views that the military needs to be overhauled after being a tool in the hands of Mr Suharto for years. The ousted autocrat

himself was head of Kostrad when he rose to power in 1965.

The new Kostrad commander head has frequently clashed in the local media with more conservative Generals, including Gen Wiranto, sparking concern within the usually tight-knit armed forces over his public airing of disagreements with the demoralised military.

Kissinger appointment: Confronted with massive economic and social problems, the Indonesian President today appointed former the US secre-

tary of state, Mr Henry Kissinger as political advisor, AP adds.

Mr Kissinger said he would confer with Mr Wahid at least once a year on the country's political and social policies.

"I responded to the President's request out of friendship for the Indonesian people and the importance I attach to the nation," he said.

"I would like Indonesia to be strong, unified and democratic."

Mr Alwi Shihab, Indonesia's minister for foreign affairs, did not explain why Mr Wahid had made the appointment.

Mr Kissinger, secretary of state at the time of Mr Richard Nixon and Mr Gerald Ford, was instrumental in shaping the US foreign policy for south-east Asia. He won the Nobel peace prize in 1973.

Mr Kissinger is also a board member of Freeport McMoran Copper and Gold Inc., a USA-based company that owns one

of the world's largest open-cut mines in West Papua province.

After assuming office last October, Mr Wahid has been struggling to pull Indonesia out of its worst economic crisis in a generation. He is also working to end years of separatist and religious fighting that threatens to tear the nation apart.

Maluku violence: One person was killed and five others wounded in renewed clashes between Muslims and

Christians in eastern Maluku islands, yesterday, an AFP report says.

Several houses were burnt in the violence involving hundreds of villagers at a cocoa plantation in the Galela sub-district on Halmahera island.

A company of 150 soldiers was sent to the area to quell the clashes. Security forces seized nine rounds of ammunition and scores of home-made weapons including machetes, spears and arrows.

STOP THE VIOLENCE

HD-16 1/1

INDONESIA HAS BEEN engulfed by one crisis after another. For more than two years now, the archipelago has been gripped by violence, street fights, communal flare-ups and calls for separation. The latest in this spiral has been the communal fire in Ambon and the whole of the Spice Islands. This was considered to be an oasis of communal harmony in the country, even during the height of the showdown between the majority Muslims and the minority ethnic Chinese at the height of the economic crisis in 1997. Obviously, the virus is spreading and the Spice Islands have also been infected by this deadly poison. Ambon and its environs are mostly dominated by the Christians, but they have traditionally maintained a harmonious relationship with the Muslims. Reports suggest that a religious flare-up now and then over the past few months ignited new tensions. A similar upsurge during Christmas has apparently resulted in this spurt in violence. Mosques and churches have been torched and close to a hundred people have been killed in sectarian violence this month. The toll is estimated at around 700 for 1999. In a bid to contain the violence, the military (TNI) has taken over control of the Spice Islands, but even it will need time to quell the rebellion and douse the fires.

Starting from the economic crisis that gripped Indonesia in September 1997, there have been crises galore. Many expected the violence to subside when the former President, Mr. Suharto, stepped down in May 1998 and let his Vice-President, Mr. B.J. Habibie, take over the reins. But the agitated youth, who were on the streets across the archipelago, were not satisfied. They demanded and got fresh elections — first to parliament and then for the presidency. In the meantime, the crisis in East Timor climaxed with a 'popular consultation' under the U.N. auspices, which led to the vote for independence. That process is still in progress. Before the new Presi-

dent, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, could settle down in office and complete a round of visits to his neighbouring countries violence erupted in Aceh, for the right to self-determination and independence. In addition to the undercurrent of a divide between the dominant race from Java and those living in Sumatra, the new administration has also to deal with the simmering problems in a host of islands, particularly Irian Jaya. During the three decades of the Suharto regime, the armed forces had acquired enormous clout and some of the regional commanders were a law unto themselves. Their actions and the alienation of the people from Jakarta seems to be largely responsible for this upsurge in violence and the trend towards separation in a more democratic environment.

For the President, Mr. Wahid, and his deputy, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, who would like to succeed him, the challenge that lies ahead is daunting, to say the least. After promising a referendum in Aceh, Mr. Wahid is now arguing that independence will not be a choice. His Government is now planning to hold a conference of representative delegates from that province to evolve an acceptable solution. Unfortunately, the representation given to the regions and provinces in the Indonesian parliament has never been enjoyed by the people or their genuine leaders. They have gone to cronies and hand-picked friends of the erstwhile first family. It is now up to the President to undertake a serious reform of the Constitution and the electoral system to ensure that the People's Representative Assembly truly becomes representative of the people from across the archipelago. This eruption of violence around the country will be part of the process of democratisation and the atmosphere of new-found freedom. The success of the Government will lie in finding solutions, introducing democracy at the grassroots, not in suppressing these voices of dissent.

14 die in Spice Islands clash

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, Jan. 1. — Fourteen people were killed and three were missing in fighting between Christians and Muslims today in Indonesia's Spice Islands, officials said.

Malik Selang, an administrator at Al Fatah Hospital in Ambon, capital of Maluku province, said the clash occurred in Masohi, a small town on the island of Seram.

Nine Muslims were killed, he said. Dozens of houses and a mosque were set ablaze.

Five Christians were also slain in the clash and three were missing, said a Christian clergyman in Ambon, some 2,400 km east of here. He declined to be named for fear of reprisal.

Both sources said most of the casualties were caused by security forces firing indiscriminately into battling mobs.

A total of at least 1,200 people have perished in the region — known as the Spice Islands during Dutch rule — since sectarian clashes first erupted a year ago. In the worst outbreak of religious violence in Indonesia's 50-year history, about 350 people were killed

last week.

Yesterday, the Army dispatched more reinforcements to end the fighting. About 500 troops landed on Morotai island in North Maluku province, local commander Lt. Col. Slamet Riyadi said.

On Thursday, two battalions of Indonesia's Strategic Reserve Force, arrived in Ambon. The troops have contributed to calming the situation in the main towns, but sporadic clashes continued on outlying islands.

Reuters adds: Residents too blamed the shooting on Indonesian police, saying eight were killed around Masohi town on the remote island of Seram and Muslim boarding schools, houses and mosques were set ablaze overnight.

According to witnesses, the victims were shot dead by members of the mobile brigade police.

An Ambon-based policeman denied the shooting, adding that the fighting on Seram had stopped yesterday afternoon.

Phone links to the island were cut today. The hospital official, who did not want to be identified, said the clashes broke out yesterday as local Christians

retaliated against Muslims after the earlier destruction of a church in Ambon.

According to police, about 1,500 people have died this year in the violence in the Moluccas, at the eastern end of this multi-ethnic nation. Meanwhile, thousands of terrified refugees fled the island and security forces imposed a curfew on parts of the region, a top general said today.

Maluku commander, Brig. Gen. Max Tamaela said the measure came after 350 people died in five days of sectarian violence.

Back to Papua: Meanwhile President Wahid has agreed that his country's eastern-most province should change its name from Irian Jaya back to its traditional name of Papua, but he ruled out the possibility of independence for the region, media reports said today.

Speaking yesterday in Jayapura, the province's capital, President Abdurrahman Wahid also apologised for human rights violations committed against civilians by Indonesian forces in their battle against a pro-independence insurgency.

Wahid-Wiranto discord again?

By P. S. Suryanarayana HD-17

SINGAPORE, JAN. 4. The sudden replacement of Indonesia's national police chief today fuelled speculation in Jakarta about new tensions between the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, and the highest ranking Minister in his Cabinet, Gen. Wiranto.

Meanwhile, 18 more people were unofficially estimated to have died in sectarian clashes in Spice islands. But this represented an improvement because of troop reinforcement. Unconfirmed reports put the toll at over 1200 in Muslim-Christian clashes in the predominantly Christian Maluku region in the Muslim-majority Indonesia in 1999.

It was officially announced today that a police investigation was being held in respect of the

alleged massacre of at least 200 Muslims in a village in Halmahera in northern Maluku sector. The main town of the Maluku region, Ambon, was however, limping back to normalcy. It was officially stated that an additional deployment of 8,000 troops had helped ease the situation.

With the police and the military establishment, which still has strong links with the former, being so much in focus, the change in the police hierarchy assumed unusual importance. Maj. Gen. Rusdi Hardjo was nominated to replace Gen. Roesmanhadi. The change has attracted attention also because Gen. Roesmanhadi is a close associate of Gen. Wiranto. Mr. Wahid and Gen. Wiranto, former military chief who still retains his service rank, have in recent

weeks differed on issues such as the Army's alleged human rights abuses in several pockets of Indonesia over a period of time. The change has only served to heighten speculation that Mr. Wahid may soon shuffle his first Cabinet.

Mr. Wahid has held consultations with the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, whom he had asked to rush back home from Hong Kong, and he himself dropped a hint about some impending Cabinet changes.

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Zaki Anwar Makarim today testified before the human rights panel on East Timor (KPP-HAM) about a contingency plan that the Indonesian military establishment had drawn up to meet the eventuality of a vote against Jakarta in the recent U.N.-sponsored referendum.

Clashes on, thousands flee Spice Islands

ASSOCIATED PRESS

AMBON, Jan. 5. — As Muslims and Christians kept up their clashes throughout Indonesia's Spice Islands, thousands fled the violence today, seeking shelter in Ambon and nearby areas.

Travelling by private boats or ferried by the navy or air force, over 10,000 people have left their homes and taken shelter in mosques, churches, schools and military barracks, officials said.

The past week's fierce fighting has cost about 500 lives. Around 1,300 people have died since violence first broke out a year ago.

Clashes continued last night on Halmahera island but it is

not yet clear how many people have died in the last round of fighting, said Maluku military chief, Brigadier General Max Tamaela.

According to reports from fleeing refugees, thousands of soldiers have poured in to quell the fighting on both Halmahera and Seram islands but minor clashes are still on.

Mrs Famiya Rerefy, 25, fled to Ambon after a mob of Christians set fire to her house in Halmahera.

Many towns on the island are nearly deserted after the fighting, she said. — I had to flee. Even with the soldiers there, I didn't feel safe. — A mother of three, Mrs Rerefy now sleeps on the floor of Ambon's main mosque and has to rely on the

local government for food and other essentials.

About 10,000 people in Halmahera have sought shelter in military barracks and are waiting to be evacuated, according to media reports from Jakarta.

Students' threat: Hundreds of Muslim students today threatened to launch a holy war against Christians if the government fails to stem sectarian clashes in the Spice Islands, adds AFP.

As violence raged on in Halmahera island, the head of the Indonesian armed forces, Admiral Widodo Adisucipto pledged the military would halt violence in Maluku.

"TNI is going all-out to settle this problem," Admiral

Adisucipto said.

Pope's appeal: Pope John Paul today appealed for peace in the Spice Islands where fighting between Muslims and Christians intensified last week, adds Reuters.

"Peace on earth to the men whom God loves," the Pope said during a weekly audience at the Vatican.

"May this announcement, heard by every heart, break the chain of vendetta, cure the wounds of hate and, definitively removing the temptation to violence, spur Christians and Muslims to see themselves as members of a single human family and to recreate harmonious relations based on justice and pardon," the Pope John Paul II said.

THE STATESMAN

6 JAN 200

House summons Wahid on violence

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 6. The Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) decided in Jakarta today to summon the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, to explain the Government's handling of the latest communal carnage in Ambon and elsewhere in the Spice Islands. The President, on his part, indicated that he might shift the Governor and the military commander of that region so that officials not belonging to either of the warring communities -- Christians and Muslims -- could be posted to usher in peace.

At another level, several thousand Islamic activists of Muslim-majority Indonesia today took out processions in Jakarta demanding justice for the predominant religious group in the Christian-controlled parts of Maluku or Spice isles. The agitators wanted action to be taken against the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, for failing to prevent an alleged mass massacre of Muslims in Halmahera sector last week.

The military authorities, who continued their security sweep across Maluku for yet another day, contradicted the claims that thousands of Muslims were killed in Halmahera. The Senior Minister for Politics and Security Affairs, Gen. Wiranto, even said the troubled areas would be insulated by the military forces so that disinformation and misinformation could be avoided to foster peace.

The President, finding himself increasingly under fire for the current turmoil, appointed staunch critics of the Government as his advisers.

THE HINDU
67 JAN 2000

Muslims for *jihad* in Maluku

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, Jan. 7. — At least 50,000 Muslims staged a demonstration in central Jakarta today, shouting for a *jihad* to avenge the bloodshed in sectarian violence in the Maluku islands.

Waving hundreds of banners saying "We are ready to die in defence of Maluku Muslims" "Tolerance is nonsense, slaughter Christians", the crowd chanted "*jihad*" (holy war) and "*Allahu Akbar*" (God is great). The people were drawn to the square by calls and newspaper advertisements taken out by Muslim politicians and activists.

Leading politicians, including Mr Amien Rais, Speaker of the country's top legislative body, described the ongoing conflict in the Spice Islands as a bid to weaken Islam in Indonesia, adds Reuters. Mr Rais shouted: "Return Ambon to its normal situation as soon as possible."

"We give (President Abdurrahman Wahid) one month to stop the killings of Muslims," said Mr Husin Ali al Habsy, one of the speakers at the rally. "Otherwise, we are ready to send at least 10,000 people there to defend the Muslims."

Muslims were urged to register as volunteers

who will be sent to the region.

Up to 1,000 people have reportedly died in clashes between Christians and Muslims in the past two weeks in Maluku and North Maluku provinces, some 2,600 km northeast of here. The two provinces, known as the Spice Islands during Dutch colonial rule, have been wracked by such clashes for the past year.

Many of the dead or injured have been shot by security forces using heavy-handed tactics to ward off the warring mobs. Both Christians and Muslims have accused security personnel of bias towards the other side.

Thousands of troops have been sent to the islands, and violence is said to have subsided.

Meanwhile, the navy said that yesterday nine warships and five aircraft were operating around the eastern Spice Islands. "The water blockade is to prevent ships with unclear missions entering the waters," navy spokesman Commodore T Ontowiryo said in a statement received by Reuters today.

The navy said it would still allow ships on humanitarian missions to sail through. It follows claims that the warring sides have received support from outside.

THE STATESMAN
- 8 JAN 2000

Muslims call for jihad in Spice Isles

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 7. Even as the Indonesian Navy blockaded the Spice Islands in a bid to contain the raging communal clashes there and as four parties announced concerted moves for a quick merger to enhance the power of political Islam, several lakh Muslim protesters on Friday vowed at a congregation in Jakarta to wage a holy war against the minority Christians if the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, fails to re-establish order in the riot-ravaged province.

The rally, held at the National Monument Square in Jakarta, was billed as a "congregation of a million Muslims." But, according to independent observers on the scene, the congregation would have been attended by at least three lakh people, while some other estimates put the figure at about half a million. Today's rally was the third successive protest congregation in as many days, although the previous gatherings were not of the same scale.

While anti-Christian sentiments ran high at today's rally, the focus was confined to the present religious-ethnic turmoil in the Maluku Spice Isles — a Christian-majority enclave in a predominantly Islamic Indonesia. The demonstrations in Jakarta were sparked by reports that nearly 2,000 Muslims had been slaughtered in the Halmahera segment of Spice Isles in recent days.

While the military authorities, responsible for security in the riot-hit areas, clarified that no massacre of that magnitude had occurred, reports from the region, as carried by the national news agency on Friday, quoted some local health officials as saying that over 900 might have died in Halmahera in the latest wave of violence.

The Maluku regional military commander expressed the view that there was no need to delimit the area for special security operations. His comments were in line with the President's assertion that he would not contemplate the imposition of martial law in the Maluku region for now.

While the Maluku situation was not considered as alarming as that in Aceh, as seen from the Indonesian military standpoint, the Navy



COMMUNAL HYSTERIA: Indonesian Muslims at a massive rally in Jakarta on Friday call for "jihad" against the nation's Christians. — AP

considered it necessary to clamp a blockade of the Spice Islands. An estimated seven ships had been deployed for the purpose of preventing the entry of unspecified vessels and the plying of boats from one affected enclave to another. The stated objective was to curb the free movement of rioters belonging to both communities. In the face of calls by the protesters in Jakarta for a "jihad" against the Christians in Ambon and other segments of the Spice Isles, the President is said to have ordered additional security vigil for keeping the self-styled crusaders at bay.

At today's Jakarta rally, the Chairman of the recently constituted National People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Mr. Amien Rais, an Islamic intellectual, said there was need to guard against any move to weaken Indonesia as the largest Muslim-majority State. The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives (DPR), Mr. A. M. Fatwa, echoed similar sentiments. Mr. Amien, leader of the National

Mandate Party, joined Mr. Hamzah Haz, Chairman of the Islamist United Development Party, and the representatives of the Justice Party as also the Crescent and Star Party in signalling readiness to merge their organisations.

The aim, it was said, was to create a unified Islamist political force in time for the next general election. Today's call was also seen in Jakarta's political quarters as a response to the President's claim that his National Awakening Party and the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI-P) might soon polarise the Indonesian political landscape despite the continued presence of the former ruling outfit, Golkar Party, on the scene.

It was partly against this context that today's rallyists called for Ms. Megawati's resignation for her alleged failure to stem the communal riots in Maluku despite her mandate to ensure peace there.

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SPICE ISLANDS / SPIRALLING VIOLENCE

Govt. panel calls for dialogue

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 10. Even as the Indonesian Government came under pressure on Monday to resolve the spiralling religious-ethnic clashes in the Maluku Spice Islands through a broad-spectrum dialogue, a top United Nations-nominated military official noted with satisfaction that normality had now been restored in the former Indonesian province of East Timor.

With fresh clashes involving natives and migrants reported to have broken out in Indonesia's Sulawesi sector, not far from the Spice Isles, a team constituted by the Indonesian Government to study the situation in Maluku on Monday urged the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, to take steps for an urgent dialogue among politicians, religious and community leaders, and military officials so that the crisis could be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

The panel, headed by Mr. Lattuconsina, said that the passions



Indonesian soldiers try to calm down Ambonese protesters trying to get the attention of the visiting Armed Forces chief, Gen. Widodo, in Ambon on Monday. They were demanding steps to end the communal violence in the Spice Islands. — AP

perpetrators, the Christian community, in that area. While Muslims are in a preponderant majority in Indonesia as a whole, Christians outnumber them in the Maluku. The panel recommended that the crisis in Ambon could be addressed as the second important priority.

In a parallel development, the chief commander of the Indonesian military establishment (TNI), Adm. Widodo, on Monday visited some of the affected areas in the context of the naval blockade of the Spice Isles.

In East Timor, now under the supervision of the U.N. for a transition to full independence from Indonesia in two or three years, the incoming force commander of the world body's peace-keeping mission, Lt. Gen. de Los Santos, noted in Dili that the menace of the pro-Jakarta militia had now considerably abated. He did not, therefore, anticipate any major problems on the eve of the prospective transfer of peace-promotive duties.

sparked by the latest violence in the Halmahera sector in Northern Maluku province should be controlled through action to address the grievances of the affected community. The Muslims of Halmahera were alleged to have been subjected to a mass slaughter, and this led to calls for a "jihad" or crusade against the alleged

Maluku, Aceh clashes

claim more lives

59 ksa -
7/11/2000

ASSOCIATED PRESS

AMBON, Jan. 11. — Dozens of people have been killed in fresh clashes between Christians and Muslims in eastern Indonesia. Similar clashes between separatists and soldiers have also occurred in the far west of the nation, witnesses and the military confirmed yesterday.

Violence broke out on Seram island, 2,600 km east of Jakarta, on Saturday and continued through the weekend. At least 24 people were killed, scores injured and hundreds of houses burned, said Sergeant Andi Ismail, in Seram's main town, Masohi. The exact death

toll is still not ascertained.

"Refugees are pouring in from the outlying areas," Sergeant Ismail said. "Initial indications suggest the violence may be over for now though."

The official Antara news agency quoted the Maluku provincial Vice Governor, Paula Kenyaan, as saying that more than 1,000 people were missing after fleeing their homes. One Muslim fighter said the bloodshed continued till yesterday.

"We attacked the Christians on Monday after they attacked us the day before," said Mr Luki Uyara.

Nearly 2,000 people have died

in a year of sectarian violence in the Maluku islands, formerly known as the Spice Islands. The fighting escalated since Christmas Day.

The Indonesian Muslim community, that makes up 90 per cent of its 210 million people, have demanded the government take firm action to stop the killings. Yesterday about 800 Muslim students rallied in the capital saying they would declare holy war unless the government acted.

President Abdurrahman Wahid, himself a prominent Muslim leader and advocate for religious tolerance, however condemned the calls for a holy

war. "I don't care whether they want to have a jihad or anything else... One thing is for sure, if they're threatening the safety of the state, we will take action," he said.

Meanwhile in Indonesia's westernmost Aceh province, at least 23 people, including three soldiers and three policemen, were killed in the past 10 days, a police spokesman said.

Lieutenant Colonel, Sayed Husaini said most of the deaths resulted from clashes between security forces and rebels.

Aceh is one of several Indonesian regions where rebels are fighting for independence.

Wahid asserts himself over TNI

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 13. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today asserted his constitutional authority over the powerful military establishment (TNI). He directed the TNI overall commander, Adm. Widodo, to replace the military spokesman, who questioned the President's constitutional supremacy in regard to the affairs of the armed forces.

In Indonesia, the armed forces have a say in civilian political affairs. Mr. Wahid, however, used ordinary language. He said: "For improvement, I have asked for the replacement of Maj. Gen. Sudrajat, military spokesman, with Air Force Vice-Marshal Graitto Husodo." Mr. Wahid said he did not know when the replacement would be effected. Air Vice-Marshal Graitto is a member of the TNI's staff of experts.

Maj. Gen. Sudrajat was reported to have said in Jakarta some time ago that the President would not have the right to interfere in the TNI's affairs. His views be-



The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid (right), and the Singaporean Prime Minister, Mr. Goh Chok Tong, at the State Palace in Jakarta on Thursday. — AP

Sulawesi. The appointments have been made amid speculation of differences between the President and his highest ranking Cabinet Minister for Politics and Security Affairs, Gen. Wianto, formerly the TNI chief. Mr. Wahid's move is only a sequel to a series of changes that he has been effecting at different levels of administration.

Goh in Jakarta

Mr. Wahid today discounted as exaggeration the fears of a 'jihad' by extremist Muslim activists against minority Christian community. Mr. Wahid sought to put the latest developments in perspective ahead of a significant visit today by the Singapore Prime Minister, Mr. Goh Chok Tong, to Jakarta.

Mr. Wahid and Mr. Goh held wide-ranging talks against the backdrop of the City-State's move to catalyse a \$500-million 'Co-Investment Fund' with some international participation as well. Mr. Goh's delegation consists of Singaporean and international investors.

Mr. Wahid today appointed a new chief for the Military Strategic Intelligence unit. Air Vice-Marshal Ian Santoso Perdanakusumah, is now heading the operational command in South

No need for U.N. probe, says Jakarta

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 18. Indonesia will ask the United Nations to desist from setting up an international tribunal to investigate the alleged role by Jakarta's military officers in fomenting the recent carnage in East Timor, now under the global organisation's protective umbrella prior to full independence in a few years.

Before leaving for New York, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr. Alwi Shihab, said he would seek to brief the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on Indonesia's "credible" national human rights commission. As this commission was already investigating the alleged atrocities committed by the Indonesian military officers in East Timor, there was no need for an international war crimes tribunal.

The move by Indonesia for "internalising" the investigation of its military officers came as the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid asserted that an army coup was not likely in the prevailing circumstances and that an attempt, if any, would be resisted through stern counter-measures. At a different but related level, Jakarta's efforts to keep the U.N. from launching a probe acquired new meaning in the context of developments concerning the "internalisation" of the issues at stake. An independent panel, entrusted with the task of bringing about reconciliation between the Muslims and Christians in Maluku, is reported to have discovered evidence of a possible link between the year-long communal violence in several places of the Spice Islands, including Ambon and some sections of the Indonesian armed forces.

But there was no authoritative confirmation of this as also the reported view of the reconciliation panel that the blame for the strife in the Spice Isles could even be traced up to the doorstep of Gen. Wiranto, presently the Senior Minister for Politics and Security Affairs and



A Muslim mob overturns a car belonging to a Christian family as they ransack the contents of the family's home (rear), in Mataram on the tourist island of Lombok on Tuesday. — AP

formerly chief commander of the combined Indonesian military forces. All the same, the move by Jakarta to treat the issues concerning its armed forces as an internal matter, added yet another dimension to the ongoing Indonesian debate on the sensitive question of the military's options.

Significantly, however, the rumours of a possible Indonesian military coup and Mr. Wahid's response remained in considerable focus in South-East Asia today. The Malaysian Defence Minister, Mr. Najib Tun Razak, said a military intervention in Jakarta was unlikely.

In making this assessment, Malaysia joined Singapore, both neighbours of Indonesia, in discounting the apprehensions of a possible coup in Jakarta now.

Meanwhile, tension prevailed in Mataram, the capital of the tourist resort of West Nusa Tenggara. At least one person is believed to have died as a result of the violence that erupted in the wake of a rally by the country's majority Muslim group against alleged atrocities by a minority Christian community in the Spice Isles. Reinforcements of security personnel have been rushed to Mataram.

INDONESIA / SECTARIAN CLASHES SPREAD

Wahid scotches coup rumours

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 17. Buoyed by international support, the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today asserted that he would act sternly to thwart any attempt at staging a military coup. However, he maintained that there would be no bid by the Army to take over the country.

Mr. Wahid said that Gen. Wiranto, the Senior Minister for Politics and Security Affairs and former chief of the Indonesian military, would stay in office for the present as "the Cabinet (itself) is intact." The rumours of a possible coup attempt are, in a sense, linked to the status of Gen. Wiranto in the context of allegations that his acts of "omission" had either caused or sustained the recent carnage in East Timor.

Mr. Wahid and Gen. Wiranto, who retained his military rank even while accepting a Cabinet position, are also suspected to be in different wavelenghts in seeking solutions to the raging communal frenzy in the Maluku Spice Isles, the intensified separatist movement in Aceh and the growing disaffection in Irian Jaya. Mr. Wahid's decision on whether to retain Gen. Wiranto in the event of a Cabinet shuffle and the professional relationship between Gen. Wiranto and the present TNI chief, Admiral Widodo, are other issues at stake in the present context in Jakarta.

Mr. Wahid said: "There will be no reshuffle.



The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, speaking at the Presidential Office in Jakarta on Monday, warns of "harsh action" against any political challenge. — AP

(coup) attempt if there is one," Mr. Wahid underscored.

About the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Mr. Richard Holbrooke's plainspeaking on the rumours of a possible coup attempt in Jakarta Mr. Wahid expressed appreciation of Washington's warning to the Indonesian military against any precipitous intervention against his Government. Mr. Wahid said: "We appreciate the fact that other countries are concerned, but of course, what we do is our own business and we are free to do what we want."

Meanwhile, the Muslim-Christian fighting spread to the holiday resort of Nusa Tenggara Barat near Bali today, with thousands of irate protesters going on the rampage, according to reports from the region. Places of worship came under arsonist assault, according to an official version, although details of casualties, if any, were not clear. The trouble at Mataram, the capital of Nusa Tenggara Barat, was sparked by anger over the alleged massacre of Muslims at Halmahera in the Spice Isles, it was said.

While a military official today spoke in Jakarta about the evidence of (alleged) external support, though a non-Governmental organisation, for the Free Papua Movement in Irian Jaya, the Free Aceh Movement was reported to have claimed killing several soldiers over the week-end. There was no official reaction on these.

The Cabinet is intact. As I have said before, there may be changes in the Cabinet but not a reshuffle of the Cabinet as a whole." Gen. Wiranto remained in office at the moment, Mr. Wahid said in this context.

"We know our own situation. So, I don't think there will be a coup. The second thing is (that) we will take harsh action against any

THE HINDU

18 JAN 2000

Clashes on in Indonesia island

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MATARAM (Indonesia), Jan. 18. — Hotels evacuated guests today and tourists were advised against traveling to Lombok Island amid violence between Christians and Muslims that has stoked fears of spreading religious unrest in Indonesia.

In Lombok's capital, Mataram, police fired warning shots at Muslim mobs to prevent them from raiding a police station where about 500 Christians — many of them Indonesian Chinese — had taken refuge.

(Meanwhile, a team promoting reconciliation in Maluku has identified four men suspected of stirring up sectarian violence and linked former President Suharto and ex-defence chief Wiranto to the clashes, a report said today,

WIRANTO BLAMED FOR MALUKU VIOLENCE

in the city, some 1,080 km east of Jakarta.

Yesterday, thousands of Muslims gathered here to protest the continuing sectarian clashes in the Maluku, where about 2,000 people have died in Muslim-Christian clashes over the past year. The rally turned violent and demonstrators began torching churches and homes.

Lombok is located about 40 km west of Bali, Indonesia's main tourist destination. The unrest is likely to further damage Indonesia's once-lucrative tourism industry, which only last year began recovering from the effects of the Asian financial crisis.

Today, gangs roamed the streets of Mataram in search of Christian homes. A band of

about 100 people broke into a house in the city centre. They ransacked the house and smashed and overturned a car (they had pushed out of the garage.

"This is the home of a wealthy Chinese Christian family," shouted one of the attackers who identified himself only as Jusuf. "We are all poor Muslim people, we are the real people of Lombok."

The crowd scattered when a squad of riot police arrived and arrested half-a-dozen looters.

The Australian embassy in Jakarta advised its citizens not to travel to the island and cautioned foreign tourists on Lombok to remain in their hotels.

The Holiday Inn in Senggigin on Lombok has started evacuating all its guests, said Mr Pandud Djodjoadi, a marketing officer at the hotel.

If guilty, Wiranto must quit: Wahid

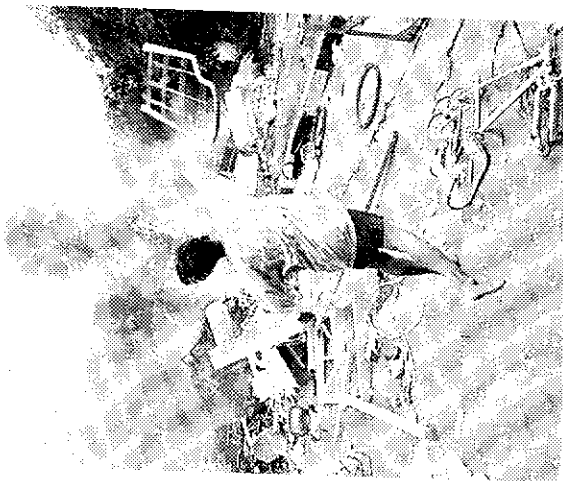
By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 19. The latest shadow-boxing between Indonesia's civilian leaders and its military establishment (TNI) slightly eased today. However, the President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, said he would ask the Senior Minister for Politics and Security Affairs, Gen. Wiranto, to resign if he were to be named "culpable" by the Government-supported panel on human rights violations in East Timor.

Known as KPP-HAM, the panel had recently interrogated Gen. Wiranto, formerly the TNI's overall commander, after having blamed his alleged acts of 'omission' for the recent carnage in East Timor.

Gen. Wiranto, who retains his military rank despite being the highest ranking Cabinet Minister, met the President in Jakarta today. The Cabinet also discussed the presentation of Mr. Wahid's first budget tomorrow and the continuing crises of violence in several pockets of Indonesia, including the tourist resort of Mataram in West Nusa Tenggara near Bali.

Gen. Wiranto later said at least 50 suspected 'provocateurs' were arrested in connection with the Muslim-Christian communal clashes that had led to the death of two persons even as the security forces took action to deal with the rioting there. While Gen. Wiranto said that stern measures would be taken to uphold the law, the President said he had received reports alleging a possible involvement of some mil-



A Muslim rioter throws goods from a Christian Chinese-owned shop into a bonfire in Mataram on the resort of Lombok in Indonesia on Wednesday. — AP

the suspected involvement of some TNI men in the anti-independence mayhem in September last year in East Timor.

The U.K.'s action drew considerable flak on the international stage, especially in the context of the U.S.' warning to the Indonesian military against attempting to overthrow the Wahid administration. The British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Robin Cook, however, justified the decision citing the democratic and non-military credentials of the Wahid administration.

Amid the coup rumours, the TNI leaders began a political counter-offensive, disclaiming any move of that kind. The chief of the territorial affairs of the Army, Lt. Gen. Aungs Widjojo, said in Jakarta that the TNI would continue to be loyal to the legitimate government of Indonesia at any given time. The notion of a coup was contrary to the TNI's 'culture', he said. Similar views were expressed by several other top military officers too. The replacement of an outspoken military spokesman, Maj. Gen. Sudrajat, by the President was a routine matter associated with the prerogative of the Head of State to assign 'tour of duty' to armed forces personnel, they said.

With relative calm amid acute tension in the troubled areas of Indonesia today, the regional military commander of the Maluku Spice Islands said today that a deadline of January 23 had been set for civilians to hand over their weapons to the authorities.

Three days of anti-Christian riots have left three people dead and at least 11 churches destroyed on Lombok island, a holiday-makers' destination neighbouring Bali

Tourists flee riot-torn Indonesian isle

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
MALUKU, JAN 20

An uneasy calm returned to the eastern Indonesian town of Mataram on Lombok island Thursday after three days of anti-Christian rioting left three people dead and at least 11 churches destroyed, officials and police said.

"It's calm already. There are no more large gatherings of people," Yahran, a spokesman for the local government, told AFP by phone from Mataram.

But an exodus of trapped tourists continued and Yahran said residents in the Gerung area of the city had set up roadblocks of trees, doors and metal bars to prevent rioters from entering the neighbouring Lembar area. Second Sergeant Pratomo of the Mataram police said security forces, armed with shoot-on-sight orders, were patrolling and in control. "Anyone trying to spoil the situation will be acted upon," he said.



A group of people try to lift a Muslim Indonesian who fell into a trance shouting 'jihad' during a demonstration against violence in Maluku islands, near the vice-presidential palace in Jakarta on Wednesday — AFP

Mobs went on a rampage on Monday, attacking Christian churches and homes, in an apparent reaction to reports of the slaughter of Muslims by Christians in the North Maluku islands.

Lombok is fast becoming a popular tourist destination and lies just east of Indonesia's prime holiday resort, Bali. Scores of tourists were evacuated Wednesday from Lombok to Bali as Mataram was rocked by a third day of anti-Christian violence. Australia, Japan and the United States have formally ad-

US warns travellers

WASHINGTON The United States on Wednesday issued a travel warning for Indonesia as political and sectarian tensions on several islands threatened to spread. "American citizens travelling to Indonesia should exercise caution," the State Department announced in a statement.

"The risks of a military coup have risen," said Devi Aurora, senior Asia economist at Standard and Poor's DRI group.

—Agence France Presse

vised their citizens against travelling to the island.

In Sydney officials said a dozen more Australian tourists were to be evacuated Thursday from Lombok, after some 30 Australians were lifted off the Gili Islands off Lombok Wednesday amid fears the Lombok rioting could spread.

Between 10 and 14 more were

expected to leave the Novotel resort on the South coast of Lombok as part of a group abandoning their holiday plans.

Australia's consul in Bali, Ross Tysoe, said he believed up to 15 Australians, mostly long-term residents, would remain on Lombok, where Muslim gangs have rampaged this week.

Tysoe said about 200 people, including up to 30 Australians, were ferried from the Gili Islands off the North-West coast of Lombok overnight. While the popular backpacking and diving area had not been the scene of any violence, Tysoe said there were fears the violence could spread.

Police on Wednesday were ordered to shoot rioters on sight and President Abdurrahman Wahid ordered security forces to take "harsh action" to quell the violence on Lombok. More than 1,800 people have died in the violence in the Maluku since a minor dispute on January 19, 1999 spiralled out of control into a cycle of revenge attacks.

Braving the brasshats

40.17
WAS IT a prescient pre-emption of a possible military coup against the democratically-elected President of Indonesia, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid? Or, was it simply a whistle in the dark that served as a wake-up call for the new civilian political elite in South East Asia's largest State?

Either way, the warning by the U.S. to the Indonesian generals against any power-grab attempt set the stage for a flurry of reality checks in Jakarta, despite Mr. Wahid's characteristic twin moves of appreciating Washington's concern and asserting that Indonesia's politics would remain its own internal matter.

By this weekend, as some key Indonesian military commanders pledged their allegiance to Mr. Wahid's civilian administration, the U.S. could evidently pat itself on the back for playing a constructive role in South East Asia as a "preponderant power" (scholar Stephen Walt's phrase).

Not long ago, the Clinton Administration had revealed an accurate sense of anticipation in regard to the recent military intervention in Pakistan. Indonesia had of course shown itself to be better versed than Pakistan in the past in practising the art of cohabitation between the military top brass and the civilian elite.

At present, however, all the Indonesian players have so far indicated openly that they would like to regard the armed forces and the democratically-elected leadership as mutually exclusive institutions that should allow the ultimate authority of the State to vest in the latter.

While the last word has certainly not been said on the durability of an emerging democratic ethos in Indonesia, the rumours of a possible putsch by the army waned as a result of a few deft moves by Mr. Wahid and the circumstantial challenges of toppling an untested but democratically-elected Government, if that had really been the design of the Indonesian military establishment (TNI).

The latest guessing games in Indonesia began in the context of a bold, unprecedented, action by a Government-backed human rights panel on the alleged atrocities in East Timor. Known in local parlance as KPP-HAM, this panel, working within the framework of the National Human Rights Commission, took the extraordinary step of interrogating Gen. Wiranto, formerly the TNI's overall commander and at present the Senior Minister for Politics and Security Affairs under Mr. Wahid.

Gen. Wiranto was asked questions on his alleged acts of "omission" as the TNI chief that had, in the panel's view, sparked or at least sustained the anti-independence mayhem in East Timor in September last year.

Significantly now, Mr. Wahid has said that he would ask Gen. Wiranto to resign from the Cabinet if the KPP-HAM were to pronounce him a "culprit". This move by Mr. Wahid fully reflected Indonesia's popular sentiments at this time, despite Gen. Wiranto's singular contribution of



Indonesia's President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid ... reigning in the military.

While the last word has certainly not been said on the durability of an emerging democratic ethos in Indonesia, the rumours of a possible putsch by the army have waned, writes P. S. SURYANARAYANA.

having acted in a democracy-friendly manner in allowing what purists regarded as that country's first "genuine" general election last June.

Mr. Wahid chose to put Gen. Wiranto on notice in this manner after ordering the TNI to change an outspoken military spokesman, Maj. Gen. Sudrajat. No clairvoyance was needed to recognise that the spokesman was being shifted in the context of his essay in constitutional interpretation to the effect of denying to the President, the authentic Supreme Commander of the armed forces, even a putative role of interfering in the TNI's internal affairs.

The TNI, with its earlier nomenclature of ABRI, had of course remained until recently an integral part of the Indonesian power structure under the doctrine of "dwifungsi". But the President had remained the nominal head of the armed forces even under that principle.

At a different level, however, the present Defence Minister, Mr. Juwono Sudarsano, the first civilian to hold the post, cautioned the new democrats, some time before the current debate on the probability of a

military coup, against angering the TNI by seeking to hound it from the centre stage.

The significance of that warning is now being acknowledged in a social milieu defined by the angst of the avant-garde democrats in regard to the suspected human rights violations by the TNI across Indonesia in the past and the fears about the military's potential for similar acts in the future.

Beyond these concerns of the past and the present, Indonesia has now come under international scrutiny in terms of "democracy-war theory", namely the potential for internal conflicts in newly-democratising societies as explained by Stephen Walt and others.

A counterpoint is that nascent democratisation in a few countries in recent years has been free from the kind of violence that had featured the earlier advent of dictatorships in certain other states.

It is still too early to judge which of these theories will be proven right in Indonesia, where the TNI does not enjoy the kind of support that Gen. Pervez Musharraf claims among the people of Pakistan.

Religious clashes continue in Indonesia, 34 killed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, Jan. 23. — Violence in eastern and western Indonesia killed at least 34 people, according to authorities and news reports today.

On Haruku island, about 2,600 km east of Jakarta, at least 18 people died after a Muslim mob attacked and burnt a church today, the region's military chief Brig Gen

Max Tamaela said.

Local residents, however, put the death toll at 25 and said several hundred houses in Haruku town had also been set on fire.

Clashes on Halmahera island in north Maluku have killed at least eight people and injured 18 in the past two days.

Fighting erupted in a remote part of the island, said Brig Gen Tamaela, and the troops

could not reach the spot in time to separate the warring sides.

Muslim and Christian gangs also clashed on Seram island today, the official Antara news agency said.

There were, however, no reports of casualties.

About 2,000 people have been killed in a year of religious violence in the Maluku and north Maluku provinces.

The fighting, triggered by a

minor accident involving a Christian and a Muslim in Ambon, capital of Maluku, has since spread to other regions.

Vice President, Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri is scheduled to visit Ambon tomorrow, in an attempt to bring peace to the region.

But few expect the bloodshed to stop. Fighting resumed within two weeks of Ms Sukarnoputri's last visit to

here with President Abdurrahman Wahid.

The violence has even spread to the tourist areas.

Last week, Muslim mobs went on a three-day rampage on the island of Lombok, setting fire to dozens of churches and destroying Christian homes, businesses.

Many Christians and most foreign tourists were evacuated to neighboring Bali as a quick

intervention by troops and paramilitary forces restored calm on the island.

Meanwhile, in strife-torn Aceh, 1,750 km north-west of Jakarta, eight people were killed and scores injured, yesterday, following clashes between rebels and security forces, military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Priyatna said.

About 20 houses were set on

fire in east Aceh after soldiers attacked a village, he said. Violence also broke out in several other towns and villages across the territory.

President Abdurrahman Wahid is scheduled to visit Aceh on Tuesday to hold peace talks with the separatists.

In the last week, at least 38 people have died as government forces cracked down on the insurgents.

THE STATESMAN
24 JAN 2000

Megawati on peace mission

REUTERS

JAKARTA, Jan. 24. — The Vice-President, Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri, set off today for the Spice Islands, where 25 Christians died in a weekend attack by Muslims on the island of Haruku.

Military officials said the victims were preparing for mass yesterday.

"They were attacked from two directions — the mountains and the shore," a military official based in Ambon said.

He added that the situation was quiet there and in other parts of the islands today, with no fighting being reported.

The violence in Haruku is the latest eruption in the Malukus, where religious violence first broke out in early 1999.

The army says more than 1,500 people have died since. Human rights groups say the toll might be more.

Ms Sukarnoputri, appointed by President Wahid to solve the Maluku problem, leads an eight-member delegation of ministers and senior police and army officers on the two-day visit.

She, however, stands accused of doing nothing to solve the problem. Her first visit in December, with the President, was followed by some of the worst killings in the religious

war.

Wahid confident: President Wahid is confident that troubles in Aceh and the Maluku Islands, will be solved by March, AFP added today.

"I expect the problems in Aceh to be solved by March and I hope Ambon will be solved sooner," he said.

He said a resolution to the Aceh problem, where violence involving security forces and separatist rebels and their supporters has mounted amid calls for a vote on self-rule, will depend on the people's wishes. "Referendum, fine. No referendum, all right," he added.

He denied accusations that the government had been slow in handling the trouble spots. "It has never been easy. It takes time," he declared.

Nine more people were killed in Aceh in the past two days, ahead of talks between Wahid and Acehnese community leaders in Sabang, tomorrow.

Fresh violence also erupted in Maluku yesterday, leaving at least 22 dead, a day before Ms Sukarnoputri's scheduled visit there.

President Wahid has ruled out a vote on independence for Aceh, saying a referendum would only address whether people want to implement Sharia and a broad autonomy scheme.

THE STATESMAN
25 JAN 2000

Wahid holds talks with Aceh leaders

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 25. ^{MS-17}The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today sought to bring a healing touch to the Aceh province, the theatre of a separatist struggle, by travelling to the region and holding talks with the local authorities and representatives. He also unveiled a proposal for a "free port" in the area to boost the economic prospects of the people there.

The enormity of the President's agenda was underscored by the clashes that occurred on the eve of his visit to Aceh. Several separatist militants and security personnel were reported killed in those incidents.

At another level, the Vice President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, continued her peace mission to the riot-ravaged Spice Isles for a second straight day. Overnight, her convoy was briefly held up at a point by some people affected by the communal carnage there, but there was no disruption of her visit itself. On the East Timorese front, a clash was reported at a market place in Dili today, but the U.N.-mandated security forces moved in to restore order.

THE HINDU

26 JAN 2000

TNI poses no worry for Wahid

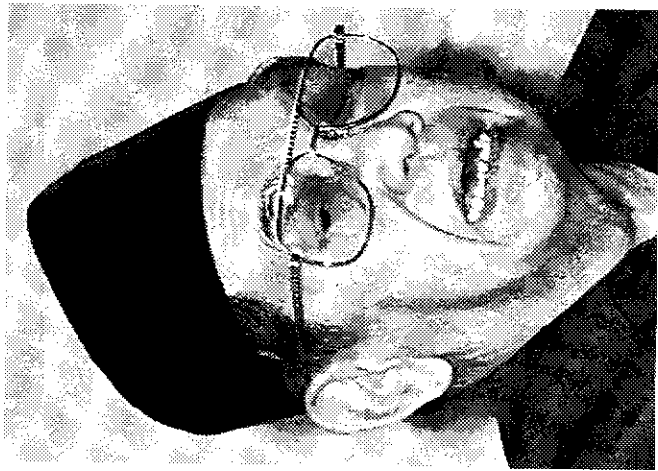
By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 27. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, announced in Jakarta today that he had signed a decree ordering the "retirement" of active military service in respect of all the four Army officers holding Cabinet positions. Mr. Wahid is also the head of Government, and those being retired from the military establishment (TNI) with effect from March 31 this year include the Senior Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security Affairs, Gen. Wiranto.

Mr. Wahid said the decree was designed to enable the Ministers to sever their links with the TNI and concentrate on their civilian duties. This announcement was punctuated with an assertion by the civilian Defence Minister, Mr. Juwono Sudarsono, that there was no indication of either the mood or a move on the part of the TNI to try and stage a coup against Mr. Wahid, the first to be elected President through a democratic process.

The talk in Jakarta's political circles today was that a coup against the President, who is going on a long foreign tour from tomorrow, was unlikely.

The announcement by the President was seen as an index of his confidence that there would be no move to topple him during his tour of European and Asian countries, including India. Although Mr. Wahid has travelled abroad extensively since assuming office on October 20 last year, the question of reassu-



The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, addressing mediapersons in Jakarta on Thursday. — Reuters

rances against the possibility of a military putsch acquired importance for the first time today in the context of a recent warning by

the U.S. to the TNI about the consequences of any power grab by it.

On a related front, the Indonesian Attorney General, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, who was until recently also the Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, said separate reports by his office and the panel might be ready soon.

That would set the stage for further investigations, if necessary, by the Attorney General's office. The reports pertain to allegations of human rights violations by TNI personnel.

In yet another development, the Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, today presided over a celebratory convention by her Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle.

She is emerging slowly from a self-imposed political reticence and gravitating towards the centre stage, with the President encouraging her to do so by assigning to her the mission of bringing peace to the Spice Isles hit by communal frenzy. She completed a three-day tour of the isles before attending India's Republic Day celebrations in Jakarta yesterday.

While violence remained unabated in the rebellious Aceh province, a fresh protest broke out in Riau province today, with the demonstrators calling for an increase in the province's share of oil revenues.

Undercurrents of separatism had been evident in Riau too for some time now.

Wahid's visit to boost regional cooperation

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 28. As the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today left on a 17-day foreign tour that would cover Saudi Arabia as also Europe and a few Asian countries including India, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Alwi Shihab, indicated that Jakarta would like to fashion a political-strategic partnership with Beijing as well as New Delhi.

It should be made by Indonesia even while striving to intensify regional cooperation among the East Asian countries, he reportedly said in Jakarta, unveiling it as a foreign policy option before his country.

The President himself did not make any such proposal though he had suggested sometime ago that a five-power Asiatic "entity" — comprising Indonesia, India, China, Japan and Singapore — should be created. However, Mr. Wahid has not said much about this in public since then.

Nonetheless, according to informed sources, the accent on India and China could be seen as a counter to the bid by Australia to establish a new working relationship with Indonesia in the wake of the recent rift between the two over the East Timor issue.

Now, as seen from Jakarta, Canberra tends to regard itself as a Western power with an Asia-Pacific locus standi. Relevant to this context is the reported parallel move by Mr. Alwi of alerting the Indonesian Foreign Ministry to the "increasing tendency" of the Western States to "impose their political agenda on developing countries."

This was indicative of Indonesia's move to interact with the West while keeping in mind the latter's perceived agenda of "political pressure and sanctions" in relation to the Third World.

In some contrast, the Philippines today began a major joint military exercise with the United States. Manila's international compulsions being different from Indonesia's, though both belong to the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the exercise opened a new chapter in the region.

It is the first major bilateral event on the U.S.-Filipino front since the closure of American bases in Subic Bay in the early 1990s.

THE HINDU
29 JAN 2000

Price of freedom: E Timor faces social unrest

BERNARD ESTRADA,
DILI, JAN 30

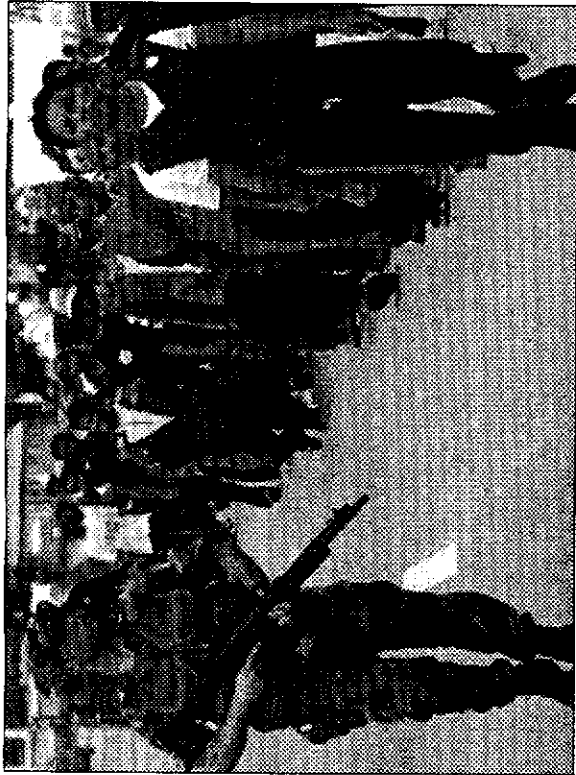
FOUR months after arriving as a liberating force in East Timor, the United Nations is now accused of dragging its feet as it struggles to mend the social fabric. Monseigneur Carlos Belo, the bishop of Dili, says he is "disillusioned" and Xanana Gusmao, the man who embodies the spirit of East Timorese resistance voices his frustration.

Their worry is the depth of the social malaise and rising petty crime which is threatening the political unity forged during the long fight against Indonesian occupation.

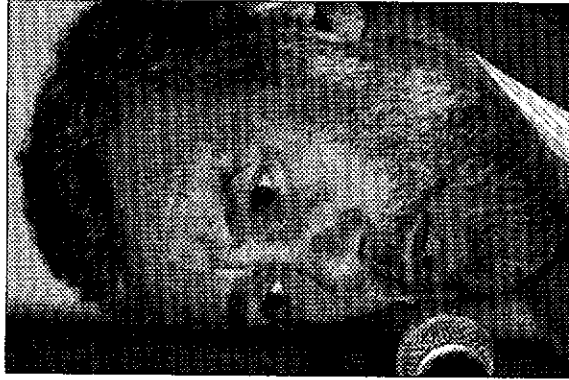
"People get frustrated, youths get less controlled," Gusmao, the President of the National Council of East Timorese Resistance (CNRT) said this week.

He was commenting on a series of incidents — looting, the violent settling of grievances — which have erupted recently in the streets the East Timorese capital. "The biggest challenge is first to maintain law and order. People grow more disillusioned," Belo said.

"They see nothing coming. They have no material to reconstruct their houses and there is no work in sight. The whole world promised money, huge amounts of money. But none is coming and the main problem is bureaucracy in the UN," the 1996 Nobel peace prize laureate said. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Chief ad-



A UN soldier rounds up youth who tried to extort money from hawkers in Dili last week; Xanana Gusmao — AFP



ing for a group of youths who tried to loot the shell of a house used to store food.

"This is a social problem because of unemployment. Nothing is politically motivated," said Jose Ramos-Horta, the overseas spokesman of the Resistance, who has now returned to Dili.

But Gusmao, whom most believe will become the first President of a fully-independent East Timor, does not hide his concern. "I am not completely hopeless, but frustrated," he told a group of journalists. "There are no jobs. Nothing is happening, and we have no possibility to do anything else than talk and try to explain."

And in the ranks of the CNRT, which held together in the struggle against the Indonesian occupation, cracks along the lines of old political differences are beginning to resurface.

"Grass roots political activities resulting from divergences within CNRT have resulted in difficulties for UNTAET and humanitarian agencies in the field," said one UNTAET official. "The consequences have the potential to be catastrophic."

—Agence France Presse

have some kind of income, with most dependent on the UN or other international organizations.

The "Cypol", the UN police, has its hands full. They number a little less than 400 out of the 1,600 who are supposed to be there.

Said Cady: "A cop who doesn't speak the local customs of the people he is supposed to be looking after is not very effective."

Many of the police — who are largely from African or Western countries — don't seem to have their hearts in the job.

"With people who are hungry and desperate we can't be too harsh," said a tall Ghanaian look-

the US dollar, which was chosen over the Portuguese escudo — as well as a legal framework for financial institutions. The lack of skilled East Timorese is such that the only way to get the future central bank up and going quickly will be to look for outside help, said Jean-Christian Cady, UNTAET's Chief of public administration.

Almost 90 per cent of the population of Dili — or some 139,000 people according to the latest UN count — have returned to the destroyed and burned out capital.

But the returnees have nothing with which to rebuild their ruined homes and only 20 per cent

Only this week did the territory get an official currency —