

# Megawati begins legal strikeback on terror

S. B. Anis - Indonesia

JOANNE COLLINS AND  
JERRY NORTON

**Jakarta, Oct. 18 (Reuters):** Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri signed two emergency anti-terrorism decrees today giving authorities wider powers to investigate the Bali bombings, the justice minister said.

"The President has just signed two decrees on terrorism and on the Bali bombings," Yusril Itha Mahendra told a news conference.

Mahendra said earlier the decrees would extend the death penalty to those convicted of terrorist acts. Media reports said they would also allow authorities to detain people for three to seven days on suspicion of committing such acts.

Last weekend's bombings in Bali killed almost 200 people, most of them foreigners. No one has claimed responsibility.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, has come under intense international pressure to clamp down on terrorism with some countries saying it has been a weak link in the US-led "war on terror".

The government has in the past been fearful of a backlash from its population if it cracks down on militant groups but many analysts say the Bali tragedy has changed that.

Some point the finger of suspicion for the Bali bombs at Jemaah Islamiyah, a militant Islamic network linked to al Qaeda, which regional intelligence officials say has plotted acts of terrorism throughout southeast Asia.

## Militant cleric

Indonesia is set to question a militant Muslim cleric its neighbours and Western intelligence agencies say is a key player in a regional terror network, but an aide said he was sick and might be unable to show up.

Police said Abu Bakar Bashir, the cleric foreign intelligence officials believe to be a leader in the al Qaeda-linked regional Jemaah Islamiyah network, has been summoned for questioning tomorrow but police and his lawyer said this was not over the Bali attack.

Lawyer Mahendradatta told Reuters today police documents showed his client was a suspect over a bomb attack in the country in 2000. "I underline this has nothing to do with the Bali blast. There is no connection with the Bali bombing," he added.

Irfan Awwas, executive chairman of the Mujahidin Council Indonesia-MMI of which Bashir is spiritual leader, told Reuters by telephone that Bashir was sick and had been taken by ambulance to a hospital

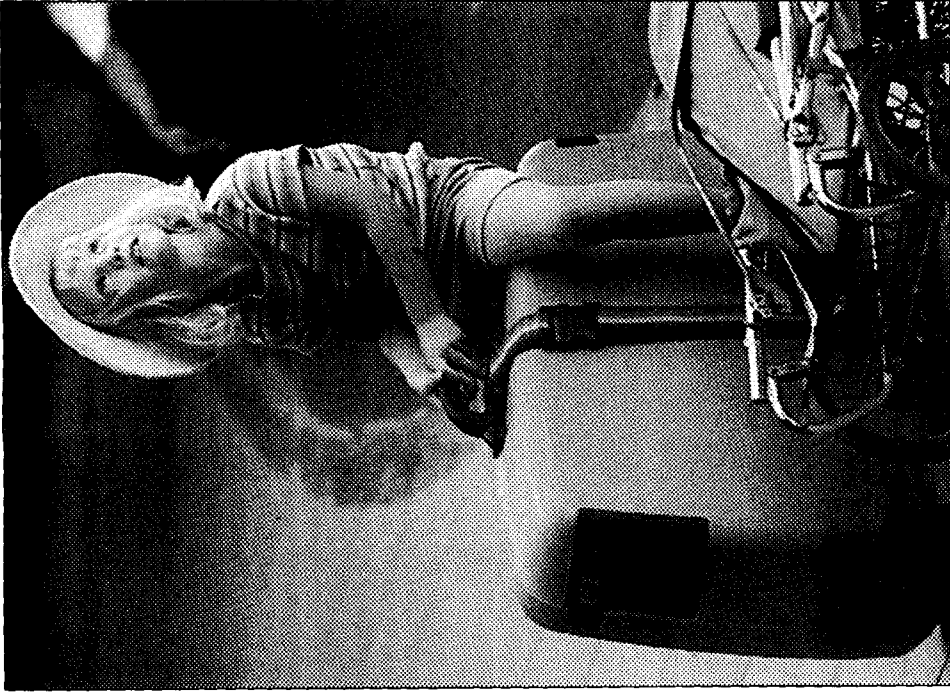
in his home city of Solo. "He has to go to Jakarta but it seems he cannot go," Awwas said. He did not give details.

Police spokesman Saleh Saaf said he would wait to see whether Bashir shows up as scheduled at 10 am (0800 GMT) tomorrow before making a comment on what action police might take. Australian Prime Minister John Howard, speaking to reporters after visiting the bombing site in the coastal resort of Kuta which is thought to have killed more than 100 of his compatriots, said he was pleased with the Indonesian response so far.

"I will say without equivocation we have put the view again, urgently and strongly, to the Indonesian government since last Saturday that a much tougher approach to terrorism must be taken."

"This is a view that we have put to the Indonesian government over a long period of time and I'm very pleased with the responses since Saturday," he said.

The distraught Australian leader, wearing an open-necked shirt with the sleeves rolled up, walked among the charred remains of what was once the Sari nightclub. It was one of the most popular nightspots for tourists, particularly for young Australians relaxing after a day in the Kuta strip.



A young girl sits on a suitcase outside the departure terminal at Denpasar airport in Bali on Friday. (Reuters)

**Manila, Oct. 18 (Reuters):** A bomb destroyed a bus in the Philippine capital late today and authorities said at least three passengers were killed and 22 wounded in the latest in a series of explosions in the Roman Catholic nation.

The explosion, at around 10 pm (1400 GMT), was on the cheap form of public transport — a non air-conditioned bus travelling to the city suburb of Novaliches and suspicion again swung to Muslim radicals fighting for an independent state in the south.

"I was inside when it happened," Merly Villareal, a young woman who was trembling and her voice shaking, told local television. "All I know is there was an explosion. I was pushed and then I saw bodies." The bus was gutted and its roof blown off. Body parts littered the floor. A headless woman's body was hanging over the steel frame.

Nobody claimed responsibility for the blast, which occurred a day after suspected Islamic radicals bombed the main bazaar in the city of Zamboanga in the south, where most of the Muslim minority lives, killing seven people and injuring more than 160.

Nerves have been stretched taut in the Philippines, which has been on high alert since last Saturday when a bomb attack in Bali in neighbouring Indonesia killed more than 180 people.

Officials said President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was closely monitoring developments. "She's very concerned about this," National Security Adviser Rollo Golez told radio. "We are very concerned." There was panic in Manila earlier in the day when a grenade exploded in the Makati financial district. No one was injured. Later a bomb scare prompted the evacuation of a high-rise office building. Restaurants and bars in Manila, usually a party city at the weekend, were not as crowded as usual today because of worries of more attacks.

# Bomb boomerang

HR-9 2/10 ✓

*The Bali blast may deal a fatal blow to the Islamists. After the massacre at Luxor, Egyptian rule improved. If Islamist forces made advances in that country, they did so through non-violent means. Indonesia may go in the same direction, says Martin Woollacott*

S. G. byn - Indonesia

AFTER THE massacre of foreign tourists at Luxor in 1997, the shock and grief felt by Egyptians was tangible. The journalist and academic Geneive Abdo describes leaving the relatively quiet campus of the American University in Cairo to find that "all around me, Egyptians were cursing the violence. They stood in crowds in the middle of downtown, waving their hands in the air and looking past one another as they shouted in anger and frustration."

The spectacular violation of Egyptian ideas of decency and hospitality by the Luxor terrorists turned the population decisively against a violent Islamism about which they already had grave doubts. The radical Islamist movements in that country condemned the attack, went on to the defensive, and began a reconsideration of strategy.

In retrospect, Luxor can be seen as the last desperate throw of the terrorist brand of Islamism in Egypt. A slow Islamisation of Egyptian society continued, which many westerners and secular Egyptians deplore, but it has nevertheless been pursued by non-violent means. Most of those who could not reconcile themselves to this course left the country, some of them to become founders and associates of what came to be known as al-Qaida.

Five years after Luxor, it looks as if al-Qaida and its local allies in Indonesia have repeated the same mistake in Bali. Just as Luxor alienated Egyptians from the path of violence, so it is likely that Bali will have the same effect on Muslim Indonesians. Extreme Islamists are far less a force in Indonesia than they once were in Egypt, and their chances of increasing their influence must be narrowed by what has happened. The operation that Al-Qaida and its helpers have chosen to conduct illustrates the almost unavoidable contradiction between national political objectives and the kind of transnational war on the west and its friends which al-Qaida's leadership, whatever remains of it, wishes to conduct.

This broader war may be served by a blow which shows that westerners enjoying themselves abroad are vulnerable; and so is an Indonesian economy dependent on income from tourism, in particular that from Bali. There are scores of such targets all over the globe and the impact will go well beyond Indonesia to damage the tourist trade of many other countries. But, as a tactic designed to gain political power in Indonesia, Bali is deeply dubious.



PHOTO: AP

**CHAIN REACTION:** Islamist extremists in Indonesia, not yet a consolidated force, will have even less room for manoeuvre if the Bali bombing permanently unites the people of Indonesia against terrorism. That, in turn, would put paid to the larger objective of a Muslim superstate established through violence.

The objective of the more extreme Islamist groups in south-east Asia is supposedly a Muslim superstate uniting Indonesia, Malaysia, parts of the Philippines and Thailand. But the way there, if we give this fantasy room for a moment, would have to be through the achievement of political control in Indonesia and Malaysia as at present constituted. Quite apart from the non-Muslim minorities in these countries and the secularised parts of the middle classes, any serious Islamist has to take into account the needs and views of the mass of ordinary Muslims. Bombs in Bali are not a way to gain influence in a complex polity where there are substantial moderate Muslim political movements. The interests of ordinary Muslims as they see them, it may be hazarded, do not include the destruction of livelihoods, the collapse of local economies, or the slaughter of guests in one's own home.

This last is a critical point of difference to the twin towers attack, and to strikes against tankers, warships or embassies. Justifications can be offered for, and conspiracy theories woven around, such events. It is not so easy to do this when innocents have been killed in your own country. Abu Bakar Ba'aysir, the leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, has made statements implying that the US might have a motive for the Bali bombs, but it remains to be seen whether this notion will gain any credence among Indonesians, however jaundiced their view of America.

Above all, events such as Luxor and Bali have the potential to greatly increase the kind of informal social policing that is the only really effective basis for preventing terrorism. It is true that the situation in Indonesia is complicated by serious strains between a central government of a somewhat secular character, a resentful army, and a number of

disappointed Muslim groups, some moderate and some not.

Ethnic and confessional strife, fomented by elements in the military who use such conflict as a way of dominating whole islands and regions, has marked the lackadaisical presidency of Megawati Sukarnoputri. Violence in Hindu Bali might be thought to fit into such a pattern, but its consequences may signal an improvement in it, with the bombs producing a different approach at all three points of the triangle. Government, army and radical groups cannot proceed, after Bali, as they did before. The government will have to respond to the American urgings it seems to have resisted and ignored until now. The games played by army commanders will be under more serious surveillance. Radicals will be under pressure both from the security forces pursuing them for real or alleged involvement in violence, and from with-

in their own ranks. In none of this should there be much comfort for al-Qaida or its Indonesian associates.

The Brazilian guerrilla Carlos Marighella defined the classic terrorist strategy as "turning political crisis into armed conflict by performing violent actions that will force those in power" into a military response "that will alienate the masses." It is an old thought and an old trap, but people — and nations — still fall into it. There have been warnings that too militarised a response to the Bali bombs could play into such a strategy. It is interesting that Luxor was followed by a limited relaxation of Egypt's very repressive methods. The government was blamed for not having responded to ceasefire offers by extremist groups, and perhaps having missed an opportunity to divide them. Now it tacked in that direction, releasing repentant extremists from jail. For whatever

combination of reasons, it worked. There were no more Luxors, Egyptian politics changed, and, in time, Egyptian tourism recovered from the impact of the killings.

Before Bali, some knowledgeable people criticised the US for exaggerating the extent to which extremist Islam had penetrated the region. There is no obvious reason now to deem them wrong. One big operation that came off and one that was foiled — the planned attack on targets in Singapore — do not prove that al-Qaida and its friends are everywhere. Rather, they suggest that they have to go to new places and pick new targets in order to succeed, and it will not be so easy a second time around. In these dangerous times it does not do to be too sanguine, but it is to be hoped they will also show that a big "success" at one level can also be a big failure at another.

# Backlash fears after Bashir's arrest

**BRIAN HANSFORD AND  
JOANNE COLLINS**

**Jakarta/Bali, Oct. 19** (Reuters): Indonesian police arrested a militant Muslim cleric today hours after the government issued emergency anti-terror decrees aimed at giving authorities wide powers in the hunt for the perpetrators of last weekend's Bali bombings.

Abu Bakar Bashir has been linked to Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network and a regional group of militants in Southeast Asia. He denies any connection, saying he is just an Islamic teacher.

"He's been captured and arrested. Temporarily, he's still in the hospital in Solo. He's sick and tightly guarded," National Police spokesman Saleh Saaf said in Jakarta. Another official

in Solo said Bashir was being held for 24 hours and his status would be reviewed on Sunday.

Bashir, who had been summoned by police for questioning in Jakarta today, entered hospital suddenly yesterday. Aides and doctors said he would be unable to travel to face questions over a bombing in the country in 2000. Police have said he was not being summoned over the Bali attack.

Neighbouring countries and the West have pressed Indonesia for months to move against Bashir, although Australia today warned his arrest might provoke a backlash from headline groups.

Witnesses said about 300 of the cleric's supporters, mostly Islamic teenagers from schools set up by Bashir, protested outside the hospital but later dispersed.

Saaf said there was "an order letter of capture and arrest" for the cleric, without elaborating.

Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer said Bashir's arrest could lead to a backlash from Muslim radicals, warning this was something "to be very wary of". But defence minister Matori Abdul Jalil played down such concerns. "Radical Muslim groups in Indonesia are a minority so let's not worry about a backlash or revenge," he said in Bali.

More than 180 people, including a large number of Australians, died in last Saturday's blasts outside Bali nightclubs packed with foreign tourists. Hundreds more were wounded in the carnage. As fears grow of more bomb attacks in the region following a number of deadly blasts in the Philippines, the US,

Australia and Britain issued fresh warnings about threats to Westerners.

Australia said it had received intelligence that parts of the Indonesian capital might be bombed in attacks aimed at Westerners. It urged its citizens today to avoid certain areas.

"The nature of the specific threats in Jakarta is the threat of bomb attacks in those certain suburbs against Westerners," Downer told the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

The US state department also issued a new warning of possible attacks against Washington's interests across the sprawling archipelago and urged its citizens not to visit.

London extended its travel warnings to much of Southeast Asia, urging Britons to exercise "extreme caution in public

places". The US, Australia and Britain have also advised their citizens to consider leaving Indonesia and have begun evacuating nonessential embassy staff and family members.

With Indonesia under intense pressure to clamp down on Islamic militants, President Megawati Sukarnoputri signed emergency decrees just before midnight on Friday giving authorities wide powers to combat terrorism and investigate the Bali atrocity.

"Police can detain anyone strongly suspected of acts of terrorism based on initial evidence for as long as seven days," the document said. For that and for longer detentions, the threshold of evidence required would be lowered from existing laws and the results of intelligence operations could be used.



**Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir in a hospital in Solo, central Java. (Reuters)**

# Megawati gets emergency powers after Bali blasts

By Harvey Stockwin  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hong Kong:** The Bali bomb blasts demonstrated, in profoundly tragic fashion, how a politically weak, poorly organised, yet struggling democracy like Indonesia is intensely vulnerable to the forces of extremism and terrorism.

But foreign, particularly western, sympathy for that democratic struggle quickly evaporates when around 200 tourists are killed by a technically proficient terrorist bomb. Suddenly, many implicitly wish that Indonesia was authoritarian all over again. But democratic Indonesia is energising itself as a result of the Bali crisis. Early Saturday morning, after day-

long cabinet consultations President Megawati Sukarnoputri signed two decrees giving the government emergency powers with which to combat the crisis. But it is likely that Ms Megawati will use these powers sparingly, lest they reawaken memories of the long authoritarian era under former President Suharto.

In the immediate wake of the bombing, a few Indonesians, like the defence minister, quickly jumped to the conclusion that the shadowy Al Qaida was to blame. But that was mainly to please the outside world, in which all too many "experts" and observers had jumped to the same conclusion well before the crime had been investigated and motives clearly established.

Indonesians know instinctively

that they live in a devious world with a political reality to match. Obviously if foreigners, such as Al Qaida operatives, were mainly responsible for the bomb blast, they must have had some local help. But if, to the contrary, it was a local conspiracy, it must have had the assistance of some military expertise. So a complex mixture of motives suggests itself which will take time to unravel.

**M. Sukarnoputri**



It is almost inconceivable that the Balinese Hindu majority would have

helped the terrorists. Doubts arise, because if Al Qaida operatives are using Indonesia as their new post-Afghanistan terrorists base (as some experts allege), why draw attention to that fact by perpetrating the massacre? Why offend the overwhelmingly moderate majority of Indonesian Muslims by being responsible for such savagery?

If some renegade Indonesian military personnel or faction were mainly responsible for the bombing, then an anti-Australian motive is a possibility—given the military resentment of Australian assistance to East Timor's moves towards independence. But why inflict great damage on the Indonesian economy in order to satisfy such a grudge?

# 8 bombers staged Bali blast: paper

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & AGENCIES

**Kuta (Indonesia):** Eight bombers in two vans staged the deadly Bali terrorism attack, a local newspaper reported on Wednesday even as President Megawati Sukarnoputri was expected to discuss the investigation with members of her cabinet.

Citing police and intelligence sources, a local daily said the bombers may have used remote control devices to blow up the two bars filled mostly with foreigners in Bali's busy Kuta tourist district.

Police have said that the explosion, which killed more than 180 people and has been blamed on the Al Qaida, was caused by a car bomb and that the powerful plastic explosive, C-4, was used. Two Indonesians have been detained in connection with the attack. One of them was said to have been in the Kuta area when the blast occurred. Meanwhile, a dismissed Indonesian air force officer has confessed to assembling the deadly bomb. The man, now held by authorities, said he regretted the huge loss of life in Saturday's attack but had not revealed who had asked him to build the 'C-4' military explosive, the 'Washington Post' reported, quoting Indonesian security sources.

Indonesia, which has been scolded internationally for



An Indonesian woman takes part in a candlelight vigil in Jakarta for the victims of the Bali blasts.

ignoring demands that it crack down on terrorism, pledged on Wednesday to press ahead with tough new anti-terror laws and formed an international investigative team to hunt for the culprits in the Bali bombing.

Meanwhile, US ambassador Ralph C. Boyce labelled reports in *The New York Times* that said he had warned Ms Sukarnoputri of an imminent attack the day before the Bali bombing as being "imprecise, to say the least". He did not elaborate.



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**BALI / MEGAWATI GOVT. UNDER PRESSURE**

# Jakarta pledges anti-terror drive

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE, OCT. 16.** Coming under a virtual diplomatic squeeze over the terrorism issue, Indonesia today denied the existence of an alleged pan-regional extremist group within the country's borders but pledged to embark on a vigorous anti-terror drive. The administration of the Indonesian President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, outlined its plan to issue a decree or 'regulation' on steps to combat terror pending the enactment of suitable legislation with teeth.

The Indonesian move, quickly welcomed "in principle" by the leaders in legislature, punctuated the diplomatic goings-on which intensified in Jakarta today. The Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, called on Ms. Megawati and held talks with the Senior Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Hasan Wirayuda.

Australia, whose nationals topped the list of the latest terror victims in the Indonesian holiday-resort of Bali, is leading the international diplomatic charge aimed at inducing Jakarta to tune its policies and actions to the wavelength of the U.S.-led "global campaign" against terrorism. Following the talks with Mr. Downer, Mr. Susilo Yudhoyono affirmed that the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) "does not exist" in Indonesia. The JI has been tracked by Indonesia's key neighbours as the terror outfit with a regional reach across South East Asia.

Despite this firm effort to refute the insinuation that some Indonesians were the evil architects of a critical mass for region-wide terrorism, Mr. Susilo Yudhoyono said Jakarta would certainly move against the purported elements of the JI if evidence were to surface against them, especially so in the context of the week-end massacre in Bali. The alleged "spiritual don" of the JI, Abu Bakar Baasyir (Bashir), has consistently disclaimed any terrorist agenda or action plans. However, some of Indonesia's



**An Australian family places flowers and prays for victims of Saturday's nightclub bombing in Kuta, Bali, on Wednesday. — AP**

neighbours and the U.S. have now urged Jakarta to look at the JI and Mr. Bashir more closely than before.

The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has commented that the latest Bali carnage might serve as "sobering experience" for the Indonesian leadership. Away from the glare of public diplomacy and the secrecy of the behind-the-scene international moves to entice Indonesia on to the U.S.-led anti-terror bandwagon, the Indonesian investigators, aided by experts from the U.S. and Australia, continued to sift the forensic evidence at the site of the mass tragedy in Bali, the worst terrorist strike since the '9/11' holocaust.

The Indonesian authorities have not yet reached any definitive conclusions. However, the latest line of investigation is centred

on the possibility that C-4 plastic explosives and perhaps even RDX had been used by the Bali plotters who might not, however, belong to the resort island itself.

Seeking to scotch the speculative reports in some sections of the Western press, the Indonesian Military Headquarters spokesman, Lt. Col. D.J. Nachrowi, is reported to have told the state news agency that the police "did not find any indication", following an "intensive investigation", that a former official of the country's Air Force was somehow behind the Bali mayhem. Of the two Indonesians being investigated, one is said to have been an eye-witness to the carnage while the other, deemed a potential suspect, was not very cooperative at this stage, according to independent observers in Jakarta.

## TERROR ISLAND

It could not have happened at a better place. Choosing a predominantly Hindu island full of Western tourists in the world's largest Muslim country for a series of horrific blasts shows a kind of ingenuity that is becoming recognizable in recent times. At least 187 people are dead and more than 300 seriously injured in the explosions at Kuta beach, a holiday resort in Indonesia's hitherto peaceful island, Bali. The features are recognizable, but there is the usual, and dangerous, obscurity shrouding this terrible incident. No terrorist organization has claimed responsibility for the blast, sparking off all sorts of speculative connections and inferences in the absence of nothing much to go by, by way of concrete evidence. This creates the sense of a nebulous and unlocalized map of terror, bringing in clusters of nations, and drawing them into uneasy relations with one another. The spectre of al Qaida hovers over this episode too. This time, the finger of suspicion points to al Qaida's southeast Asian counterpart, the Jemaah Islamiya. The goal of this extremist group is to create an Islamic state comprising Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the southern Philippines. Of course, it is said to have links with al Qaida, some of its men having been trained in Afghanistan. 15/10

These Asian countries are now part of the map of terror, having to negotiate their relations with one another and with the "West" — that is, with the United States of America and its allies in the "war against terrorism". The West, in this instance, is not monolithic. It would include Australia, for example, whose citizens have been worst hit by the Bali blasts. It will now have to redefine its security alignments. Australia is already helping the US in Afghanistan and did not have a very happy role to play in East Timor. Indonesia's president is also being pressured by Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines (itself fighting Islamic insurgency in the south) to take a tougher stand. She is having to walk the razor's edge between the radical Islamist elements in her ruling coalition and the army, nurtured in a dictatorship for long enough to still assume certain unwritten prerogatives for itself, even when it is now part of a fledgling democracy. In the background to all this is Afghanistan — the disturbing, but unavoidable, question of the extent to which the dispersal of terrorism is actually the consequence of what was done to combat it in Afghanistan. And whether shifting focus to Iraq would actually prove to be counterproductive, fostering nothing other than the displacement of terror to another region and to another web of fundamentalist forces. //

US WARNING PRECEDED ATTACK

# Bali blasts

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# toll 187 ✓

**The Jakarta Post/ ANN**

JAKARTA, Oct. 13. — At least 187 people, including foreigners, were killed in a powerful blast that ripped through two discotheques in Bali late on Saturday night.

Another bomb exploded near the island's US consular office almost simultaneously but no casualties were reported from there.

Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, who flew to Bali, today condemned the the blasts and vowed to arrest the perpetrators. "The Indonesian government strongly denounces this shameful bombing."

More than 330 people were injured in the blast that rocked Kuta town shortly before midnight yesterday.

"Authorities are working hard to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice," Ms Megawati told a hastily convened press conference at her residence here before leaving for Bali. Armed Forces chief Gen. Endri-artono Sutarto and foreign minister Mr H Wirayudha flew with her.

Bali police chief Brig-Gen. Budi Setyawan has vowed to resign within the month if he does not find the

culprits in what has become the island's bloodiest tragedy in its recent history.

National police spokesman Mr Saleh Saaf today said the explosions were caused by a carbomb.

In a related development, the government said it will increase the presence of troops at major foreign companies, including Freeport gold mine and energy projects, following the blast.

The giant US-owned Freeport mine in Papua province and Exxon Mobil's natural gas operation in Aceh are considered strategic assets and are already heavily guarded.

The attack comes just weeks after the USA reopened its diplomatic missions in Indonesia following a shutdown over the 11 September anniversary caused by fears of new attacks by Al-Qaida.

**Vajpayee shocked:** Mr Vajpayee today expressed shock at the terrorist attack at Bali in Indonesia and asked the international community to join in efforts to rid the world of religious extremism, adds PTI from London.

**Another report, photograph on page 3**



SBA  
Indonesia

**BALI BLAST / MEGAWATI VISITS SITE**

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# Intelligence failure: Jakarta

**JAKARTA, Oct. 13.** The Indonesian Vice-President, Hamzah Haz, today partly blamed weak intelligence and poor security measures for the overnight blast which killed at least 187 people in the resort island of Bali.

"Our weakness so far has been in the intelligence. Our intelligence should not be NATO — No Action Talk Only," Mr. Haz was quoted as saying by the official Antara news agency.

"Those in charge of security affairs must follow up on any information and detect (any threat) more accurately," he said.

He said the Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, should explain why the explo-

sion had happened. "Our weakness lies in the management of politics and security," he said.

He warned that the bomb attack would scare off investors, desperately needed by Indonesia as it is struggling to emerge from an economic crisis. "We have to establish security in this country, otherwise no investor will come and our country will collapse," the Vice-President said.

Meanwhile, the President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, today arrived in Bali and went straight to the bomb blast site.

Ms. Megawati, who arrived at 3:40 p.m. local time at Bali's Ngurah Rai international airport, went straight to the stretch of devastated buildings where

the powerful bomb exploded around 11 p.m. local time on Saturday.

Tight security was in place and more than 1 km stretch of road had been cordoned off from the public.

The United State today condemned the bomb blast as a "despicable act of terror."

"The United States Government condemns in the strongest possible terms this despicable act of terror," the U.S. embassy said in a statement.

"The United States has offered all appropriate assistance to the Government of Indonesia to see that those responsible for this cowardly act face justice," the statement said. — AP

THE HINDU

14 OCT 2002

# Car bomb kills 187 in Bali club

Al Qaida hand suspected as terror strikes world numb

**Bali:** A massive explosion from a car bomb destroyed a nightclub on the tourist island of Bali, sparking a devastating inferno that killed at least 187 people and wounded more than 300, many of them foreigners. There was no claim of responsibility, but the blasts came three days after the US government issued a worldwide terror alert. The attack heightened fears that Indonesia is becoming a haven for terrorists and that Al Qaida operatives are active.

A second bomb exploded almost simultaneously near the island's US consular office, authorities said. There were no casualties. The US embassy's recreation club in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, was evacuated after a bomb threat. President Megawati Sukarnoputri, whose government has been accused by the US and its neighbours of being slow to respond to the terror threat, flew to Bali and promised to cooperate with the international community in fighting terrorism.

The Saturday night blasts, which the US denounced as a "despicable act of terror", followed persistent reports that Osama bin Laden's network was trying to establish a foothold in the world's most populous Muslim nation. Police said the dead included nationals from Australia, Britain, France, Germany and Sweden, but declined to speculate on who might be responsible. It was one of the world's most devastating attacks against tourists in one of the world's most popular tourist destinations.

A US embassy spokeswoman in Jakarta said a car bomb outside the Sari Club in the teeming Kuta Beach nightclub district did most of the damage. "There were bodies everywhere, people burned were walking around in shock."

The blasts in Bali, a destination popular with everyone from hippies to high-flyers, coincided with heightened security around the world and followed a bomb blast in Finland, another unlikely target, that killed seven people and wound-



**HORROR IN PARADISE ISLAND:** Police officers stand guard over the wreckage of vehicles outside the Sari Club in Denpasar in Bali, Indonesia, where a car bomb exploded on Saturday.

ed dozens. "It's nothing quite like anything I've ever seen—there was more blood, the smell of burned skin and the pain that they were in, you can't really put that into words," Melbourne tourist Martin Lyons told Australia's Nine Network Sunday programme. Richard Poore, 37, a television presentation director from New Zealand, said hundreds of revellers were inside the Sari.

Poore, who filmed the aftermath, had tried to get into the club 20 minutes before the blast—but it was too full. "I saw limbs lying on the ground," he said. "I got to the stage where I couldn't film any more because it made me feel physically ill," he said. "I've never seen any-

thing like it in 12 years of reporting."

Britain slapped a travel warning on Indonesia, where Islam is traditionally moderate and bloody ethnically-based separatist violence has seldom targeted foreign nationals. The US and Singapore, which has detained dozens of people in a crackdown on what it says is a Southeast Asian terror network, have been pressing Indonesia to arrest Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir they describe as a pivotal player in the group.

Indonesia says it has no evidence to link Bashir to Jemaah Islamiah, as the group is known and which in turn has been linked to the Al Qaida. Agencies

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# Indonesia seeks to allay China's concern

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE, AUG. 17.** The Indonesian authorities today took time off from their independence day celebration to assure Beijing that they were not seeking to fish in the troubled waters of the Taiwan-China confrontation. Indonesia's intervention follows the "concern that China has conveyed to the former about the possibility of "diplomatic manipulation or manoeuvres by the Taiwanese Vice-President, Annette Lu, (also known as Lu Hsiu Lien) who is at present on a private visit to Jakarta.

The latest rise in temperature in the effervescent China-Taiwan crisis is traceable to Ms. Lu's visit to Indonesia with whom Taipei has no diplomatic relationship. In circumstances not fully explained by either Taiwan or indeed Indonesia, she has already spent a few days on the holiday resort of Bali before travelling to Jakarta.

The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Hassan Wirajuda, clarified in Jakarta today that there had been no diplomatic contact between Ms. Lu and the Indonesian President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, contrary to reports of such a meeting. Indonesia, according to the Minister,

fully recognised Taiwan as an integral part of China. There was, therefore, no question of any official dealings with Ms. Lu, it was pointed out.

China's "concern, which was confirmed by the Indonesian Foreign Minister, flowed from the recent move by the Taiwanese President, Chen Shui-bian, to test the international mood by floating the idea of a referendum within Taiwan on its future political status". He had indicated that a plebiscite would be a "basic human right" to determine whether or not Taiwan should move away from the present situation about its identity on the international stage and consider sovereign independence as the territory's political destiny.

What angered Beijing was the definitive statements by Mr. Chen that China and Taiwan were one country on each side of the Taiwan Straits and that they could be deemed to have equal sovereignty. With China raising the stakes and intensifying its own diplomatic offensive to stop Taiwan in its tracks, Taipei has also conveyed to its friend and ally, the U.S., that no legislative or executive move had been made at this stage to hold a referendum in Taiwan. It is against this background that

the current visit to Indonesia by Ms. Lu has given rise to speculation, by China and others of its line of thinking, about any hidden agenda on the part of Taiwan.

However, Indonesia has reaffirmed its belief that there is only one China and that Taiwan is an intrinsic component of that single-China. On balance, though, Indonesia's willingness to let Ms. Lu travel, in exercise of what she herself has described as her human right, acquires importance in the larger context of Americas preoccupation with its "war against terrorism" and Taiwan's determination to test Beijing's mood and patience during the run-up to a possible leadership change within the Communist Party of China later this year. If a major South East Asian country like Indonesia has allowed Taiwan to raise its profile through Ms. Lu's "holiday diplomacy", a factor at work is Jakarta's own sense of autonomy in international relations in the context of new possibilities for improved ties between Indonesia and the United States. The issues go beyond Taiwan's frantic efforts to win friends and influence nations with the aim of having a say on its final political status.

## Blast mars Independence Day in Aceh

5 2 15 1977  
HO. 14 1813  
**BANDA ACEH (INDONESIA), AUG. 17.**

An unknown assailant threw a hand grenade into a crowd gathering to commemorate Indonesia's Independence Day celebrations on Saturday in the troubled province of Aceh, injuring 13 people, police said.

Another explosion badly injured two men in Kuta Baru village on the outskirts of Banda Aceh, witnesses said.

The first blast occurred on a soccer field about an hour before the morning ceremony was due to begin, police said. None of the injuries were serious, but the explosion disrupted preparations for the celebrations.

"Someone threw a hand grenade at the crowd and fled," said a military policeman, Sgt. Sariya, who like many Indonesians uses only one name.

The crowds ran away in panic but eventually returned to the field, which was heavily guarded with soldiers and police. As many as 5,000 people turned up for the ceremony celebrating Indonesia's independence from Dutch colonial rule in 1945.

Rebels in Aceh have been fighting for independence from Indonesia since 1976.

The violence has claimed thousands of lives and rights activists accuse the military of abuses including torture, kidnappings and assassinations.

The separatists often launch attacks on and around Indonesia's Independence Day — celebrated August 17 — but denied involvement in Saturday's blasts.

A rebel spokesman for Banda Aceh accused security officials of setting off the explosions to discredit the insurgents.

"We are not responsible for Saturday's blast.

There was tight security there, anyone bringing a doughnut into the field would be checked," said rebel spokesman, Maksalmina, who uses only a single name. — AP

# Indonesia's move to reinvent itself

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, AUG. 11. Indonesia's Peoples Consultative Assembly today approved a package of innovative constitutional changes which, if implemented, will reinvent the country's political system itself.

The highest legislative forum, known as MPR in the native parlance, also decreed the establishment of a constitutional commission as the Assembly's latest annual session drew to a close in Jakarta following marathon discussions for over 10 days.

Topping the list of these constitutional changes was the abolition of Indonesia's "praetorian system of governance that accorded a pivotal role to the military and police forces in politics.

With effect from the next general election, now due in 2004, the Indonesian military and security forces would cease to hold seats in the MPR.

This was announced by the MPR's Speaker, Amien Rais, at the conclusion of the Assembly's session today.

He said that "the TNI (the Indonesian acronym for the military establishment) and police will be a professional state security and defence forces and (they will) no longer involve (themselves) in day-to-day politics.

Another mandated constitutional amendment, which is likely to refashion the substance of Indonesia's politics, was the introduction of a system of direct elections for the posts of an executive President and Vice-President.



Members of Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly applaud as they decide to adopt a package of reforms on the Constitution during the final session at the Parliament building in Jakarta on Saturday. — AP

This new measure is also likely to come into force from the general election slated for 2004. Under the current practice, the MPR itself functions as the electoral college for the posts of President and Vice-President.

While all these statute changes were designed, over a period of several months, to transform the Indonesian polity into a more democratic and people-friendly dispensation, a maverick proposal that the MPR today rejected with an air of finality was the move to introduce sharia laws or the Islamic system of jurisprudence.

As a nation of over 210 million people, Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation.

Since it adopted an independent Constitution in 1945

in the context of the Dutch decolonisation of the erstwhile East Indies, Indonesia has remained steadfast in adhering to largely secular politics.

The latest move by a minority of religious parties to inject religion into politics and recast Indonesia as a virtual Islamic state was defeated quite easily in the MPR, according to those who were privy to the deliberations.

While the non-Islamisation of Indonesia's polity might attract considerable attention across the international stage, given the state of contemporary political discourse there, the new constitutional changes constituted the key topic of interest within Indonesia itself.

Summing up the MPR's latest decisions, Mr. Amien Rais said that interest groups (or lobbies)

would join the ranks of the military establishment and the police in losing their statutory representation in the Consultative Assembly.

Under the existing system, the MPR consists of all the 500 members of the lower House of Representatives, all elected by the people except for 38 nominees of the military-police network, besides 200 other non-elected members appointed by the President and the Government.

This configuration was worked out to suit the authoritarian texture of administration that Indonesia has lived with for several decades.

The latest changes will now pave the way for a new-look MPR. Following the 2004 general election, the MPR will consist of the House of Representatives, all of them to be elected directly by the people, and a Regional Representatives Council, which too will consist of members to be chosen by the people themselves.

Commenting on the total abolition of the "praetorian system with effect from 2004, the Speaker of the existing House of Representatives, Akbar Tandjung, said this would send out a positive signal for the development of Indonesia as a nation of institutions.

Even as Indonesia begins to break free from its recent traditions of individualistic rule, the military forces would need to pay more attention to professionalism which could be fostered through enhanced funding for the development of necessary skills, he pointed out.

## Indonesia looks at poll reform

JAKARTA, AUG. 6. Indonesia's voters could get the chance to elect their President directly for the first time as soon as 2004, after a top legislative commission signed off on the proposal on Tuesday.

The proposed change to the country's Constitution will be presented to the full Assembly on Thursday.

If approved by the Assembly, the proposal would be sent to Parliament, which could set up the elections as soon as 2004.

Currently, the People's Consultative Assembly has the power to choose and dismiss the President and Vice-President.

It used that power last year to remove the President, Abdurrahman Wahid.

Direct Presidential elections could be a major step forward for this fledgling democracy, which only emerged in 1998 from a 32-year dictatorship.

New election rules are among the hotly contested issues the Assembly is debating in its 12-day annual session that ends next Monday.

The Assembly is also considering changes in the constitution that would force the military from politics and mandate traditional Islamic law.



Indonesian students, covering faces with tooth paste to beat the effect of teargas, chant slogans near Parliament in Jakarta on Tuesday. — AP

In a related development, water cannons dispersed thousands of protesters who demanded sweeping constitutional reforms, including the right of voters to elect the President directly and an end to the military's official role in politics.

About 3,000 people, most of them students, demanded the 700-member body introduce direct Presidential elections and eliminate a block of 38 seats reserved for representatives of the security forces.

"We must have reforms or die," demonstrators chanted.

Police strung razor wire behind the main gates to prevent the students from entering the compound.

When protesters began rocking the gates and throwing plastic water bottles at officers, three water cannons were used to disperse them.

There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Many Indonesians say that a transformation from military dictatorship to democracy cannot be achieved if the armed forces retain a high profile and official role within politics. — AP



# Mahathir not to run in next election

*10 15 119 6 5 ASIN 2003*  
**KUALA LUMPUR, SEPT. 13.** The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, said on Friday he would not run in Malaysia's next general election, the national news agency reported.

The remark was the strongest indication yet that Mr. Mahathir had decided against calling an early election before he retires as Prime Minister in late 2003, and confirmed that he will give up the parliamentary seat he has held for nearly 30 years.

Mr. Mahathir, Malaysia's leader since 1981, stunned his country by announcing in a June 22 speech that he would step down as

Prime Minister and chairman of the ruling National Front coalition:

Shocked party leaders mobbed him at the podium and persuaded him to stay on. A transition plan was announced for Mr. Mahathir to hand over power to his deputy, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in October 2003.



**The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, waves to his supporters in Alor Setar, northern Malaysia, on Friday. — AP**

After the transition plan was announced, speculation intensified that Mr. Mahathir

(76), would call general elections before he resigned, leading the coalition to the voting booths one last time.

Ruling party officials sought to cool the speculation by saying the general elections would not be held before 2004 — but markets and other observers are still watching Mr. Mahathir and other leaders for signs to the contrary. The parliamentary term expires in late 2004. During a visit to the northern city of Alor Star, Mr. Mahathir said on Friday he would not contest the next general election, but that he hoped Malaysians would not support Opposition parties, the Bernama news agency reported. — AP

14 SEP 2003

THE HINDI

# 15-year jail term for Suharto's son

JAKARTA (INDONESIA), JULY 26. An Indonesian court on Friday declared the youngest son of the former dictator, Suharto, guilty of paying two hitmen to murder a Supreme Court judge and sentenced him to 15 years in jail.

"The defendant has been proven guilty of all the charges," said the presiding Judge, Amiruddin Zakaria.

In addition to murder, Hutmomo Mandala Putra, better known as Tommy, was found guilty of illegal weapons possession and fleeing justice.

Another member of the five-judge panel, Andi Samsan Nganro, said Tommy paid Rupiah 100 millions (\$11,000) to the two assailants and ordered them to kill the judge, who had sentenced him to an 18-month prison term for corruption.

The murder trial was considered a test of post-Suharto Indonesia's ability to overhaul a notoriously corrupt judicial system.

"It is true that the defendant instructed them (the hitmen) to commit a criminal act and in fact the two carried it out," Justice Nganro said. He said the handgun used to kill the judge belonged to Tommy.

With the defendant absent from the courtroom and his attorneys storming out in protest, the five-judge panel began reading the verdict despite defence



The defendant's chair for the former Indonesian President, 'Tommy' Suharto, remains empty as judges wait to read his verdict in Jakarta on Friday. — AP

pleas for a delay. The court proceedings were postponed only temporarily on Friday when Tommy insisted he was sick and asked to see a doctor at his prison cell. The verdict came after a four-month trial marked by frequent courtroom outbursts by the defendant, witnesses recanting their stories and the brief detention of a defence at-

torney for allegedly bribing witnesses. "The sentence is too light," said Solikin, a street vendor outside the courtroom who, like many Indonesians, uses only one name.

"He should have been sentenced to at least 20 years. He ordered the killing of a judge and the judge's killers got life."

Tommy was convicted of or-

dering the assassination of Justice Syafiuddin Kartasasmita, who sentenced him to prison in a graft case in September 2000.

The justice was shot dead by the two hitmen riding a motorcycle exactly one year ago. The hitmen have already been given life sentences.

Tommy, who was not present during the verdict, denied any involvement in the murder.

Judge Zakaria rejected pleas by the defence team to postpone the verdict until Tommy could be present.

The six lawyers responded by hastily leaving the courtroom.

"We think our presence in the courtroom without the defendant is useless," the defence attorney, Juan Felix Tampubolon, said outside the courtroom. "It is clear that the judge's decision to continue the hearing has violated the defendant's rights."

Applause broke out in the courtroom when the rejected the defence plea and began reading the verdict sheet, which is hundreds of pages long.

Earlier, Judge Zakaria read a doctor's report confirming Tommy had a stomach ache and headache.

About 400 policemen carrying batons and handguns patrolled in and around the packed courtroom, where more than 100 people had gathered to hear the verdict. — AP

S. B. Anis - Indonesia

HD-121

27/7

27 JUL 2002

# Army set to regain top TNI post

By Amit Baruah

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**SINGAPORE, MAY 14.** The Indonesian Army is all set to regain the top job in the country's military (TNI) with the President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, nominating a top Army officer to take over as TNI chief from a retiring Navy man.

The Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Endiartono Surtarto, is the only name that has been sent by the President to the House of Representatives, which must confirm his appointment. Reports from Jakarta said that Gen. Endiartono's name was sent to Parliament on May 10. If the House approves his candidature, then he will take over from Admiral Widodo, who is retiring. An attempt had been made by the former President, Abdurrahman Wahid, to sideline the Army by giving prominence to other wings of the military. The fact that a top Navy man was given the job of TNI chief

was seen as an attempt to reduce the role of the powerful Army in Indonesian politics. Now, however, Ms Megawati, whose vision of Government-military relations is quite different from that of her predecessor, has decided to return the top TNI job to the Army.

The new President's style of functioning too is quite different from that of Mr. Wahid. Many believe that Ms. Megawati is a believer in the "strong State" idea, a vision in which she is likely to find common ground with the military.

In a separate development, the Defence Minister, Matori Abdul Djahil, is travelling to Washington for a meeting with his U.S. counterpart, Donald Rumsfeld, and other top Pentagon officials.

The Washington meeting comes as a follow-up to the recent security talks held between the two countries in Jakarta.

THE HINDU

15 MAY 2002

## 2 killed in blast ahead of Aceh peace talks

Agence France-Press

ACEH, April 23.— Ahead of scheduled peace talks, a powerful blast on the outskirts of the industrial centre of Lhokseumawe in the north of Indonesia's restive Aceh province killed two suspected Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels and injured seven — one man, four women and two children, Aceh military spokesman Major Zainal Muttaqin said today.

The explosion, which reportedly could be heard two kilometres away, occurred inside a residence while a home-made bomb was being taken from the house by two GAM members, Major Muttaqin added.

Earlier last night a civilian was shot dead by an unidentified gunman in North Aceh's Tanah Jambo Aye village, Major Muttaqin said.

One corpse bearing gunshot wounds and severe torture marks was found in Pasar Baru in Central Aceh yesterday while three corpses with similar marks were found by residents in South Aceh on the same day. According to a resident, one of the victims was a local government official.

The latest killings come days ahead of peace talks between government officials and GAM representatives set for 27 and 28 April in Geneva, Switzerland.

THE STATESMAN



**Megawati Sukarnoputri fanning herself while presiding over anniversary celebrations of the founding of her Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) in Jakarta in January 1999. — API/PTI**

**I**N the past few months, the media community in Indonesia has become increasingly alarmed at the growing tendency, on the government's part, to regain control of the media. Experienced journalists inside and outside the country note that this is to be expected in the aftermath of a honeymoon period between the government and the media, after an authoritarian regime has been toppled — all the more reason to watch out for the forms that these efforts of media control will take.

The latest advice from President Megawati Sukarnoputri is that the media should try to be "executors" once in a while, instead of continuously raising baseless criticism. This would only serve to further risk impartiality while the media must face up to constant questioning on whose side it is on.

The statement reflects that

the government is reluctant to be criticised," said one observer. People become angry when they are only criticised without being offered solutions.

One wonders what media the President or her advisers subscribe to, given the endless talk shows and columns featuring a wide range of experts from which one could select independent views and informed proposals.

The first indication of increasing media control was the establishment of an information ministry in Ms Megawati's Cabinet (although suggestions that the honeymoon was over started earlier, under the government of Abdurrahman Wahid who always blamed the media for alleged misquotations).

Following expressions of disgust from those who thought that the dark days of having a Big Brother, a government body to control the flow of

# Press control tendency insults public intelligence

answering to the media, who might prefer quoting them than their conflicting ministers.

What subtle efforts to gain public support for media control choose to ignore is that there are now many efforts within the media and wider society to control the media.

We have never had media watchdogs and now there are so many.

The public has only to discern which bodies live up to their claims of representing the widespread concern that the media is not using its newfound freedom in a responsible manner.

The struggle to have a law on freedom of information is of course not only in the interest of journalists — the coalition of groups diligently working on the issue includes those working on a better environment, those fighting against corruption and advocates for consumer interests.

What must be pushed forward is not a reaction against a bad media — it is instead the strive for greater transparency and accessibility to information for the public who would be empowered to make more informed decisions and measures that affect their lives.

To recognise otherwise is to repeat the assertion that father (or mother) knows best and scrutinises or covers up sensitive information for his brawling children.

This is what was done in the past when ethnic, religious or racial differences were not to be discussed — landing the media in confusion when it suddenly had to report bloodshed.

While the public is learning to deal with the power of media freedom, a more informed public would learn to contest or ignore irresponsible reporting, thus snuffing them out of the market.

And as the government has adopted the jargon of public empowerment, it must also reinforce it in its mentality and put an end to its habit of insulting public intelligence.

— *The Jakarta Post, Aera News Network.*

While studying the Indonesian government's efforts to control the media in different forms and the repercussions of such action, ATI NURBAITI, Chairperson Alliance of Independent Journalists, Jakarta, deduces that as people learn to deal with the power of media freedom, they will also learn to contest or ignore irresponsible reporting

civil society toward reform.

A number of groups within the Coalition for the Law on Freedom of Information are also anxiously monitoring whether deliberations on this draft law will have a lower priority among legislators compared to the draft law on state secrecy and the draft law on anti-

terrorism — both of which might run counter to the struggle for the freedom of information.

The President has criticised the media quite a few times but the new rule against "door-stop interviews" for the President and Vice-President Hamzah Haz have not helped.

If the leaders concerned would

allocate time and sit down for a few minutes with the media each time it is necessary for them to air their stance, door-stop interviews, with dozens of microphones competing for space around their faces, would not happen. But the country's leadership must remain easily accessible to the public by

## 100 YEARS AGO TODAY

FEBRUARY 17, 1902

### THE FLOWER SHOW

**T**HERE was again a very good attendance at the Flower Show yesterday, but there was no Band. The exhibits commenced to be removed after 4 P.M. and as the cut flowers had to be disposed of, some were sold and others given away gratis. Most of the fruits and vegetable were brought out into the open, and large purchases were made. Some of the fruit fetched fancy prices. A native who exhibited four rare papayas of extraordinary size was offered seven rupees for them, but refused to sell. Hotel and boarding house keepers purchased a good portion of the vegetables, which generally went off very cheap; but there were not many purchasers of fruit, as the price demanded were prohibitive. By six o'clock the show had closed. It was intended to have an exhibition of agricultural implements along with the show, but the few firms who deal in them did not respond to the invitations sent.

### DEMOLITION OF BUSTEES

**A** correspondent writes: "Under the orders of the Calcutta Municipality, the large bustee in Amoti Lal Seal's Street is being demolished. Several huts have been dismantled, but no effort whatever is being made to remove the mass of thatch, framework and tiles which have been lying about for over a week. Since the demolition of these huts, the air about the place is by no means sweet. The Municipal Office is close by hut it does not seem to be the duty of anyone to see the debris removed and the place levelled and fenced off. Some huts still exist, and the residents of these and passers-by are using the land where the huts have been removed as latrines. In fact, this part of the neighbourhood has been worse since the demolition than before, and if steps are not taken at once to clean up this place, there may be an epidemic of some sort."

### SUIT FOR WRONGFUL DISMISSAL

**B**EFORE Mr Justice Sale, at the High Court yesterday, Mr Leslie applied on behalf of Mrs Caroline Elizabeth Cutler for leave to file a plaint against Messrs Hall and Anderson to recover Rs 10,000 as damages for wrongful dismissal. The plaintiff was employed as a dressmaker in the firm, and was under an agreement to serve for a period of twelve months. One day while at work she felt very ill and had to go home. She then placed herself under the treatment of Colonel Harris from whom she obtained a medical certificate which she sent into the firm, but notwithstanding that she was dismissed. His Lordship admitted the plaint and ordered written statement.

# Presidents and problems HD-13

*S B Asen  
9/2/01*

**T**HE FIRST lady has completed a year on the job; the second has done six months. Both, however, are in political trouble. The Philippines President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and her Indonesian counterpart, Megawati Sukarnoputri, face formidable hurdles — both at home and abroad.

Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo has gone the whole hog in supporting the American camp; a joint U.S.-Filipino military exercise involving some 650 American troops is currently under way on the Philippine island of Basilan and is directed against the Abu Sayyaf terrorist outfit. Ms. Megawati, on the other hand, has been soft on Islamist militants. She has even begun to earn the ire of neighbouring countries for appearing to be reluctant to take action against what appears to be a regional militant network.

Both in the Philippines and Indonesia, the domestic and international challenges the Presidents face are closely inter-linked. After the Philippines closed down the U.S. base at Subic Bay years ago, Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo has gone overboard in her overtures to bring the Americans back to the Philippines and enlist them in the battle against the Abu Sayyaf.

Outside Afghanistan, the United States has committed the largest number of troops anywhere since September 11, 2001, to the Philippines in the battle against terrorism. While there has been much debate on the scope and nature of the "exercise", the mere fact of the American presence is significant. American troops, as per an "agreement", will not engage in combat operations against the Abu Sayyaf, but will shoot back if shot at. Clearly, a lot is left open to interpretation in such an arrangement. From Washington's point of view, the Abu Sayyaf continuing to hold an American couple hostage is provocation enough.

Many civil society groups in the Philippines, especially those on the Left, have been critical of Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to allow American troops. There have been demonstrations and protests on the streets and even dissent within her Government. There is considerable criticism against Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo for being unable to deal with the problems of poverty and unemployment while using public money to project herself abroad.

The Vice-President and For-

eign Secretary, Teofisto Guingona, has spoken out publicly against the President permitting the joint military "exercise", scheduled to last for six months at present. "I will not be silent... I'll still look (out for) the interest of the nation. I did not sacrifice and will not compromise my principles," Mr. Guingona has said.

The Vice-President said he had full faith in the Philippine military to deal with the Abu Sayyaf problem and wanted the issue to be resolved. Mr. Guingona remains convinced that the extended stay of U.S. troops in the Philippines is unconstitutional.

For her part, Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo has been sharply critical of her deputy. "I do not want (Mr.) Guingona to air his reservations publicly... we already know he has reservations. It's not good to stress that because

Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo is doing too much, Ms. Megawati is simply doing too little. Both Malaysia and Singapore want key members of a regional militant network arrested by Jakarta; so far the Megawati Government has not gone beyond questioning one of the wanted persons. Her reluctance to take on the Is-

probe Mr. Akbar's alleged acts of corruption.

The Attorney-General's office in Indonesia is notorious for being slow and allowing big fish to get off scot free. In such an environment, the President has been found wanting as far as dealing with the issue of corruption and nepotism is concerned. Ms. Megawati's decision to depute her husband-politician, Taufik Keimas, to China at the head of a business delegation, has also led to criticism from several quarters. The President has also kept the press at arm's length. This is particularly galling for a press used to excellent access from the former President, Abdurrahman Wahid. Ms. Megawati rarely deals with the press, the job is left to her lieutenants.

Both Ms. Megawati and Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo (in the Phi-

*Both in the Philippines and Indonesia, the domestic and international challenges the Presidents face are closely interlinked, writes Amit Baruah.*



**Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Megawati Sukarnoputri... In the hot seat.**

we belong to one team. It's all right for us to disagree as long as we disagree among ourselves and not in public."

The Philippines President has taken the lead in South-East Asia as far as building an "anti-terrorist" model is concerned. Her warm interactions with the U.S. President, George W. Bush, have been noted. It is evident that Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo has not been able to "sell" her U.S.-Philippine joint military "exercise" to the Filipino people. These reservations may cause long-term problems for the President.

In neighbouring Indonesia, Ms. Megawati is still allowing Islamist militants a free rein. If

larmists has undermined the President's secular credentials and placed a question mark on whether her Government will be able to enforce the rule of law. Ms. Megawati, who doesn't have a majority of her own in Parliament, also faces credibility questions in dealing with issues of corruption. The Golkar leader and House of Representatives chairman, Akbar Tandjung, has been named a suspect in a corruption case by the Attorney-General.

But the Indonesian President has stopped more active members of her Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) from supporting the formation of a parliamentary panel to

lippines) took power at times of crises for their respective countries. Though six months and a year may be considered short to evaluate their performance as leaders, the indicators warn of more troubles ahead. In the Philippines, there is persistent talk of "coups" — reports that are denied from time to time by the military as well as the political leadership. Such talk doesn't enhance the image of the Philippines as a stable polity.

Civil society in the Philippines and Indonesia have made their positions clear about the direction their leaders should take. Will Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo and Ms. Megawati take the cue?



# Wahid questioned <sup>1/11</sup>

Jakarta, January 11 <sup>Shasta - Indonesia</sup> H-11

FORMER INDONESIAN President Abdurrahman Wahid was questioned by police on Friday over allegations that some of his staff took bribes from the son of another ex-President, Suharto.

A relaxed Wahid emerged from police headquarters to tell reporters he had no knowledge of allegations staff members took \$1.4 million from Hutomo "Tommy" Mandala Putra to clear graft charges against him.

Wahid has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing but he confirmed to police that he met Tommy in hotels in Jakarta in

October, a month before he vanished for a year to avoid serving an 18-month jail term for graft.

"I was questioned about the meetings...Tommy asked me to interfere in his case which was being handled in the Supreme Court," Wahid said.

"At that time, I told Tommy that I would never interfere in judicial or legislative matters."

The Supreme Court in October overturned a ruling which had found Tommy guilty of graft.

Former first lady Sinta Nuriyah Wahid was questioned by police on Tuesday and she also denied any wrongdoing.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 JAN 2002

To thinking citizens, the idea of setting up a new regional military command (Kodam) today may sound strange or outlandish, if not blatantly antithetical to the nationwide struggle in Indonesia to establish a civil society. However, in the case of the demand of the people of the troubled province of Aceh that its long dissolved Kodam be reinstated, their reasons deserve scrutiny, but only if the measure is intended to help accelerate the return of peace there.

Aceh's previous military command was rather grandly referred to as Kodam Iskandar Muda (after the powerful sultan who ruled the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam in the first part of the 17th century.) The idea of reinstating an Aceh Kodam has been an "on-again, off-again" proposal. When President BJ Habibie's government announced the idea of re-establishing a Kodam in Aceh, many parties in the province, who had been traumatised by the brutal and inhumane military operations conducted under the code name of DOM, flatly rejected the proposal. They included the local assembly (DPRD), which is now one of the supporters of Kodam's reinstatement. They now say that they are proud of the name Iskandar Muda.

The people of Aceh are irritated by the presence of the Operational Command for the Rehabilitation of Security (Kolakop) in Lhokseumawe, an industrial city and regency capital of North Aceh.

The function of Kolakop, which is headed by a Brigadier-General and the provincial police chief, has been queried. If a semi-military agency chaired by two brigadiers-general can be established, why not set up a Kodam in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, with a clear status and situated in the

# Task cut out

*S. S. bin*  
*Indonesi*  
In the troubled Indonesian province of Aceh, if the Kodam military command is to be reinstated, it must bring to justice the men in uniform for human rights abuse and restore to the Acehnese their sense of ethnic pride

provincial capital instead of Medan? History shows that in 1629 Iskandar twice tried to free Malaka from the yoke of Portuguese colonial power. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Aceh achieved great prosperity under the monarch and controlled the north-western portion of what's now known as the Indonesian archipelago.

But there are also community groups, especially non-governmental organisations, that do not care about historical sentiment and fear a repetition of cold-blooded military operations, carried out in an even more callous way. The Kodam was abolished with 16 others throughout Indonesia and merged into 10 new military commands in 1985. The functions of the Kodam Iskandar Muda were



Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri

moved to the North and Central Sumatra Military Command in Medan, capital of North Sumatra. The Acehnese were somewhat demoralised by the measure because, historically speaking, Aceh had played a leading role in the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia in the 1940s whereas Medan, then the capital of East Sumatra region, with its traditional, pre-colonial aristocrats had been the capital city of the Dutch-created puppet state of Negara Sumatra Timur (East Sumatra State).

However, after the central government explained that the change had been implemented for the sake of efficiency, the people of Aceh were able to accept it. Studying the mood of the people during a

meeting between delegations representing the Aceh administration and the Acehnese people, we would tend to say that Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri will soon give her nod to the plan.

But amid the wave of change currently sweeping the world, she needs to give more thought to demands to abolish Kodam throughout the archipelago. With the fall of Suharto's despotic regime, which abused the power of the military from the central military headquarters right down to the village level in the pursuit of its own interests, this noble idea should have been seriously discussed many years ago.

But back then it was completely unthinkable because of the presence of so many pro-Suharto elements both within and without the government. Considering that Kodam usually asks for police assistance to secure special events, it could be viewed as a redundant unit anyway. In Aceh, the law has long been held at bay by separatists and members of the armed forces and police. The local government should announce, as part of its plan to reinstate Kodam, ideas on how to make the best use of the new military command to: first, bring to justice those officers who have committed human rights violations, because what the Acehnese badly need right now is the restoration of their pride, whether that be based on historical factors, ethnic pride or justice.

Second, when the time comes, to join other people throughout the country to campaign for the abolition of military commands at all levels to raise our nation to the same level as modern and civilised countries.

- The Jakarta Post/Asia News Network.