

Treason letoff heat on Jakarta

Jakarta, Dec. 1 (Reuters): An Indonesian high court has cleared radical Muslim preacher Abu Bakar Bashir of treason but upheld other charges.

A spokesperson for the Jakarta court also said today Bashir's prison sentence, handed down in September, had been reduced to three years from four.

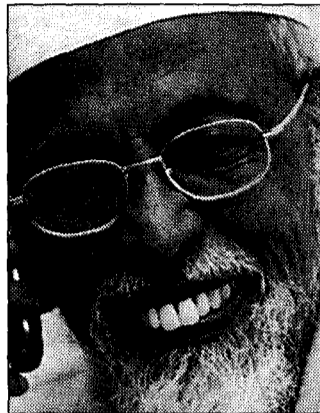
Lawyers for Bashir said they had not received notification from the court on the appeal and would still fight for his release.

But the decision brought immediate criticism from some analysts who saw it signalling a softer Indonesian stand on militancy. Security hardliners in the West as well as in neighbouring countries such as Singapore had attacked the original four-year sentence as too light.

A Jakarta lower court ruled in September that Bashir, accused of being the spiritual leader of the Jemaah Islamiah militant Muslim network, at least knew the group existed, and convicted him of treason and other charges. But it said allegations Bashir led Jemaah Islamiah, blamed for actual and planned violence throughout the region, were unproven.

The appellate court, in a ruling announced today, overturned the treason conviction but upheld charges of forging documents and violating immigration laws, the spokesman said.

"The high court has decided the defendant has to be punished for three years," said high court spokesperson Hasan Basri, who said the ruling was reached last



Abu Bakar Bashir

month but not announced.

"The defendant has been proven guilty of forging documents, and getting in and out of Indonesia without going through immigration. However, on the charge of toppling the government that was ruled proven by the lower court, the appeals panel ruled that it was not proven," he told reporters.

Sidney Jones, Indonesia project director for the International Crisis Group think-tank, said the ruling could make the conviction of other militant suspects harder.

"It's an unfortunate decision by the appeals court because it's going to make it much more difficult for Indonesian prosecutors to convict members of Jemaah Islamiah simply for their role in the organisation," Jones said.

The Jemaah Islamiah is widely seen as al Qaida's arm in Southeast Asia.

Bali bombing mastermind sentenced to death

Associated Press

JAKARTA, Sept. 10. — Judges sentenced an Islamic militant to death by firing squad after finding him guilty today of being the "intellectual mastermind" behind last year's deadly nightclubs bombings on Bali island.

"Imam Samudra has been clearly proven to have planned a terrorist act, and we hand down the sentence of death," Judge Wayan Sugawa said. Samudra shouted "God is Great" after the verdict was read, while several people in courtroom cheered. Samudra pumped his fist into the air as he was led out by police. "Go to hell, you infidels, and Bush, Sharon," he yelled in English.

The latest sentence was another indication that Indonesian authorities are serious about using the criminal justice sys-

tem to crack down on terrorism, without invoking draconian internal security acts — such as those in Malaysia and Singapore — that allow police to detain suspects for long periods without trial or access to legal advice.

Government leaders have said they are proud that their country has not compromised civil liberties in the struggle to eradicate Muslim militancy.

Earlier today, Judge Iffa Sudewi said Samudra played "a dominant role in the Bali bomb blasts and... is the intellectual mastermind behind the Bali bomb explosions." Samudra (33), an Afghan-trained fighter, has said he wants to die as a martyr.

But during the trial he denied the charges that he had commanded the group of militants who carried out the attack on 12 October that killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists.



Imam Samudra after his conviction on Wednesday. — AFP

Samudra's sister prays for a miracle

JAKARTA, Sept. 10. — The sister of Imam Samudra, the Islamic militant sentenced to death today for masterminding the Bali bombings, said she was praying for a miracle to save her brother.

Ms Nunung told Elshinta radio her family rejected the ruling passed by a court in Bali because it was "engineered by humans and it was not a punishment from God". The hope from our family is for him to be set free. Samudra's lawyers say he has told them to appeal because he should have been tried under Islamic law.

If Samudra's appeal is rejected in future, Ms Nunung said she hoped her brother would "die for a holy cause as a mujahed (jihad warrior)". "Perhaps it (death) is the best thing for my brother, Abdul Aziz," she said from the family home in a village near Serang, a town in west Java. Aziz is Samudra's birth name. — AFP

COURT CLEARS CLERIC OF CHARGES

Bashir convicted for treason

Jakarta Post/ ANN
& AFP

JAKARTA, Sept. 2. — A court here today convicted Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir to four years in prison after finding him guilty of involvement in treason by attempting to topple the Indonesian government. The central district court also found Bashir (65) guilty of forging official documents and violating immigration laws.

The court, however, acquitted the cleric of other charges of plotting the assassination of the then Vice-President Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri. He was also cleared of leading any direct treason attempt as well as heading the Jemaah Islamiyah terror outfit, which is suspected to be linked to the Al-Qaida.

Mr Justice Muhammad Saleh, heading a five judge Bench, said Bashir "has been proven to take part in subversion with the aim of overthrowing the government". But he added: "There is not enough evidence to say that the defendant Abu Bakar Bashir is the leader and the organiser of subversion with the intention of overthrowing the government."

The five judges, who took turns reading the verdict, said there was no proof that Bashir heads the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror group but added that he was part of its struggle.

They said he waged a JI terror campaign to topple the Indonesian government and to establish an Islamic state and



Abu Bakar Bashir escorted to prison after being charged with treason in Jakarta on Tuesday. — AFP

had demanded a 15-year term.

Judges also convicted Bashir of an immigration offence. The four-year term includes the sentence for this crime. They ruled that the time Bashir has already spent in custody be deducted from the sentence. He was arrested last October.

Following the verdict, Bashir alleged his trial had been orchestrated by the Indonesian government to satisfy the USA and its campaign to combat terrorism worldwide. "Just because I am fighting for the sharia law, I am accused of subversion."

Bali blast accused let off with 4-yr term

Jakarta, September 2

AN INDONESIAN court Tuesday jailed Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir for four years on treason charges, but said the prosecution had failed to prove he led the Jemaah Islamiah network blamed for bombings in Southeast Asia.

The sentence was far less than the 15 years demanded by the prosecution in a case, which has been widely seen as a test of the willingness of the world's most populous Muslim nation to crack down on radical Islam.

Political analysts described

the sentence as light and one predicted it would make the US think twice before handing over suspected Jemaah Islamiah operational commander Hambali for trial in Indonesia.

But Bashir himself, a 65-year-old preacher and educator who has repeatedly rejected all charges against him, said he would appeal and urged his supporters to remain calm.

"I cannot accept this, therefore I will appeal," he said soon after sentencing, his voice rising. "I ask you to remain orderly, and be careful of provocateurs from America."

His supporters shouted "Allahu Akbar" (God is Greatest).

The panel of five judges convicted Bashir of participating in acts of treason, but they rejected a central part of the prosecution case when they ruled he had not necessarily led a plot to topple Indonesia's secular government.

"Although the treason acts were proven, there has not been enough evidence to prove Abu Bakar Bashir was the leader of treason acts of trying to oust the lawful government," said presiding judge Muhammad Saleh.

"The panel has an opinion

that Abu Bakar Bashir has not been proven as the leader of Jemaah Islamiah," Saleh said earlier.

Officials link Jemaah Islamiah (JI) with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida, the group blamed by Washington for the September 11, 2001, suicide hijacking attacks on the US. Investigators have also linked the group to last October's Bali blasts and a car bomb attack on a Jakarta hotel on August 5.

Ken Conboy, head of RMA Indonesia, a Jakarta-based security risk company, said, "I think a lot of people, they were looking

at this as a litmus test to see how serious the government was. Four years, considering he'll probably get (time) off for good behaviour, is more or less a glorified slap on the wrist," he said.

Zachary Abuza, a counter-terrorism specialist at Simmons College in the US and an expert on Jemaah Islamiah, predicted Washington would not be pleased. "The Americans are going to be very angry," he said. "I think it really might make the Americans pause when they think about turning over someone like Hambali to them."

Reuters



AFP
Abu Bakar Bashir after his trial in Jakarta on Tuesday.

Hambali: Jakarta

firm on access

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, AUG. 18. Even as Indonesia celebrated its Independence Day in a state of unprecedented security vigil on Sunday, the political attention remained centred on the need to have direct access to Hambali, an Indonesian national and a suspected terror-monger in U.S. custody.

There were no reports of any terrorist violence across Indonesia, and the authorities in Jakarta stepped up their efforts to secure access to Hambali. The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Hasan Wirajuda, said in Jakarta that the President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, spoke to her U.S. counterpart, George W. Bush, on information about and access to Hambali.

Jakarta would like to send a team to ascertain facts and interrogate Hambali at the unspecified location where he

was being held under U.S. custody since his capture in Thailand a few days ago. Despite Hambali's capture, during the course of his suspected preparations for a terrorist strike in Thailand to coincide with a summit of the forum for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) there later this year, the threat perception as regards that conference was not lowered by the authorities.

Mr. Bush is scheduled to participate in the APEC summit in October. An Indonesian security official said that the primary purpose of the requisition was to ascertain the "future terrorist plans" of the suspect.

The U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, said in Australia that it would be "a foolish assumption" to imagine that the terrorist threats in the Asia Pacific region had come down as a result of Hambali's arrest.

19 AUG 2003

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ARREST / INDONESIA PIQUED?

Jakarta wants 'quick access' to Hambali

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By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, AUG. 16. Indonesia is eager to gain "a quick access" to Hambali, suspected terror master-mind now in U.S.' custody at an unspecified location following his capture in Thailand a few days ago.

The Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, said in Jakarta today that the Government would "take necessary steps to gain access to and question Hambali". Riduan Isamuddin, better known as Hambali, is a national of Indonesia by birth, and Jakarta's move to interrogate him is related to his suspected complicity, as planner and executioner, in the Bali terrorist carnage last year as also the recent bombing of a luxury hotel in Jakarta besides several other incidents which were originally viewed as manifestations of communal violence.

The U.S.' claim to have precedence over all other countries in the matter of Hambali's interrogation is traced to the suspicion that he was a key player in the serial terrorist strikes on American targets on September 11, 2001. Moreover, the proactive role played by the U.S. secret services in effecting his capture, albeit in some coordination with the Thai authorities, has automatically given Washington a clear advantage over all other

countries with a claim to investigate him.

Indonesia is smarting under a sense of alienation over the manner in which Hambali's capture and the follow-up actions have been carried out by the U.S. with the help of Thailand, according to some diplomats and analysts in the Asia Pacific region. Not surprisingly, but without openly expressing dismay over the U.S.' action of playing the global super-cop, Jakarta underlined their own "claim of jurisdiction" over Hambali.

The overall context of Jakarta's plea is that Hambali, the only person of non-Arab stock suspected to be a chief functionary of the Al-Qaeda, is also known to be the alleged operations-chief of the regional Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). In Indonesia, the role of Thailand, a fellow-member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), has also come under the spotlight, given that Bangkok has acquiesced in the U.S.' decision to keep Hambali under its own custodial jurisdiction. It is in this context that the Indonesian Justice and Human Rights Minister, today commented, with a note of implied meaning, that "Thailand's decision (to let the U.S. take him under its custody) should be respected, even though Indonesia deserves the right (just as well) to investigate Hambali".

17 AUG 2003

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S. S. Amin
Kusuma

A BOLD VERDICT

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Kusuma

AN INDONESIAN COURT'S verdict, convicting and sentencing to death a key figure behind the Bali bombing of 2002, could well prove a landmark in the fight against global terror. When the country with the largest Muslim population in the world treats a terrorist atrocity carried out in the name of religion as a capital crime, it sends out a powerful message that those who perpetrate such acts cannot seek shelter in religion. The terrorist organisation, Jemaah Islamiya, which is believed to have authored this outrage and others of a similar nature, proclaims that such acts are necessary for the furtherance of its millennial mission. The verdict conveys a sense of the consensus among Indonesians, especially the Muslim majority, that leniency should not be shown on any ground to those who commit mass murder. The court did not hesitate to call the killing of 202 people in the Bali attack what it was — a crime against humanity. The court was not rattled by the bomb that exploded in Jakarta two days before it passed judgment; the blast took 10 lives. Nor was the court fazed by the brazen exultation by Amrozi bin Nurhasyim over his murderous actions. Through his demeanour and conduct following the pronouncement of the death sentence, Amrozi clearly intended to send out a signal to like-minded fanatics to mobilise and act like him. The verdict holds out the promise that the Indonesian judiciary will not falter as it processes several other cases filed in connection with the Bali outrage.

The Amrozi case was prosecuted, and the sentence imposed, under a special anti-terrorism law. This shows that Indonesia has felt the need to readjust the normal judicial mechanism to deal with the phenomenon of terrorism. However, the Indonesian state has not succumbed to the temptation of resorting to large-scale sus-

pension of human and civil rights. The curtailment of civil liberties has occurred in several countries around the world, including some with strong democratic credentials, when confronted with the phenomenon of fundamentalist terrorism. It is all the more remarkable that a sober and measured approach has been taken by a country that is still finding its democratic feet after long spells of dictatorship. It should be remembered that democratic institutions in Indonesia are still under pressure from a restive military that does not trust civilians to run the country effectively. The resilience displayed by the Indonesian judiciary should instil confidence in the Government of President Megawati Sukarnoputri that the institutions of the Indonesian state have the strength to withstand the terrorist challenge. Ms. Sukarnoputri, indeed the Indonesian political class as a whole, must now mobilise the people so that the sober and democratic views of the majority decisively prevail over the exhortations of fanatics.

If Indonesia stays the course, it could set an example to the other countries of South East Asia as they tackle the challenge of strengthening democratic institutions in the face of extremist challenges. The Philippines and Malaysia are other countries in the region that have clashed head-on with forces of de-stabilisation that supposedly take their inspiration from religion. In the global campaign against fundamentalist terrorism, there has been a lopsided emphasis on intelligence gathering and related security measures. Indonesia's success in bringing to justice a terrorist mastermind focusses on another area where various other countries should learn to do better. This particular verdict has demonstrated that resort to extra-judicial processes is not called for by the campaign against global terror.

Indonesia cleric breathes fire from jail

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Solo (Indonesia), Aug. 10 (Reuters): In a message sent from his jail cell, the Indonesian cleric believed to lead the militant Jemaah Islamiah group urged Muslims today to adhere to their faith without fear of being labelled "terrorists".

The fiery address from Abu Bakar Bashir came as officials at a school he set up confirmed that a man identified by police as the suicide bomber who triggered last week's huge blast at Jakarta's JW Marriott Hotel was one of their pupils.

The speech also comes just two days before Jakarta prosecutors will sum up their case against the frail cleric, who is on trial for treason, and make their demand for sentencing. The maximum penalty he faces is a life term. Bashir, who denies the existence of the militant Muslim group blamed for last year's deadly Bali bombings and the Marriott attack, sent word to 3,000 believers gathered in a stadium in this city in central Java island for a congress of the Mujahideen Council of Indonesia, or MMI.

"Do not be afraid of being labelled as trying to overthrow (the government) or as terrorists when you are carrying out Islamic Shariat," Bashir said in the speech read out at an inaugural prayer meeting by Irfan Awwas, MMI executive chair-

man. Bashir is spiritual leader of the MMI and is believed to play a similar role in the shadowy JII, seen as the Southeast Asian arm of Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network. His words were interrupted by cries of "Allahu Akbar (God is Greatest)," from the congregation. Solo is the heart of Bashir's movement and where he runs the Islamic school that was attended by some of the accused Bali bombers.

School officials said another of the pupils was Asnar Latif Sani, identified as the suicide bomber who drove a car packed with explosives and fuel up to the lobby of the US-run Marriott Hotel last Tuesday and blew it up. Asnar, 28, graduated in 1994, they said.

The death toll from that attack rose to 11 today when a severely burned taxi driver died of wounds sustained in the attack, officials said. Bashir was taken in for questioning by police within days of last October's bombings of two Bali nightclubs that killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists, and his trial on charges of trying to topple the government began in late April.

The congress of a group seen by many security experts as the public face of Jemaah Islamiah is held every three years and will elect a new emir, or spiritual leader. Bashir could be re-elected, officials of the group said.

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JAKARTA BLAST / SIMILARITIES WITH EARLIER INCIDENTS

S. B. ...
- 9/20/03

Suspects, motives not yet clear

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, AUG. 6. Even as the Indonesian security agencies today identified some similarities between Tuesday's bomb blast at a luxury hotel in Jakarta and last October's bombings of night clubs in Bali, the exact identity of the suspects as also the intended targets in the latest case remained to be firmly established.

Though the Indonesian police zeroed in on the similarities between the J.W. Marriott Hotel blast in Jakarta and the Bali bombings, they did not want to conclusively blame the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) at this stage.

The JI, a suspected South-East Asian affiliate of the Al-Qaeda, was believed to have master-minded and carried out the Bali

carnage that claimed 200 lives. The official death toll in yesterday's blast is 10. Nearly 150 others were injured.

With the investigation being intensified and security measures tightened in Jakarta today, officials said they were drawing sketches of at least two suspects. The Inspector-General, Erwin Mapasseng, Director of the Detective Unit of the Indonesian Police, told journalists in Jakarta that one of these sketches was that of a person believed to have been in the van that seemed to have been used to set off the explosives. The other sketch would be that of the man who bought the van recently.

Meanwhile, the National Police chief, Dai Bachtiar, is reported to have said at another press conference in Jakarta today that a mixture of low-intensity explosives and high-yield explosives appeared to have been used in the blast. The high explosives were identified as TNT and RDX, and this tactical combination was seen to be similar to the packaging of explosives in the Bali bombings. The authorities would not still treat the blast as an established case of suicide bombing, despite the existence of some physical evidence in the shape of a van wreckage that could have carried the explosives.

The Vice-President, Hamzah Haz, who had on Tuesday spoken of the possibility that the U.S. interests were the target of the terrorists, said today that the intelligence and security agencies could not be blamed for what was essentially "a calamity" that occurred despite the forecasts about such acts of terror.

The Foreign Minister, Hassan Wirajuda, said that "France and Australia have offered some help" in the investigation of the blast. The Philippines and Singapore, too, had offered similar assistance, he noted.



The Indonesian President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, visits a survivor of the Tuesday Marriott Hotel bombing, in Jakarta on Wednesday. — AP

Bali bomber hails attack

BALI, AUG. 6. The alleged mastermind behind last year's Bali blasts today said he was happy about the Tuesday attack in Jakarta, saying he hoped Muslims had carried it out.

"Thank God, I am thankful," Imam Samudra shouted after he testified in Bali in a peer's trial. "I am happy, especially if the perpetrators were Muslims."

Samudra, who is also on trial for the Oct. 12 nightclub attacks that killed 202 people, was testifying at the trial of Hutomo Pamungkas, who stands accused of driving the van used in those blasts.

After being asked by reporters about yesterday's explosion, Samudra tried in vain to shake off his handcuffs to gesture. —AP

Cleric urges tough action

JAKARTA, AUG. 6. One of the most influential Muslim clerics in Indonesia called today for tough action against the bombers of a top Jakarta hotel, but said hard evidence was needed before blaming the radical Jemaah Islamiyah network. Ahmad Syafii Maarif, chairman of the moderate 30-million-strong Muhammadiyah, said, "This tragedy should be condemned outright and strongly. It is uncivilised action." Mr. Maarif, who criticised last year's arrest of Abu Bakar Bashir, a militant cleric accused of being the leader of the JI, said Muslims using violence were 'corrupted'. "Some people feel very helpless. They feel they have been marginalised," he said. — Reuters

THE HINDU

7 AUG 2003

Suicide car bomber kills 14 in Jakarta

By Joanne Collins and Telly Nathalia

Jakarta: A huge car bomb ripped through one of the top hotels in Indonesia's capital on Tuesday, killing 14 people and wounding about 150.

The city's governor said a suicide bomber was probably responsible for the attack on the J.W. Marriott Hotel—the second major blast to hit Indonesia in less than a year.

It was timed as thousands of workers poured out of offices for lunch and mosques called the faithful to prayer.

The blast ripped through the lobby and set fire to cars and taxis out front. Many windows in the 33-storey hotel were blown out. Wreckage from the charred lobby was strewn over a wide area.

Diners were eating lunch in restaurants and cafes in the hotel and in a nearby office tower when the blast blew out windows and showered people with shards of glass.

The Indonesian Red Cross said 14 people died and 150 were wounded.

"Thirteen bodies have been evacuated to hospitals while the last one, a human head

without body, was just found by a Red Cross team on the fifth floor of the hotel," a senior Red Cross official said.

Tuesday's attack coincided with high-profile trials of suspected Islamic militants on bomb-related charges—including that of Abu Bakar Bashir, an influential cleric in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

He is accused of leading the Jemaah Islamiyah network blamed for a series of attacks on Western targets, including October's Bali bombings that killed 202 people, most of them foreign tourists.

Jakarta governor Sutiyoso said, "There is a strong possibility this was a suicide bomber," while defence minister Matori Abdul Djalil was more blunt, calling it an act of terrorism.

Washington said last week that Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida network was planning new suicide hijackings and bombings in the US and abroad. The explosion hit Indonesia's financial markets. The main stock index ended down three per cent, its lowest in more than two months. Reuters

THE TIMES OF INDIA

6 AUG 2003

6 AUG 2003

Bali suspect spews venom on foreigners

BALI (INDONESIA), JUNE 12. An Islamic militant accused in last year's Bali terror attacks told a court on Thursday why he builds bombs: He wants foreigners out of Indonesia and thinks late night television shows and Western movies are immoral.

Defendant Amrozi bin Nurhasyim also said "white people" killed in the Oct. 12 bombings deserved to die because of what they had done to Muslims. More than 200 people died, mostly foreign tourists, when bombs ripped through two nightclubs on the Indonesian resort island.

Mr. Amrozi could face execution by firing squad if convicted.

He is accused of buying the materials and the mini-van used in the car bomb attack. In earlier testimony, he admitted his role in the Bali bloodshed and told his lawyers he was ready for punishment.

On Thursday, Mr. Amrozi admitted at his trial that he was also involved in a string of earlier bombings in Indonesia.

He said he made a bomb that exploded at a Christian church in 2000, injuring two people. The blast was one of several on churches across the country that day.

He said he also built a device that blew up the Jakarta residence of the Philippine Ambassador, Leonides Caday, in August



Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, one of the key suspects in the Bali bombings, at his trial in Denpasar, Bali, on Thursday. — AP

2000. Two people were killed and the envoy seriously wounded.

"Before the Bali bombings, I prepared the vehicles and bought the explosives to bomb the (residence) of the Philippines

on foreigners

S f Amrozi bin Nurhasyim
Ambassador," Mr. Amrozi said. "I carried out these violent acts because there was no way to expel (foreigners) from Indonesia through diplomatic means."

In 2001, he put together a bomb that exploded at a Jakarta shopping mall, injuring two people.

The 40-year-old mechanic said he had acted in defence of Indonesia's moral fabric, which he said was collapsing in part because "foreigners have colonised late night television" — the latest but most bizarre justification for his attacks.

"What would happen to Bali in 10 years if I hadn't bombed it?" he asked the court. "For sure, the morals of Indonesians would be severely ruined because most people would not be going to mosques, churches and temples."

Mr. Amrozi also said foreigners had polluted Indonesian by bringing in "Western videos and drugs."

"The Jews, the Americans and their puppets know very well how to destroy the lives of Indonesians," he told the court. "Destroying our morals is very important to them."

Mr. Amrozi said he felt sorry for local victims but had nothing but contempt for 'whites' killed in the attack. — AP

No mercy for Aceh rebels, say troops

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Banda Aceh, May 22 (Reuters): Indonesian troops fought rebels across six different parts of jungle-clad Aceh province today, as officers considered imposing curfews on flashpoints in the region.

The military said it had killed several more separatists today, taking the total since Monday to 16. It said a district rebel commander had also surrendered yesterday, the second senior separatist to do so in a week.

"There have been six clashes today, some are still going on. At all times we can intensify the operations because we have no mercy toward these separatists," Aceh military chief Maj. Gen. Endang Suwarya said in the provincial capital Banda Aceh.

A spokesman for the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which began fighting for independence in 1976, insisted no separatists had been killed and accused the military of murdering nearly 50 civilians. The military denied killing non-combatants.

The military, which launched its biggest offensive since the 1975 invasion of East Timor following the collapse of last-ditch peace talks in Tokyo, said it was considering slapping curfews on Pidie and Bireun districts, both separatist strongholds.

"Violence has risen in both those places," said Firdaus Komarno, a military spokesman in the oil and gas-rich province on the northern tip of Sumatra island.

In Jakarta, foreign minister Hassan Wirajuda went on the defensive in the face of international concern, telling foreign envoys Indonesia's territorial integrity was at stake.

"It is they who speak the language of force and terror," he said, blaming the rebels for the unravelling of a five-month-old peace pact. Mediators say Jakarta sank the weekend Tokyo talks.

More than 10,000 people have been killed in the 27-year war but casualty claims are traditionally hotly disputed.

One hospital official in Banda Aceh said the military had brought in nine bodies riddled with bullets since Monday. Some, he said, looked like civilians. "Almost 50 civilians have been killed by the military," said a GAM spokesman, speaking from an undisclosed location. He could offer no witness accounts of troops doing the killing.

The military said it had killed 16 rebels and captured nine in the campaign so far, with one soldier killed and six wounded. Suwarya said today's clashes had been in East Aceh, West Aceh, a region near Banda Aceh and an isle just off the capital.

As part of the isle operation, troops secured the beachfront of

the scenic island, 30 minutes by boat from Banda Aceh, that the military said had been used by GAM to train recruits and which under normal circumstances would be a tourist paradise.

"We will pounce if the rebels come out of the jungle," First Admiral Adi Prabawa, commander of the Western Fleet's combat division, said enroute to the island on a patrol boat.

Reporters were told to stay on the patrol boat offshore.

23 MAY 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

100 Indonesia's bleeding province 2005

THERE MUST be a political curse on Indonesia's provinces, the way they bleed from constant conflict. Be it Riau — where its five million inhabitants blame their poverty on Jakarta, or Kalimantan — a powder keg of inter-ethnic strife, or the Moluccan Islands where demographic and political factors spark off Christian-Muslim clashes, all Jakarta regimes have realised this. The government of Megawati Sukarnoputri has now sent in troops to the north-west province of Aceh for a battle royale with separatist rebels after negotiations for a peace settlement broke down. The all-out military offensive indicates the government's frustration with the separatist Free Aceh Movement — better known by its Indonesian acronym, Gam — which Jakarta accuses of violating a five-month old truce that was supposed to end over a quarter century of violence.

The charge may or may not be true, but neither side can shrug off responsibility for the human rights violations experienced by the civilian population of Aceh. The Indonesian army doesn't have an enviable reputation in this re-

spect, as the events of East Timor testify. It's horrifying to learn from the grisly catalogue of abuses committed before the ceasefire last December in Aceh that more than 10,000 victims of the fighting have been civilians. Gam apparently found this handy to fuel Acehnese resentment against Jakarta's rule, with people wondering if the government was not actually exploiting the region's resources without sharing it with them.

The failed peace agreement wasn't such a bad deal as it offered Aceh an autonomous government by 2004, which would have been allowed to keep 70 per cent of the revenue from the province's rich oil reserves. With such deep mistrust on both sides, it's not easy to resolve the issue without the dawning of sense on the combatants or through international mediation. Maybe Aceh's strategic position at the mouth of the Malacca Straits — one the busiest waterways in the world and a vital oil route to the west — will now prompt western intermediaries to try and establish a peace in the province that respects Acehnese aspirations.

22 MAY 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

ACEH / WORLD LEADERS CALL FOR PEACE

Scores of schools torched as fighting turns fierce

110-14
07/5

S. S. Asia - Indonesia

BANDA ACEH (INDONESIA), MAY 21. Fighting between rebels and Indonesian troops killed 13 people in Aceh province Wednesday, a separatist spokesman said, while helicopters fired rockets at rebel bases on islands off the provincial capital.

The clashes were the bloodiest since the Indonesian President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, declared martial law and an all-out military offensive in Aceh after weekend peace talks in Tokyo broke down.

Tengku Agam, a spokesman for the Free Aceh Movement, said the 13 people, including 10 civilians, were killed in an attack about 2 km east of the northern Aceh town of Bireun.

A military spokesman, Lt. Col. Firdaus Komarno, confirmed an operation was under way in the region, but he would not give details on casualties.

"The military are coming out in big numbers on land and on sea. Ten civilians along with two unarmed rebels and one Government soldier were killed," Lt. Col. Agam said.

Unidentified men have



An Indonesian soldier runs for cover during a gun fight with rebels in Lampuku, Aceh province, on Wednesday. — AP

Banda Aceh. Marines also landed on the islands, but there was no immediate word on casualties.

The resumption of hostilities has alarmed world leaders, who have urged Indonesia to restart talks with the rebels, though none have criticised Jakarta's hardline stance.

In a joint statement, the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and visiting Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, said in London they regretted the

breakdown of the peace accord.

"We urge both the Indonesian Government and the Free Aceh Movement to return quickly to the negotiating table," they said. — AP

torched more than 150 schools and both sides accused each other of carrying out the arson.

On Wednesday, three helicopters fired rockets at suspected rebel bases on two islands close to the provincial capital,

2 2 MAY 2003

THE HINDU

4 rebels killed, 40 schools torched in day two of offensive

Troops parachute into Aceh

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Banda Aceh, May 20 (Reuters): Indonesian troops parachuted into central Aceh province today and patrols fanned out in search of rebels on the second day of a military offensive aimed at crushing a 27-year-old rebellion.

Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels, who number about 5,000 and demand independence, said 17 civilians had been killed in sporadic fighting so far. Indonesia's military said it had killed four rebels, while four soldiers had been wounded.

At least 40 schools have been torched since yesterday when Indonesia launched its military offensive, one of its largest in decades, in the resource-rich province of about four million people. President Megawati Sukarnoputri has vowed to keep ethnically diverse Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, unified and this war has been seen as a key test of that pledge.

Indonesian military chief Gen. Endriartono Sutarto warned rebels they would be "wiped out". The separatists have vowed to fight forever.

"You must chase and wipe out GAM...you are trained to kill, so wipe them out," Sutarto told 200 military officers in battle dress in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh.

But seeking to allay fears among this staunchly Muslim province's population that troops would abuse civilians as in past operations, Sutarto or-



An Acehese boy in the village of Bireuen on Tuesday. (AFP)

dered his officers to shoot their own men in the heads if they did.

The international community responded with dismay to renewed fighting after the collapse of a five-month-old peace pact, fearing heavy casualties. The US, Australia and the UN urged a return to the negotiating table.

GAM has demanded independence since 1976 in a conflict that has killed more than 10,000 people, most of them civilians. Hundreds of troops parachuted into the region around Takengon in central Aceh, where troops want to secure an airfield.

Besides saying troops were on patrol in various parts of Aceh — it was unclear if they had encountered resistance — military officials declined to give many details of the operations.

Casualty claims and counter-claims moved into higher gear. A GAM spokesman said 17 civilians had been killed since the war began. He said the rebels had suffered no losses.

"People were shot and then even burned. Many houses have been burned as well," said Sofyan Dawood. The military accused GAM of burning down at

least 20 schools and denied any involvement in civilian deaths. Dawood denied GAM had torched schools.

Local television showed footage of fire razing four schools in a town near the industrial city of Lhokseumawe as fighting raged nearby. Civilians cowered behind push carts or fled.

Picking through the blackened ruins of one torched school on the outskirts of Banda Aceh, nine-year-old Chaerani grappled with what had happened. "Everything now scares me. GAM. Soldiers. Police. I just want to go back to school," she said.

President Sukarnoputri ordered the offensive after last-ditch peace talks in Tokyo collapsed. Mediators have blamed Jakarta for the failed weekend talks, saying the government came with additional conditions that made dialogue impossible. Jakarta had insisted the rebels explicitly give up their demands for independence.

With 45,000 troops and police on the ground, top generals hope the campaign will take no longer than six months, even though the armed forces have failed in previous campaigns to eradicate GAM.

Witnesses in Banda Aceh and Lhokseumawe said civilian life appeared normal today, as people went about their business and Aceh's ubiquitous roadside coffee houses opened as usual.

2 1 MAY 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

Jakarta steps up Aceh offensive

BANDA ACEH (INDONESIA), MAY 20. Indonesia's military dropped more paratroopers on Tuesday in Aceh in an assault against separatist guerrillas who defied demands to disarm, while officials in Washington and other capitals urged Jakarta to restart autonomy talks with the rebels.

Five rebels were killed and seven others captured on Monday during the first day of the assault, Maj. Gen. Endang Suwarya said on Tuesday. Indonesia has sent more than 1,000

elite troops to the north-western province, firing rockets and landing marines in what is expected to be Indonesia's biggest military operation since it invaded East Timor in 1975.

There were no immediate reports of fighting on Tuesday, but buildings — mostly schools — were set ablaze in northern Aceh. At least 20 schools were burned on Monday.

"Those captured rebels have revealed that (the rebel group) has a plan to burn down school

buildings, especially those located around military posts, in order to discredit the military," Gen. Suwarya said.

Gen. Suwarya, the military chief in Aceh, said that a battalion of soldiers was being dropped close to southern town of Takengon, a known rebel stronghold. The United States, Japan, Australia and members of the European Union said that talks aimed at securing a deal for Aceh's regional autonomy did not go far enough. — AP

21 MAY 2003

Assault on Aceh begins

Jakarta Post/ANN & AP

BANDA ACEH, May 19. — Hundreds of Indonesian military paratroopers dropped into Aceh today and fighter planes fired rockets at a rebel base in Aceh province, signaling the start of military offensive just hours after the breakdown of peace talks in Tokyo.

Some 468 members of a rapid reaction strike force parachuted from six Hercules aircraft to join about 28,000 troops already near Cot Keueung in Aceh Besar 12 km outside Banda Aceh, Mr Firdaus Komarno, military spokesman for the operation, said. The area is a known rebel stronghold.

The spokesman said OV-10 Bronco aircraft fired rockets at suspected rebel positions as part of normal operating procedure but the landing was unopposed.

It was unclear if there were any casualties in the attack which the military said targeted an alleged weapons cache in the rebel camp.

An Indonesian commander here, Maj. Gen. Erwin Sujono, said: "The offensive has begun."

He added that 15 warships had moved into waters close to the northern town of Lhokseumawe, an area with a heavy concentration of rebels.

Earlier today, the Indonesian military said it was ready to "ambush and paralyse" the separatists in Aceh.

President Megawati Sukarnoputri gave the go-ahead for the attack last night by signing a decree imposing martial law in Aceh just hours after the peace talks in Tokyo with the Free Aceh Movement broke down.



Indonesian police commandos drop off a helicopter during a drill on Monday as the government built a security ring around Jakarta. — AFP

20 MAY 2003

THE STATESMAN

Jakarta launches war against Aceh rebels

BANDA ACEH (INDONESIA), MAY 19. Indonesian attack planes fired rockets on Monday at a rebel base in Aceh province, signalling the start of a major military offensive just hours after the breakdown of peace talks in Tokyo and the imposition of martial law.

More than 1,000 elite soldiers landed in the province by sea and air in an operation to "destroy" the Acehese rebels in what was expected to be Indonesia's biggest military operation since its invasion of East Timor in 1975.

The talks in Tokyo fell apart when the rebels rejected Jakarta's demands to lay down their weapons, drop their independence bid and accept regional autonomy. The rebels vowed to resist any attack by the military and to fight on for independence.

The Indonesian President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, signed a decree late on Sunday authorising war in the oil and gas-rich in province and imposing martial law. It gave the military sweeping powers to make arrests, impose curfews and curb travel. The military immediately arrested five senior rebels.

On Monday, Indonesian planes fired the rockets at a rebel stronghold about 20 km east of the provincial capital of Banda Aceh, said Maj. Gen. Erwin Sujono.

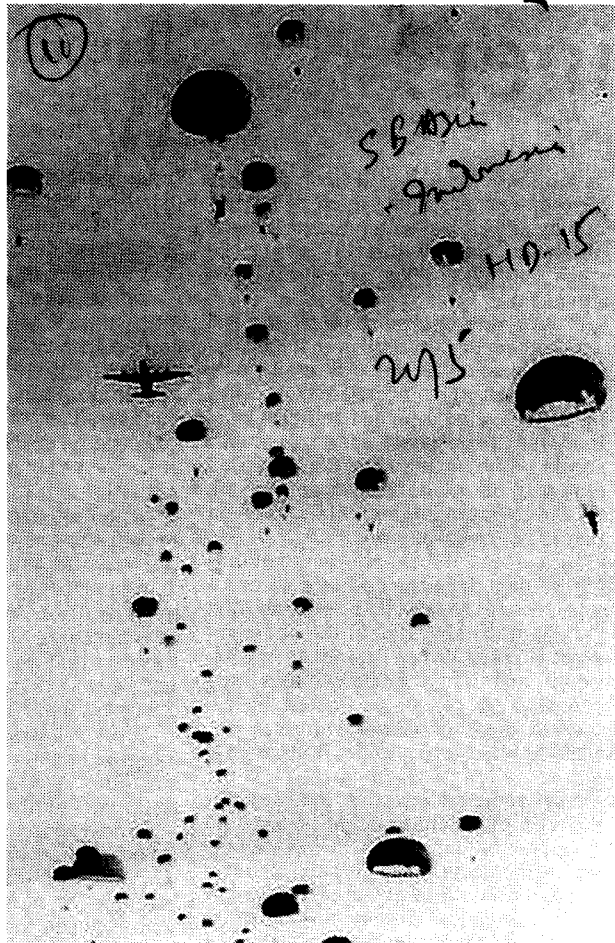
"The offensive has begun," Gen. Sujono said in Banda Aceh.

Earlier on Monday, hundreds of troops parachuted into the province in a show of force. Six C-130 Hercules transport aircraft released 458 soldiers over an airstrip close to Banda Aceh.

In the north of the province, more than 600 marines landed from one of 15 warships off the region's northern coast, an area with a heavy concentration of rebels, Gen. Sujono said.

By late afternoon, there had been no rebel casualties reported and troops were meeting minimal resistance, said Maj. Gen. Syafrie Syamsuddin. One Indonesian marine was killed in an accident while landing on a beach in bad weather, he said.

Indonesian military Chief, Gen. Endriartono Sutarto, said: "I have ordered soldiers to hunt for those (rebels) who refuse to surrender ... hunt for them and destroy them



Hundreds of Indonesian soldiers are parachuted into an area near the airport in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh, Aceh province, on Monday, in the country's biggest military operation since its invasion of East Timor in 1975. — AP

to their roots." There are more than 30,000 government troops in Aceh, up against about 5,000 poorly armed rebels.

Monday's attack signalled a return to military confrontation following a December 9 peace agreement between the Government and the Free Aceh Movement that raised hopes for a breakthrough in one of

Asia's longest running separatist conflicts.

The accord unravelled in recent months following violence by both sides and mutual recriminations.

More than 12,000 people have died in fighting since 1976 in the province, province 1,900 km north-west of Jakarta, amid accusations of atrocities on both sides.

On Monday, a body with gunshot wounds was found near Banda Aceh while in northern Aceh unidentified gunmen fatally shot a man riding a motorbike with his wife.

The circumstances surrounding both deaths were unclear. Monday's attack using U.S.-made OV-10 Bronco attack planes was the first time in several years that the military has used air-to-surface missiles in Aceh.

No one was injured in the attack, which the military said targeted an alleged rebel weapons cache.

The Government estimated that the number of refugees in Aceh will balloon to 100,000 from the current 5,000.

"The Government has prepared medical supplies, clothing, sheets, food, rice, 4,000 tents and medicines," the Social Affairs Minister, Bachtiar Chamsyah, said.

Deva Rachman, a spokeswoman for U.S. energy giant, ExxonMobil, which operates extensive natural gas fields in Aceh, said that despite the hostilities "production has been unaffected." — AP

20 MAY 2003

20 MAY 2003

THE HINDO



Aceh rebels sore over arrests

BANDA ACEH (INDONESIA): Five Aceh separatists were arrested on Friday as they tried to leave for peace talks with the



Indonesian Government, and rebels threatened to pull out of the discussions unless the negotiators were released. The talks in Tokyo aim to save a faltering Dec. 9 peace deal in the oil-and gas-rich province that was hailed as a landmark attempt to end a 26-year insurgency that left 12,000 dead. The negotiators from the Free Aceh Movement were arrested as they tried to leave

their hotel in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh and travel to the airport. Police said the men were detained because they had not reported to officers before leaving the province — something they are required to do under the peace deal. Three of the negotiators were also under house arrest after police said last week they were considering charging them with ties to a series of recent bombings in Indonesia. The chief negotiator, Zaini Abdullah, said that they would not negotiate unless the men were released (*the picture shows armed members of the Free Aceh Movement, riding a motorcycle at a village in Aceh province*). — AP

19 MAY 2003

THE HINDO

Talks fail, martial law in Aceh

AFP & JP

JAKARTA, May 18. — Indonesian President Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri signed a decree authorising military operation and imposed martial law in Aceh province after peace talks with separatists failed in Tokyo, security officials said today.

Security minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said Ms Megawati "ordered authorities to carry out the integrated operations," including what was termed a security restoration operation. Martial law will last for six months but may be extended. Military authorities have been preparing for

weeks for an attack and fighter planes, warships and thousands of troops have been readied. The state of emergency, or martial law, gives the military sweeping powers to arrest and detain people in the restive province.

Indonesian police arrested five senior rebel representatives in Aceh, less than two hours after the government imposed martial law in the province.

The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) said it had ordered all fighters to be on alert for an attack.

The security minister did not say when the operation would start. He said the GAM's refusal to end its 27-year struggle for independence prompted the decree.

"In principle the Free Aceh Movement rejected fulfilling the requirements of the government of Indonesia," he said, referring to three conditions he set late yesterday. Mr Yudhoyono said that based on a draft statement the rebels had prepared in Tokyo, "it is very clear there is no willingness from GAM to accept the Unitary State of Indonesia as the framework for a peaceful solution in Aceh." The decree said a series of peace moves, including the granting of special autonomy to Aceh "does not stop the Free Aceh Movement's intention to break away from the Unitary State of Indonesia and to declare their independence."

The two days of talks between separa-

51-2
84
tist rebels and Indonesian officials in Tokyo today ended in failure, with no agreement on how to salvage a faltering peace pact and avert war in the resource-rich Indonesian province of Aceh.

As the two sides sat down for the second day of negotiations in Tokyo, thousands of Indonesian troops massed in the province, poised to attack. But despite the threat of war, the rebels refused to comply with Indonesia's demand that they disarm.

Police post attacked: Aceh Rebels attacked a police post in Bireuen district, seriously injuring a policeman. An unidentified gunman shot a village chief in North Aceh.

Threat forces Indonesian peacekeepers to leave

Jakarta Post/ANN & AP

BANDA ACEH/JAKARTA, April 7. —

International peace monitors in Indonesia's Aceh province today said they would withdraw from the south of Aceh after a mob of about 900 people threatened to burn down another of the group's offices. The incident is the latest blow to a fragile peace between separatist rebels and the government in Aceh province aimed at ending a 26-year-old war in the region. On Sunday, a pro-Jakarta mob

torched an office belonging to the Henri Dunant Center, the Swiss-based non-governmental organization that is overseeing the peace deal. It was the second time an office belonging to peacekeepers has been attacked since the deal was signed in Geneva on 9 December. A spokesman for the center, Mr Steve Daly, said an "organised mob" of around 900 people today surrounded a HDC office in Tapaktuan in south Aceh. He said the protesters threatened to burn down the building unless the monitors left the region by Friday. He said it re-

mained unclear who was behind the incident. After talks with the mission's leadership in Banda Aceh, staff members handed the demonstrators a letter agreeing to leave South Aceh by Thursday, he said. The crowd, which accused the observers of being biased toward the rebels, then dispersed, witnesses said. Rebels and some rights activists have accused elements of the military of attempting to destroy the peace process by orchestrating the violence and intimidation — a charge denied by police and military officials. On Sunday, Mr Daly said the peace

process was "clearly in trouble" as a result of the attack, adding that today's incident only serves to reinforce those fears.

Aceh peace pact

The Indonesian minister for security and political affairs Mr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono today said President Megawati Sukarnoputri, after considering alternative policies during a Cabinet meeting on Aceh, decided to stick with the peace process but warned that it was ready to fight if necessary. "The president took a decision today

... the process of Aceh will be almost four months of Hostilities. signed in Geneva

the military and fight. "If all the agreement to set with the spirit of its sovereignty of the Reputing Aceh," he

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