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Dreaded 10,000 on Jakarta lips

Banda Aceh (Indonesia), Dec. 27 (Reuters): Indonesian vice-president Jusuf Kalla said today the death toll from a tsunami that swept across the Indian Ocean region could hit 10,000 in one area of his country alone.

That would more than double the death count for all Indonesia of 4,912 given earlier by a government minister.

Kalla's comments came after a visit to this provincial capital where, during the day, rescue workers pulled hundreds of bodies from treetops, rivers and wrecked homes, trying to clean up before disease could spread.

Speaking in the northern Sumatran city of Medan, Kalla said: "In Banda Aceh, the deaths (could be) between 3,000 to 10,000".

It was unclear whether Kalla, who said he had attended a mass burial of 1,500 bodies in the afternoon, was referring only to Banda Aceh proper or the surrounding area. The health ministry had earlier estimated deaths in Banda Aceh at 3,000.

More than 24 hours after waves crushed houses and swept through downtown streets of the sprawling, low-lying city, troops were still unloading piles of bodies from military trucks as weeping and dazed survivors tried to identify victims. At a market on Banda Aceh's outskirts, hundreds of swollen bodies were covered with bright orange plastic sheets.

"I'm tired. I'm looking for my father. Please help me," wailed Maimori, 22. She said her father was a fish seller and last spoke to her yesterday before going to the market.

As night fell, dozens of bodies were still scattered on streets and masses of debris — mud, ruined trucks and cars,

mangled motorcycles and wood from shattered houses — deposited when the tsunami swept as far as 8 km inland had yet to be cleared.

Banda Aceh was virtually blacked out after dusk, with power supply cut. Few people ventured onto the streets, and a stench of death hung over the city. Some activity could be seen at the main mosque, where Acehnese from outside town came to ask residents about missing relatives. Many people remained unaccounted for.

"I was outside my house, people were screaming 'big waves, big waves'," said Nazarudin, 40, lying on the floor of a hospital hall, his foot mangled and his face cut. "I managed to hold onto a tree. But my wife is gone. She is missing"

The wall of water up to 10 metres high that followed a massive earthquake off the Indonesian coast killed more than 22,000 people across Asia.

Many in Aceh drowned in waters churning with huge rocks, logs and the remnants of homes uprooted by the waves that slammed into the northern tip of Sumatra island yesterday. A wooden ship over 50 metres long sat on a street near the seafront where the raging waters had left it.

The UN said it had offered to send disaster response teams into restive Aceh, currently off-limits to foreign aid workers because of a long-running insurgency.

Thousands huddled in mosques, tents and larger buildings after the quake. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono arrived in the Aceh town of Lhokseumawe late today. Indonesian media said he prayed with refugees and told them they would get help soon.

Epicentre Indonesia tries to come to terms

The Jakarta Post/ANN
& AP

LHOKSEUMAWE (Indonesia), Dec. 26. — Tidal waves swamped towns in northwestern Indonesia close to the epicentre of today's undersea earthquake and left 4,185 dead, authorities said.

Most of the deaths were reported from the province of Aceh, which lies on the northern tip of Sumatra Island. Communication links to many regions in Aceh are still cut off some 12 hours after the quake struck, raising fears that the toll would rise further.

At least 50,000 people had fled their homes and taken refuge in government

offices or other buildings on higher ground, North Aceh district head Mr Alam Syah said. Hundreds were still unaccounted for.

Witnesses said the corpses of at least six children were laid on stretchers in morgues at one hospital in the northern Acehese city of Lhokseumawe.

Communication links to the town had been cut. "Things look pretty bad in Banda Aceh," Iyong Sukandar, secretary general of the Indonesian Red Cross said.

The government struggled to respond to the disaster in Aceh, which has been torn by separatist violence for 26 years. "We still don't know what's happen-

ing there because of a lack of communication," Vice-President Mr Jusuf Kalla said. "We're sending our two top ministers to Aceh now. We're also preparing food supplies, medicines and makeshift shelters as emergency backup."

An AP reporter in the village of Lancuk close to Lhokseumawe saw several bodies wedged in trees. "Waves as high as two or three meters suddenly rose up in the sea," said a fisherman.

More than 500 kilometers to the south-east of Banda Aceh, four fishermen drowned when high waves hit their boat in a river close to the coastal town of Deli Serdang.

27 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

CHANGE IN INDONESIA

Will Susilo Rise To The Occasion?

By SP SETH

SFB 18/10 SB 18/10

Indonesia's direct presidential election is a milestone in its democratic transition. The election process was free and fair, with a landslide victory for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who thanked President Megawati "for bringing this democratic process". In other words, the incumbent President avoided the temptation of rigging the election. And that is a testimony to the gradual maturing of the political system.

But this also means that the people want the system to deliver. In a country where 40 per cent of the work force is estimated to be either unemployed or under-employed, people's expectations from the new democratic system are scary. And Susilo will have to bear the brunt. Obviously, he will not be able to perform miracles. But he might be able to set the tone for a hopeful future.

Personal style

Is he cut out for such a role? What we know about Susilo is that he has an easy personal style enabling him to work with dictators as well as political hacks. He has managed to survive and prosper under the Suharto regime and his successors. Which is an admirable quality, but could as well be an example of sitting on the fence and lacking leadership quality of making tough decisions.

An example of his waffling: "It is not the hope of the Indonesian people to put human rights as absolute. There must be a balance between liberty and security, between freedom and order, between rights and responsibility". Which is neither here nor there. He can have his bet both ways depending on the circumstances. This might explain his rather mediocre performance in his military and civilian lives.

Will he, therefore, rise to the occasion in his new role as the country's president? He might

The author is a freelance writer

because he has quite a few things going in his favour. First, as president he will be his own master and not doing others' bidding as was the case before. Second, as Indonesia's popularly elected president he doesn't owe significant political debts. With his popular legitimacy, he can afford to be more audacious to capture people's imagination. He might

congratulation at the country's nascent democracy, making it somehow a substitute of sorts for lack of material development. Susilo himself is a votary of the system. He reportedly said that "the system, and not an individual, is the true wise leader". In other words, he is not likely to rock the system.

Susilo's military background is



even create a strategic vision for the country — a common goal to galvanise an otherwise disparate and dispirited people.

Third, being less controversial than most political leaders of Indonesia, he has the temperament to create political harmony. He is already planning to take steps "for reconciliation between my side and Megawati's side for the cabinet". In other words, he might be able to create a national political coalition represented in his cabinet.

Old and new

But, even with the best will in the world, Susilo will still be a captive of the system. The system is a hybrid of the old and the new — the old still extant from the Suharto era with accommodation for the country's new political elite. There is not much in it for the common good. There is even an element of self-

another question-mark. At the popular level, it is working to his advantage. Judging by the election results, it would seem that Indonesian people want as their president to be a mix of military and civilian attributes. Susilo is proud of his military background, hailing from an army family. His son is also an army officer.

At the same time, he is also a political populist. He comes out as an honest leader keen to serve his people. People are disillusioned with Suharto's civilian successors so far. Susilo's mix of military and civilian qualities might just do the trick. People do not want to return to Suharto-like dictatorship, but they do want a touch of discipline in their national affairs. And Susilo seems to fit that role. There is so much riding on the newly-elected president.

In the same way, so much is

expected of him by the United States, Australia and others in terms of dealing with terrorism. Susilo is American-educated and broadly in tune with the need to effectively curb terrorism. Without a secure and safe national environment, Indonesia would have great difficulty attracting foreign investments and generally create healthy economic growth. All this is common sense.

US pressure

But another part of this equation is that a popularly elected president will not remain popular for long if he is seen to be doing others' bidding, like acting under US pressure. Indonesia is not a terrorist territory. There is only a tiny minority of hard-core militants on the rampage. It is true that they can and are doing considerable damage. But they do not have popular support for their cause.

At the same time, Indonesians are a proud people and do not like being dictated to. They do not like being the likely target of a pre-emptive strike from outside the country to sort out their terrorism problem. This is precisely the kind of things that are not helpful to fight terrorism. It gives terrorists a *raison d'être* as the saviour of a national/religious cause.

And it creates and expands a constituency with varying degree of sympathy for their cause, though not necessarily approving their methods. This is what the terrorists want — a deeply-felt sense of wrong being visited on the Muslim people because of their religion.

Indonesia's newly-elected president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will have the unenviable task of meeting such diverse expectations of both his people at home and his admirers abroad. Whether or not he will be able to deliver remains to be seen. But one thing is for sure. Indonesia, under its new president, is not set for smooth sailing.

Democracy triumphs

5/1-8 11/80 S. B. Asia - Indonesia
Yudhoyono picks up the mantle in Indonesia

It is a victory for Indonesia's democracy that in an election seen as fair both by domestic and international observers, President Megawati Sukarnoputri was defeated by challenger Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and power is to be transferred on October 20. Sukarnoputri appeared less than graceful by maintaining silence after her defeat, although she has not challenged the result within the stipulated time limit, leading the Constitutional Court to confirm Yudhoyono's victory. Sukarnoputri's inarticulateness, in fact, was a general feature of her presidency, and may have been a factor in her rejection. Her term at the helm was neither outstanding nor disastrous, it was mediocre. Her government stabilized Indonesia, both economically and politically, after the turmoil of the late nineties when the economy tanked and the Suharto regime was brought down. The economic growth was about 5 per cent annually, which is much less than what Indonesia experienced under Suharto before the great East Asian meltdown, and not enough to make a dent on high unemployment figures. Besides no anti-corruption moves were initiated during her rule, and Indonesia's record on corruption, which hurts common people, is the worst anywhere. Most of all, she wasn't a charismatic leader who could voice her people's concerns and state clearly how she would address them. Nevertheless, credit belongs to her for restoring democracy in Indonesia.

She had to concede defeat to a minister in her own cabinet, a former general. Reservations have been voiced about his background in Indonesia's notorious security apparatus, which was used by Suharto to smash political dissent. But Yudhoyono acquitted himself in democratic politics creditably. He also acquired a PhD in economics, which is uncharacteristic of a former general. His credentials should equip him to deal with Indonesia's two challenges: security and economics. Aceh is still boiling over, terrorist attacks take place from time to time, radical Islamists of the Jemaah Islamiyah are active. On the economic front he must build investor confidence and attack widespread poverty. He also faces a political challenge in that his Democratic Party controls only 56 out of 550 seats in the House of Representatives. He will, therefore, have to co-opt some of the larger parties in parliament to advance his legislative agenda. Despite everything, the rapid progress Indonesia has made towards attaining democratic stability makes it, in some ways, the counter-Iraq or Palestine. In the latter places it appears that Samuel Huntington's despairing vision of the clash of civilizations is coming true, with inordinate US-Israeli pressure leading to the radicalisation of Islam. The world's largest Muslim country grabs less attention from CNN, but it proves that Islam and democracy are compatible.

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MR. INDONESIA

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SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO was confirmed the winner of Indonesia's long-drawn presidential election after the counting of votes was completed in all parts of the vast archipelago. Mr. Yudhoyono crossed the last hurdle on his way to becoming the sixth President when the incumbent Megawati Sukarnoputri asked her supporters to accept the verdict. While Mr. Yudhoyono won over 60 per cent of the vote to Ms. Megawati's 38 per cent, he observed decorum and waited for his rival's concession speech. The smoothness of the transition is significant for two reasons: this is the first time Indonesia has voted directly to elect a President; secondly, the popular mandate for Mr. Yudhoyono is overwhelming, surpassing all predictions. By denying Ms. Megawati's party, the Indonesia Democratic Party-Struggle (PDP-I), a victory in the parliamentary elections earlier this year, voters indicated their desire for a change in leadership. But although Mr. Yudhoyono led Ms. Megawati in the first round of voting in the presidential election, none of the three candidates — General Wiranto of Golkar was the third contender — could secure more than 50 per cent of the vote and this necessitated the second round run-off between the top two. The people of Indonesia have made a clear and emphatic choice.

Can Mr. Yudhoyono, who was a member of Ms. Megawati's Cabinet until recently, live up to expectations? The presidential contest was essentially about personalities, not policies. But several challenges will test the governance skills of the new President and his political abilities. Among the reasons for Ms. Megawati's defeat were her inability to pull Indonesia's economy together — the country is yet to recover fully from the 1997 South-East Asia economic meltdown — and her failure to arrest widespread

corruption and rising unemployment. The recent suicide bombings outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta demonstrated that the renewed challenge of terrorism would demand Mr. Yudhoyono's attention. In this, his task will be no different from the one his predecessor faced: to track down terrorist networks in the world's largest Muslim country without being branded a stooge of the United States, more specifically of the Bush administration, in what is perceived by most Indonesians as "a war against Islam." The former General's policy on the simmering separatist struggle in the province of Aceh will also be crucial for the future of a loosely knit nation of different ethnicities and languages. But first and foremost, Mr. Yudhoyono has the task of bringing the lower house of parliament, where his Democratic Party has just 10 per cent of the seats, under his control. His massive mandate should help.

Governing a democratic country is never easy and Mr. Yudhoyono knows he must deliver. He will be held accountable by a people who expect a great deal. Indonesia can justly take pride in setting up its first genuinely democratic government, with both Parliament and President elected by the people. This has come seven years after General Suharto, the brutal and corrupt dictator who ruled Indonesia for three decades, was dethroned by popular protests. The outgoing President, who was one of the main leaders in the movement that led to the ouster of Suharto, did not quite live up to the expectations of the people. Nonetheless, as she leaves office, Ms. Megawati must be given a fair share of credit for consolidating Indonesia's democratic reforms and for ensuring the smooth conduct of the elections. Her comprehensive defeat and acceptance of it can, in fact, be regarded as her democratic vindication. /

Yudhoyono wins Indonesia polls

Associated Press

JAKARTA, Oct. 4. — Voters handed former General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono a landslide victory in Indonesia's first direct presidential election, according to official results announced today. The US-educated candidate will be inaugurated on 20 October.

Markets and foreign governments will be eager to see how he intends to tackle the many problems facing the world's most populous Muslim nation.

The official results of the 20 September election showed Gen. Yudhoyono with 60.62 per cent of the votes, ahead of Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri's 39.38 per cent. A total of 115 million people voted.

Gen. Yudhoyono's campaign team cancelled a planned acceptance speech late today after Ms



Gen. Yudhoyono: It's time out for President Megawati. — AFP

Megawati did not concede as she had been expected to, his aides said.

Ms Megawati, who during her three-year term in office rarely addressed the media, will "speak at the right time", said her campaign manager Mr Pramono Agung, adding that she fully accepted the

results.

Earlier in the day, Gen. Yudhoyono already began speaking like the new leader. "I will arrange the makeup of the next government and a programme for the first 100 days, and then will explain to the people what the government is truly working for," he told reporters.

A running tally of votes had shown Gen. Yudhoyono with an insurmountable lead in the election for more than a week, but he had declined to claim victory until Ms Megawati had conceded.

The election was the first in which Indonesia's 210 million people were able to vote directly for their President. The poll, which was peaceful and free of irregularities, was praised as a key step in the country's transition to democracy after the downfall of ex-dictator Suharto in 1998.

THE STATESMAN

5 OCT 2004

Megawati sorry for shortcomings

Associated Press

JAKARTA, Sept. 23. — Indonesian President Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri refused to acknowledge defeat in this week's national elections, but apologised for her government's shortcomings today and called on the next administration to be "more responsive to the needs of the people". Ms Megawati told the People's Consultative Assembly that her Cabinet had enacted key democratic reforms, helped decentralise the country's administration and peacefully ended sectarian and religious conflicts across the archipelago.

But she acknowledged that corruption and terrorism remain problems, saying "it is hoped that the next government will be more responsive to the needs of the people. ...It is undeniable that there are a lot of tasks which we did not complete and various weaknesses that still have to be improved. For these weaknesses and all the things that have not been finished... I offer you my deepest apologies".

"The bombing in... Bali in 12 October 2002, the bombing at the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta in 5 August 2003, as well as the bomb in front of the Australian embassy in 9 September 2004 have reinforced our



Ms Sukarnoputri wipes a tear during her last address to Parliament on Thursday. — AFP

awareness that terror threats must not be underestimated," she said.

With 104 million of the estimated 120 million votes cast in Monday's elections counted, challenger Mr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had 61 per cent to Ms Megawati's 39 per cent, according to the general election commission.

THE STATESMAN

Megawati ousted in historic polls

Reuters
Jakarta, September 21

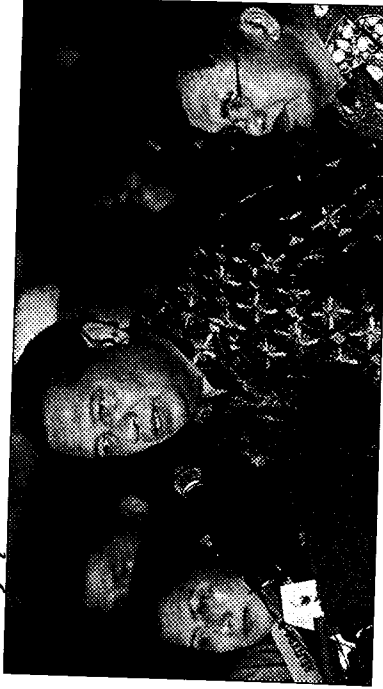
FORMER GENERAL, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono defeated Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri in a historic direct election but now has to deliver on promises of tighter security, better government and more jobs.

As of early Tuesday, Yudhoyono had yet to claim victory after Monday's run-off, but he had won 60 per cent of the ballots with about half the vote counted. Megawati had 40 per cent. In past elections, early counting has proved a reliable guide to final results and pre-election polls as well as an independent survey of Monday's vote also forecast a Yud-

hoyono victory. Indonesia's financial markets strengthened on Tuesday after the peaceful conclusion to a long election season in the world's most populous Muslim nation and on expectations the market-friendly Yudhoyono, 55, will appoint a strong cabinet.

Many expect Yudhoyono to retain Megawati's well-respected finance minister, Boediono, in his cabinet, although it could be more than a week before any cabinet announcement comes. "I'm thinking of forming ... the cabinet when I'm sure that I would win this election. Probably 10 days from now, I will be knowing that based on the count," Yudhoyono said on Monday.

Without declaring victory, he



AP
Indonesian President-in-waiting Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (centre) speaks to reporters in Jakarta late on Monday.

has already reached out to Megawati, 57, who in public has barely acknowledged him since he quit her cabinet as chief security minister in March after a bitter row over his presidential ambitions. "It is time for reconciliation," he said.

Indonesia geared up for historic polls

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Jakarta Post/ANN

JAKARTA, Sept. 19. — Indonesia is putting the finishing touches on preparations for the historic presidential election run-off tomorrow, and the country appears ready for the polls despite some minor glitches.

The excitement was already building since yesterday, with residents of neighbourhood units around the country erecting polling stations. There was a slight increase in the number of passengers at Pulogadung bus terminal in North Jakarta, as people returned to their hometowns to cast their votes.

The government has announced that tomorrow is a national holiday, to give all eligible voters a chance to make it to the polls. At least 153 million people have registered for the runoff, which will pit Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri against Gen. Susilo

Bambang Yudhoyono.

The Indonesian General Elections Commission (KPU) said that it was ready to organize a presidential run-off simultaneously across the country beginning at 7 a.m. tomorrow. "We have prepared everything necessary to hold the second round of presidential elections across the country. All polling stations have been set up," KPU chairman Mr Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin said today.

In a related development, President Megawati today urged Indonesians to demonstrate to the world that the nation was capable of staging peaceful elections. "Let us show the world that we are a nation that can hold an election in a democratic, secure, orderly and peaceful manner," Megawati told some 2,000 people gathered outside her official residence for a prayer session on the eve of the presidential runoff.

THE STATESMAN

জাকার্তায় গাড়িবোমা বিস্ফোরণ, নিহত ৯

জাকার্তা, ৯ সেপ্টেম্বর: ৯/১১-এর জঙ্গি হানার তিন বছর পূর্তির দু'দিন আগে ফের আতঙ্ক ছড়াল সন্ত্রাসবাদ। রাশিয়ায় বেসলানের স্কুলে জঙ্গিদের নৃশংস হানার জের কাটতে না-কাটতেই জাকার্তায় অস্ট্রেলীয় দূতাবাসের সামনে আজ গাড়ি-বোমা নিয়ে হামলা চালাল জঙ্গিরা। বিস্ফোরণে অন্তত ৮ জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে, আহতের সংখ্যা প্রায় ১৮২। হতাহতের সংখ্যা আরও বাড়বে বলে আশঙ্কা করা হচ্ছে। পুলিশের নন্দেহ, এই হামলার পিছনে রয়েছে আল কায়দার একটি সহযোগী সংগঠন জেমা ইসলামিয়া। দু'বছর আগে বালি দ্বীপের দু'টি নাইট ক্লাবে বিস্ফোরণে মারা যান ২০২ জন। তার মধ্যে ৮৮ জন অস্ট্রেলীয় নাগরিক ছিলেন। সেই ঘটনা এবং গত বছরের আরও একটি বিস্ফোরণে জেমা ইসলামিয়া-ই জড়িত ছিল বলে পুলিশের দাবি।

অস্ট্রেলীয় দূতাবাসের সামনে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটলেও দূতাবাসের কোনও কর্মী বা সে দেশের কেউ মারা যাননি বলে অস্ট্রেলিয়ার বিদেশ মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে। ঘটনার নিন্দা করে ইন্দোনেশিয়ার বিদেশ মন্ত্রক আশ্বস্ত করার চেষ্টা করেছে যে, এটা কোনও নির্দিষ্ট দেশের উপরে আক্রমণ নয়। বরং এর পরে সন্ত্রাসবাদের বিরুদ্ধে আন্তর্জাতিক লড়াই আরও দৃঢ় হবে। অপরাধীদের খুঁজে বার করার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়ে ইন্দোনেশিয়ার প্রেসিডেন্ট মেঘবতী সুকর্ণপুত্রী



বৃহস্পতিবার জাকার্তায় বিস্ফোরণের পরে জ্বলছে গাড়ি। — রয়টার্স

বলেছেন, আতঙ্কিত হওয়ার কারণ নেই। আর অস্ট্রেলিয়ার প্রধানমন্ত্রী জন হাওয়ার্ড বলেন, “আমাদের দেশ সন্ত্রাসে ভয় পাবে না।” বোমা-বিশেষজ্ঞদের একটি দলকে নিয়ে আজই জাকার্তায় আসছেন অস্ট্রেলীয় বিদেশমন্ত্রী আলেকজান্ডার ডাউনার।

মধ্য জাকার্তার ব্যস্ত রাস্তা রাসুনা সেইড-এ অস্ট্রেলীয় দূতাবাস এমনিতে দুর্গের মতো। কড়া নিরাপত্তা ছাড়াও দূতাবাস ভবনের বাইরে রয়েছে বিরাট উঁচু ধাতব টিউবের বেড়া। চার পাশে একগাদা অফিস, হোটেল এবং অন্যান্য দূতাবাস। আজকের বিস্ফোরণ ঘটে অস্ট্রেলীয় দূতাবাসের ঠিক সামনের রাস্তায়। আশেপাশের বেশ কয়েকটি

অফিস-বাড়ির ক্ষতি হয়, হুড়মুড়িয়ে ভেঙে পড়ে জানালার কাচ। বাইরের বিশাল বেড়া এবং তার সঙ্গে মূল ভবনের দূরত্বের জন্য অস্ট্রেলীয় দূতাবাসের বিশেষ ক্ষতি হয়নি। তবে ধাতব বেড়ায় বড় গর্ত হয়ে গিয়েছে, রাস্তাতেও গর্ত তৈরি হয়েছে। প্রত্যক্ষদর্শীরা জানান, বিস্ফোরণের পরেই সামনের রাস্তায় ছড়িয়ে পড়ে মোটরসাইকেল, গাড়ি এবং ট্রাকের দোমড়ানো টুকরো। ঘটনাস্থলে পড়েছিল ছিন্নভিন্ন দেহ, শরীরের পোড়া টুকরো। রাস্তা জুড়ে বয়ে গিয়েছে রক্তের স্রোত।

পুলিশ সূত্রের খবর, নিহতদের মধ্যে বেশির ভাগই নিরীহ মানুষ।

প্রত্যক্ষদর্শীদের মতে, দূতাবাসের এক জন ইন্দোনেশীয় রক্ষী মারা গিয়েছেন। দূতাবাসের এক রক্ষী জানিয়েছেন, বিস্ফোরণের আগে দূতাবাস ভবনের সামনে রাস্তার ‘ডিভাইডার’-এ ইচ্ছা করেই ধাক্কা মারে একটি মিনি-ভ্যান। সেটিই গাড়ি-বোমা কি না, এখনও পরিষ্কার নয়। জাকার্তার পুলিশ-প্রধান জেনারেল দাই বখতিয়ার বলেছেন, ২০০২ সালে বালির নাইট ক্লাবে এবং তার পরে ২০০৩-এ রাজধানীর মারিয়ট হোটেলের সামনে যারা বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়েছিল, সেই জেমা ইসলামিয়া-ই আজকের ঘটনার পিছনে রয়েছে বলে সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে। সবক’টি ক্ষেত্রেই গাড়ি-বোমা ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে। আজকের বিস্ফোরণে সন্দেহের তির ইসলামিয়ার নেতা আজাহারি হুসেনের গোষ্ঠীর দিকে। ব্রিটেনে প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত মালয়েশীয় এই হুসেন গাড়ি-বোমা তৈরিতে বিশেষজ্ঞ।

অস্ট্রেলীয় বিদেশমন্ত্রী রাতে ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় এসেছেন। তাঁর মতে, দূতাবাসের সামনে এই বিস্ফোরণের লক্ষ্য অস্ট্রেলিয়াই। নিরাপত্তা নিয়ে উদ্বিগ্ন অস্ট্রেলীয়দের ইন্দোনেশিয়া ছাড়তে পরামর্শ দেওয়া হয়েছে। সামনেই ইন্দোনেশিয়ার প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন এবং অস্ট্রেলিয়ার সাধারণ নির্বাচন। তার আগে এই বিস্ফোরণে অশনি সঙ্কেত দেখছে দু’দেশই। বিস্ফোরণের নিন্দায় সরব হয়েছে হোয়াইট হাউসও। — রয়টার্স, এ পি

ANADARAZAR PATRIKA

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10 SEP 2004

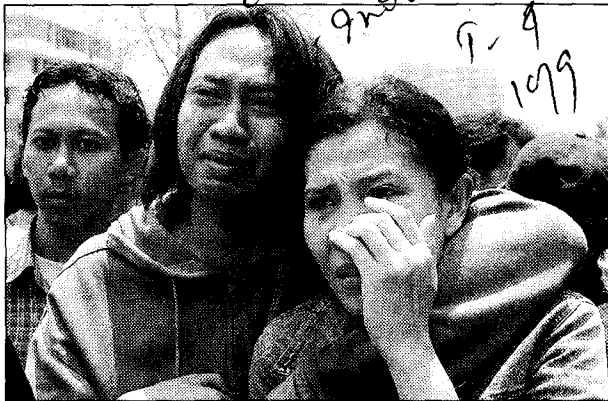
Attacks bear traces of Qaida influence

Hong Kong, Sept. 9 (Reuters): Indonesian police chief General Da'i Bachtiar was reporting to a parliamentary commission in Jakarta today on the threat posed by wanted Jemaah Islamiah bomber Azahari Husin. Even as he spoke, the room shook.

In a busy street in the heart of the Indonesian capital, a powerful car bomb had exploded outside the Australian embassy, killing at least eight people and wounding more than 130. The US-led war on terror has yet to deter the world's violent extremists from using terror to pursue their goals.

"Like Chechnya trying to set the Caucasus ablaze, they are trying to destabilise," said Magnus Ranstorp, terrorism expert at St Andrews University in Scotland. "There is a climate of destabilisation. They may be a long way from that but they are trying to ignite the dry grass that exists."

Regional terror experts agreed that the latest attack was almost certainly the work



A brother and sister cry during a search for their father who worked in the Australian embassy in Jakarta. (AFP)

of the shadowy Jemaah Islamiah network, the southeast Asian arm of the al Qaida. Indeed, several said the attack — against a western target, well-planned in advance and of significant size — bore the hallmarks of al Qaida influence.

Bachtiar was swift to tell reporters that the bombing appeared to have been carried out by Azahari's bombers. At least three top collaborators of

the Malaysian believed to have built the bombs that killed 202 people in Bali in October 2002 are on the run among Indonesia's crowded islands.

In addition to Azahari, Indonesian police have long been searching for Indonesians Dul Matin and Zulkarnaen — believed to be in charge of military matters for JI — as well as leading JI member Noordin Mohammed Top.

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HEADING FOR CHANGE

Suharto
government

WITH OVER TWO-THIRDS of the votes in Indonesia's first direct presidential elections already counted, the results may be known in the next few days. But one thing is clear — the country wants a change from the three-year-old leadership of Megawati Sukarnoputri. Her party, the Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDP-P), won the country's first free election to Parliament in 1998 but lost the general election earlier this year to the Golkar, a political vehicle of General Suharto. The dictator was dethroned in 1997 but the party is now led by General Wiranto, who was his army commander. Although Megawati, the daughter of Indonesia's founding father Sukarno, was the symbol of popular protest against the Suharto dictatorship, she has obviously failed to live up to expectations. Despite her political inexperience she was chosen President by the legislators in 2001 — under the old system. She replaced Abdurrahman Wahid who was widely perceived as ineffectual and corrupt. Now, after three years, she has lost her sheen and perhaps the election. Indonesia is yet to recover from the economic meltdown of 1997 and ranks among the most corrupt countries in the region. The continuing violence has done her administration no good.

So much so that in the presidential election now under way General Susilo Bambang Yudhyono, who quit her Cabinet a few months ago to float his own party, is the frontrunner. General Wiranto is now in third place. Since none of the three candidates appears anywhere near securing 50 per cent of the votes, a run-off between the top two, some time in September seems a certainty. This means the uncertainty will continue. More than anything else, the rise of the generals has triggered fears of a re-emergence of Indonesia's Armed Forces (TNI), who

were a powerful and dreaded force in the country's politics during the Suharto era. Since his fall, the country has introduced several measures to keep the TNI under control and strip it of the socio-political role that it acquired under the dictator. A powerful military was needed to keep the archipelago of over 17,000 islands together and also to rein in separatist movements, for example in the Aceh province. Though the Constitution was amended to abolish the seats that the military had in Parliament, it retains the "pan-Indonesian" grassroots organisation. Any elected President or government would necessarily depend on the military to maintain law and order and hold the nation together.

Both the Generals — Yudhyono and Wiranto — have promised decisiveness in tackling corruption, separatism, and terrorism. They have also promised not to let the TNI regain its influence. General Wiranto was even indicted by the United Nations for his role in the genocidal violence in East Timor before it became independent. However, if one of the generals is elected, it might be relatively easy for him to fall back on the TNI to bring the diverse country under control. The silver lining in this dark cloud is the fact that democratic traditions are striking roots. The generals too have had to campaign hard and canvas for votes. There is likely to be another round of intense campaign for the run-off. Irrespective of who becomes President, Indonesia's fledgling democracy is already a winner in this contest. The fact that both parliament and the President are directly elected by the people matters most. Even if millions of Indonesians vote a former military chief in, it will be their democratic choice. They can only hope that the next President will set the house in order, rebuild the country, and revive its battered economy.

Ex-general leads Jakarta democracy race



Retired general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono after casting his ballot. (Reuters)

Jakarta, July 5 (Reuters): Retired general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono took the lead today in Indonesia's first direct presidential election that strengthened democracy in the world's most populous Muslim country after decades of authoritarian rule.

Yudhoyono was projected to win 34 per cent of the votes, not enough to avoid a second round run-off election on September 20, an independent count of votes showed.

A representative sample of votes by the US-based National Democratic Institute and a local research organisation showed President Megawati Sukarnoputri won 25 per cent, while another retired general, Wiranto, took 24 per cent. That margin was too small to say for certain who Yudhoyono would face in the run-off, said the group, whose projec-

tions have been highly accurate in the past.

From primitive tribesmen in far eastern Papua province and Hindu farmers in Bali to trendy Jakarta office workers and beleaguered residents of strife-torn Aceh in the west, Indonesians turned out in force for the landmark election.

Unofficial reports put turnout at more than 80 per cent, with voters expressing delight about directly electing their President six years after the fall of long-time autocrat Suharto.

Opinion polls ahead of election day had shown Yudhoyono, who resigned as Megawati's security minister in March and is backed by a small, new party, with a commanding 20 to 30 per cent lead over his four rivals. But Wiranto, the candidate of the largest party in parliament, and

Megawati had formidable campaign machines that turned out their voters.

A number of ballots were incorrectly punched due to confusion over the folded ballot paper, said Gunawan Hidayat, national coordinator for the People Voter Education Network, which deployed 100,000 monitors.

The election commission ordered them counted as valid and Chairman Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin saw few irregularities. "The general impression is everything has gone smoothly," he said.

Megawati, the daughter of Indonesia's founding father, Sukarno, proved unable to jumpstart a sluggish economy and clean up rampant corruption during three years in power.

"I am very disappointed with the current government.

Megawati seems weak," said Gafur Latuconsina, 54, a rice seller in Ambon, capital of the Molucca Islands in the far east.

In the old-money Jakarta precinct of Menteng, a frail-looking Suharto, the ex-general who ruled for 32 years before stepping down amid student-led protests in 1998, cast his vote early.

"This is a wonderful transition from authoritarian rule to purely democratic rule in just six years and the people of Indonesia are to be congratulated," said former US President Jimmy Carter, one of hundreds of international poll monitors.

Previously a national assembly chose leaders in the nation of 17,000 islands and 220 million people, about 85 per cent of them Muslim.

Voters were attracted to Yudhoyono as an honourable soldier

who unlike Wiranto was untainted by a human rights scandal during his military career.

With all the candidates drawn from Jakarta's political elite, little divided the top four on major policy issues. None called for an Islamic state and some analysts said the election underlined the compatibility of democracy and Islam.

The vote followed a messy shift to democracy since Suharto quit, a period marred by political chaos and economic crisis.

Investor fears of election-related violence hurt shares and the currency, but the campaign and voting were peaceful.

"The market is betting that whatever the outcome of the vote, policies will remain market friendly," said Thio Chin Loo, currency analyst at BNP Paribas

in Singapore.



President Megawati Sukarnoputri after voting. (Reuters)

Golkar Party wins Indonesia polls

AP Wire Photo/ANN & AP

JAKARTA, May 5. — Golkar Party, the former political machine of Indonesian autocrat Suharto, won the largest percentage of votes in the country's legislative elections, officials said today.

In the final tally, Golkar won 21.58 per cent of the 113.4 million valid votes cast in last month's parliamentary polls, said General Election Commission (KPU) chief Mr Nazuruddin Syamsuddin.

As expected, based on previously reported estimates, President Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle came in second in the 5 April ballot, garnering 18.5 per cent, according to definitive data released by the Mr Rusadi Kantaprawira, who headed the vote count for the National Election Commission.

The result represents a major setback for Ms Megawati's party, which won more than a third of the votes in 1999 — in the first free ballot after the overthrow of Suharto's 32-year dictatorship. Analysts said it is likely to mar her chances in the 5 July presidential elections.

Golkar's chairman Mr Slamet Effendi Yusuf said voters were convinced that the party had transformed itself into a democratic institution after serving as Suharto's political ma-



Golkar Party says it has transformed itself into a democratic institution after serving as Suharto's (above) political machine for three decades. — AFP

chine for three decades. "The result shows that the Indonesian people believe Golkar is the party that has the competence to take Indonesia out of its economic crisis."

Voters had been angry at Ms Megawati's failure to improve the stagnant economy.

According to the final tally, the National Awakening Party of former

President Abdurrahman Wahid came in third, with 10.57 per cent. It was followed by the United Development Party of Vice President Hamzah Haz with 8.15 and the Democratic Party of leading presidential contender Mr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono with 7.45 per cent.

The Muslim-based Prosperous Justice Party and the National Mandate Party garnered 7.43 and 6.44 per cent respectively.

Six other parties won between 2 per cent and 5 per cent of the vote, including the Christian-based Peace and Welfare Party.

The final distribution of seats in the 550-member House of Representatives and Regional Representative Council — the upper House — will be decided this week.

It has taken the KPU a full month to tabulate the voting results for a three-tier election held April 5 for national, regional and district legislative bodies.

Out of the 148 million eligible voters, some 124.4 million cast their votes, or 83 per cent, of which some 10.9 million were rejected as invalid, said the Election Commission at a press conference.

Due to a complicated system designed to secure fair representation to outlying regions with smaller populations, the final vote percentages do not automatically translate into a corresponding number of seats in the legislature.

Bashir faces terror charges

Jakarta Post/ ANN

JAKARTA, April 30. — Indonesian police today arrested radical Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir as a terror suspect after firing tear gas and water cannon to disperse hundreds of his supporters outside the gates of a Jakarta prison.

Bashir will be charged with the Bali nightclub bombings and numerous other attacks by Jemaah Islamiyah, a top Indonesian anti-terrorism official said the cleric's arrest. The charges will relate to "terrorism cases in Indonesia, starting in 2000 until the Bali and Marriott bombings", Mr Ansyad Mbai, who heads the anti-terrorism desk at the security ministry, said. "The culprits are JI and now police have proof that Bashir is the outfit's leader."

As soon the cleric stepped out of the jail after serving a sentence for lesser offences, a detective showed Bashir (65) a warrant for his arrest under an anti-terrorism law.

"Yes, sir," Bashir told the detective. "There is no problem."

He was taken into an armoured vehicle, escorted by plainclothes and uniformed police, and driven to national police headquarters.

Reacting to the arrest, one of Ba-



Radical Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir waves to supporters as he is arrested in Jakarta on Friday. — AFP

shir's lawyers, Mr Ahmad Khalid said: "We will challenge this in court. This is not an arrest, this is kidnapping... We were not notified. This is not law. There is no more law in this

country." The lawyer quoted Bashir, who was clad in his customary long white shirt and Muslim cap, as saying: "Never surrender."

Asked if Bashir would be detained for six months, Jakarta police chief Mr Makbul Padmanegara said: "One thing is clear, investigators have already obtained legal evidence to carry out the arrest."

Some 600 police, helmeted and carrying riot shields, arrived before dawn outside the prison. They tried to negotiate with about 700 angry supporters, some of whom had camped for days outside the prison to protect him.

A water cannon then began spraying the crowd, who responded with a hail of rocks and bottles. Police carrying plastic shields picked up some rocks and tossed them back. Several of them, some with bloodied shirts, were later seen being led away under arrest. "We are ready to die as martyrs!" screamed some protesters and "Salemba will become the second Ambon," in reference to bloody Muslim-Christian battles in the eastern city this week.

Police, still firing tear gas, later marched forward under cover of three water cannon and pushed supporters back from the jail approaches and into side streets.

THE STATESMAN 1 MAY 2004

Indonesia poll count enters see-saw phase

Jakarta, April 7 (Reuters): A spurt in votes counted in Indonesia's parliamentary elections today put President Megawati Sukarnoputri's party neck-and-neck with the former political vehicle of ex-strongman Suharto.

Earlier Golkar, Suharto's old party, had led the count.

But the new totals still represented only 12 per cent of the electorate, and opinion polls before the election as well as a scientific sampling of results afterwards suggest that Golkar will emerge on top when the count is done.

The new figures were for over 18 million votes — three quarters from Java, a stronghold of Megawati's Indonesia Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) — out of an electorate of 147 million.

PDI-P had taken just over 20 per cent and Golkar just under. In the 1999 election, PDI-P took 34 per cent and Golkar 23.

The poorer PDI-P showing compared to 1999 is in line with polls that have showed that many voters feel Megawati's government has failed to live up to promises to fight graft and improve people's lives.



President Megawati Sukarnoputri in Jakarta on Wednesday. (Reuters)

"(They) said they are the party for common people but the fact is all prices of necessities have risen," said Wirdodo, 38, a worker at a furniture firm.

Wirdodo, from Indonesia's second largest city, Surabaya, voted for the Democrat Party, whose most prominent member is ex-general and former securi-

ty minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Opinion polls already showed him leading Megawati in the July 5 presidential ballot for which the parliamentary vote sets the stage. A good performance by the Democrats in the count so far is a further boost to his reputation.

"What we see is that many who voted for the Democrat Party are voters who supported PDI-P in 1999," said Rustam Ibrahim, head of the Institute for Social and Economic Research which is part of a group that has done extensive opinion surveys.

The Democrats were registering just over 8 per cent in the latest count, a respectable showing for a new contender in a race with 24 parties, and above the minimum required for it to field its own presidential candidate in July.

Parties are likely to put together coalitions for presidential and vice-presidential tickets, and Yudhoyono has received a stream of visits by leaders of other parties. But late yesterday, he told reporters it was too early to discuss party coalitions ahead of more definitive results from the vote for the 550-seat parliament and local legislatures.

THE TELEGRAPH

7 APR 2004

Suharto's ex-party casts cloud on Megawati fate

Jakarta, April 4 (Reuters): The former party of ousted autocrat Suharto is set to win the most votes in Indonesia's parliamentary elections tomorrow as it taps a yearning for the stability and rapid economic growth of his long rule.

Although opinion polls show Golkar, once Suharto's political vehicle, getting nowhere near a majority, the result is likely to be a big blow to incumbent President Megawati Sukarnoputri and could dent her hopes of winning a second term later this year.

More than 147 million voters in the world's most populous Muslim nation are eligible to take part in elections for the 550-seat parliament and local legislatures, billed as the biggest and most complex one-day vote the world has ever seen.

Tens of thousands of police and soldiers will guard polling stations amid fears that Muslim militants could launch attacks.

Given the size of Indonesia, it may take one or two days before a significant number of votes have been counted.

Besides putting Golkar ahead of Megawati's Indonesia Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P), opinion polls also show the President trailing for the first time in the presidential election race set for July to her former chief security minister, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

The respected retired general, the candidate of a smaller party, quit the cabinet last month



An Indonesian woman looks at a list of candidates at a Jakarta polling station on Sunday. (Reuters)

after a row with Megawati.

"This may be the watershed point," said William Liddle, an Indonesian expert at Ohio State University visiting for the election. "Support for Megawati's party has been going down for some time. Now her personal popularity is also dropping."

The latest Indonesia Survey Institute poll showed Golkar winning 23.2 per cent of tomorrow's vote, with Megawati's party, currently the strongest in parliament, taking 17.5 per cent.

A separate poll by a U.-based group had Golkar with 22.2 per

cent and PDI-P 11.5 per cent in a field of two dozen parties. Both Golkar and PDI-P are secular-nationalist.

In northwestern Aceh, which is under martial law as Indonesian troops try to quell separatist rebels, the province's governor warned of possible unrest but urged people to vote.

"I ask people not to get contaminated with calls to forego their voting rights. There will be people who probably don't want others to participate, or who will stir up trouble," governor Abdullah Puteh said.