

The price of democracy

The overthrow of Suharto blew the lid off the pressure cooker of Indonesian radicalism.

John Aglionby

VIEWED THROUGH a prism of headlines, Indonesia can easily appear to be an unstable nation being ripped asunder by radical Islamists. Four big terrorist attacks by locally recruited militants in three years – the 2002 Bali nightclub bombing, the 2003 bomb at the Jakarta Marriott hotel, the 2004 bomb at the Australian embassy in Jakarta, and Saturday's Bali bombing – suggest not only incompetent security forces but something profoundly wrong with society.

A further problem is the authorities' refusal to rein in orthodox Islamist groups that have bullied more than two dozen churches into closure over the past two years and repeatedly attacked the Ahmadiyah sect's premises on the grounds of alleged deviancy, as well as a decision by the National Ulema Council to ban pluralism and liberal teachings.

The most populous Muslim nation undoubtedly has its problems. Outposts of radicalism have taken root in much of the sprawling archipelago over the past seven years and militants continue to stoke communal conflict in the eastern islands of Sulawesi and the Moluccas. Jemaah Islamiyah, the terror network linked to Al-Qaeda that wants to turn most of South-East Asia into a caliphate, has put down deep roots in the country and some leading members, such as Azahari Husin – the Malaysian being blamed for orchestrating the last three of the four attacks – have been forming their own organisations with even more radical agendas. Azahari's outfit is called Thoifah Muqatilah (combat unit) and it is thought to want to escalate the struggle. Like the organisers of the London attacks, he uses fresh recruits unknown to the authorities who are willing to make martyrs of themselves.

Afraid of being seen as Western pawns by the country's Muslim majority, the last four Presidents have declined to crack down as hard as they could have on these radical groups, thereby allowing them to expand. The Government and its people are now paying the price, hav-

ing to quell extensive periods of unrest and prevent terrorist attacks with security and intelligence forces that, until very recently, were far from first-rate.

Having said all this, the radicalism must be placed in context. Despite its impact, the movement's numbers are tiny and not growing fast. And despite the perceived global assault on Islam – whether in Iraq, Palestine or elsewhere – the vast majority of Indonesia's 190 million Muslims remain moderate. Islam arrived in Indonesia through trade rather than conquest, so not only does it lack some of the characteristics prevalent elsewhere but it is also diluted by cultural traditions that predate its arrival. This is becoming manifest in domestic politics: Islamist parties are faring well but only because they espouse clean, well-run government and shy away from demanding an Islamic state.

And history cannot be ignored. Radical Islam was born during the colonial era but was violently repressed during the 32-year dictatorship of General Suharto, supported by the West. When his regime collapsed in 1998, it was as if the lid had been blown off a pressure cooker. Radicalism thrived on the oxygen it had been starved of.

Flourishing democracy

The other major development since 1998 is that Indonesia has transformed itself into a flourishing democracy. Indonesians directly elected their President for the first time this year and a return to authoritarianism seems unlikely. A new respect for law and order means Indonesia is not willing to copy Malaysia and Singapore – or the United States – by detaining alleged militants and terrorists indefinitely without charge. While the great majority of the nation condemns them, there seems to be an acceptance that giving everyone a voice is part of the price of becoming a democracy. Indonesia has shown the world how a predominantly Islamic country can embrace democracy. Alas, it is also showing the world that the transition can be costly. – ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

President suspects suicide bombings

INDONESIAN COPS RELEASE CHILLING VIDEO

Francis Elliott
and Raymond Whitaker

BALI, Oct. 2. — It is the simultaneous bombing of two resorts - and the return to a previous target - that point to Al-Qaida and its followers being behind last night's bloodshed in Bali.

Less than three months ago, but for a couple of mishaps for the terrorists, London would have been hit by two sets of four explosions two weeks apart. When the British consulate and HSBC bank were hit in Istanbul in November 2003, authorities were caught off-guard, even though two synagogues had been bombed five days before. It took the bombers nearly three years to return to Bali, but Indonesian officials have been warning for months that the shadowy Jemaah Islamiyah militant network, seen as the regional arm of Al-Qaida, was planning more attacks in the world's most populous Muslim nation. Since the previous Bali atrocity there had been two bloody bombings in the capital, Jakarta.

Last night's bombings are a far more typical jihadi operation than the assault on London: of the 24 significant terrorist attacks since 11 September 2001, all but two have taken place in a Muslim country. Like those behind the bombing of the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh in late July, yesterday's terrorists waited for Westerners to fly to them. Tourists seem impervious to the threat in destinations such as Morocco, Dubai, and Egypt, even though there have been six terrorist attacks on Western visitors to Muslim countries in the past 12 months alone.

Although attacks on the West are regularly thwarted, intelligence chiefs privately concede there is little they can do to forestall attacks in many Muslim countries.

Indonesia is thought to have been the venue for a "conference" of Osama bin



An Indonesian mourner places a paper wreath at the bomb blast scene in Jimbaran, on Bali on Saturday.— AFP

Laden's lieutenants at which a plot to bomb Singapore was hatched in January 2002. One man linked to that plot, Abu Bakar Baaysir, was convicted for his role in the first Bali bombing. Indonesia promised a crackdown on radical Islamic groups with terrorist links, but two months ago the 67-year-old cleric had his 30-month sentence cut. Another plotter was freed.

Muslim image tarnished, says Shaukat Aziz

Terrorist acts by Muslim extremists will not win support for their cause but will only tarnish the religion's image. Pakistan's Prime Minister said today, a day after suspected Islamic suicide bombers killed at least 26 people on Indonesia's resort island of Bali.

"All they achieve is to equip our detractors with grist to malign Islam and the Muslims," Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz said in a speech at an Islamic university in Malaysia's biggest city, Kuala Lumpur. Mr Aziz, reading from a prepared text, did not

directly refer to yesterday's Bali bombings that killed at least 26 people and injured more than 100.

The Southeast Asian group Jemaah Islamiyah, which has strong Al-Qaida links, is accused of carrying out the attack.

Mr Aziz claimed the actions of Muslim extremists had resulted in the vast majority of Muslims being associated with them and demonised.

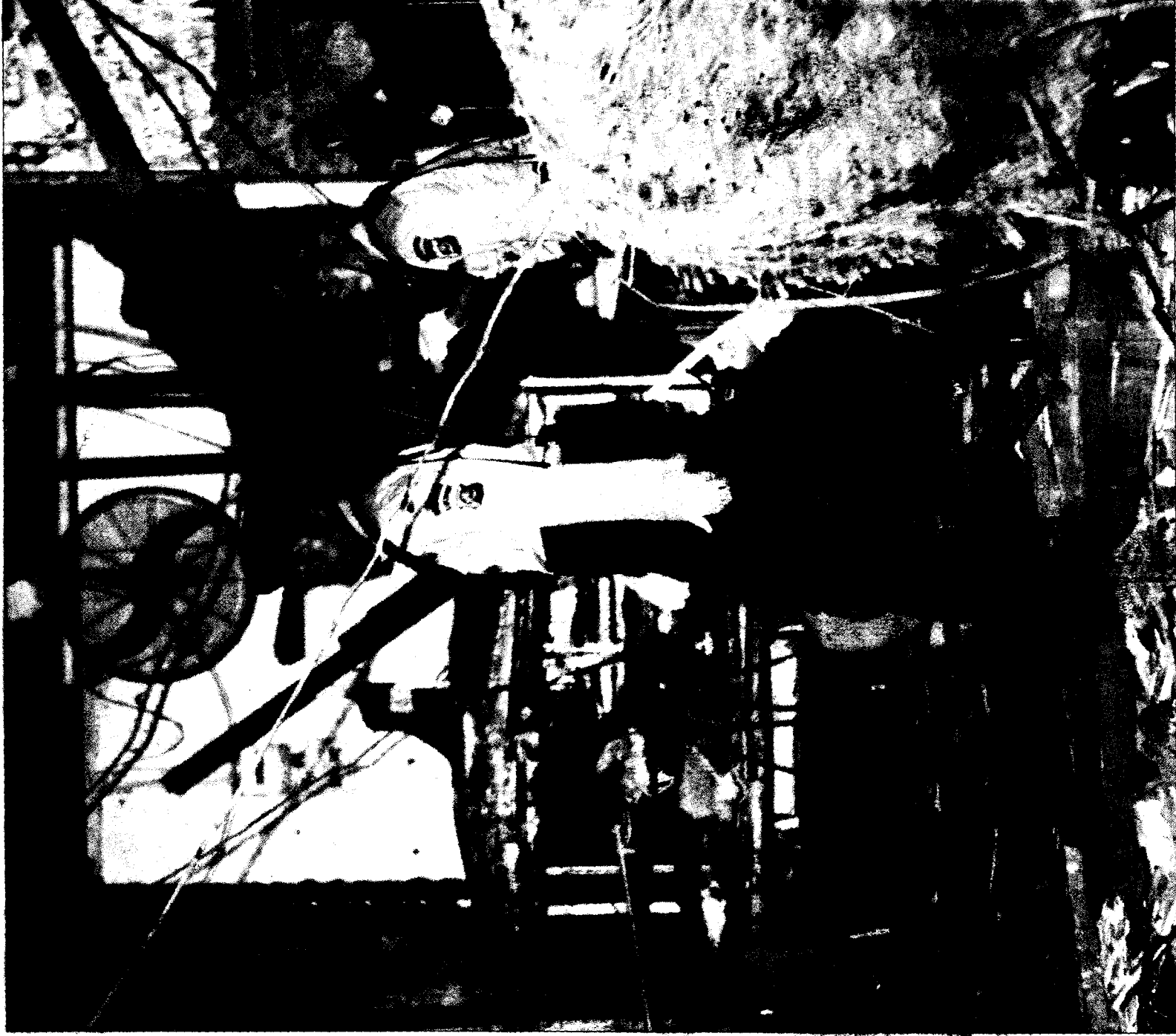
Mahathir slams blasts

The deadly bombings on Indonesia's Bali island will set back efforts by Muslims to correct misperceptions that they support terrorism, Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mr Mahathir Mohamad said today. "People will perceive the Muslims as being very bad people, but that is not Islam at all," said Mr Mahathir, one of the most respected figures in the Islamic world. "We are against such attacks. There is no reason at all for doing that. They are not helping the cause." No one has so far claimed responsibility for the blasts. — **The Independent** (with updates from AP)

SERIAL BLASTS IN BALI TARGET TOURISTS AGAIN ■ 25 DEAD, MORE THAN 100 INJURED

ANNIVERSARY ATTACK

59 Asia
9/20/04
10/1/04



Indonesian security personnel survey a bomb-damaged restaurant in Kuta, Bali, on Saturday. AFP

Associated Press

BALI, Oct. 1. — Almost three years to the day of the 12 October 2002 bombings in the Indonesian resort island of Bali that left 202 dead, terror visited the holiday destination again today. Bombs exploded almost simultaneously at two tourist spots on the island, killing at least 25 (Agence France Presse puts the toll at 35) persons and wounding more than 100, police and hospital sources said.

The victims included foreign tourists and suspicion for the explosions immediately fell on the Al-Qaida linked regional militant group Jemaah Islamiyah which had been held responsible for the 2002 blasts that killed mostly foreigners.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has strongly condemned today's blasts. "The President condemned the terror attacks. He has received reports (of the blasts) and instructed all related institutions to tackle the cases soon," Mr Andi Mallarangeng, the presidential spokesman said. He said that Mr Susilo had instructed coordinating minister for political, legal and security affairs Mr Widodo AS, and national police chief Gen. Sutanto and intelligence chief Mr Syamsir Siregar to leave for Bali tonight to tackle the matter, adds Strait Times/ANN. Last month, President Yudhoyono said he was especially worried that the extremist network was about to carry out more attacks.

The blasts at Jimbaran beach and a bustling outdoor shopping centre in downtown Kuta "were clearly the work of terrorists," Major-General Anusyaad Mbaal, a top Indonesian anti-terrorism police officer, said.

Sanglah Hospital, near the capital Denpasar, which took over the task of identifying victims, said 25 people were killed and 101 others were being treated at six hospitals.

Among the injured were 49 Indonesians, 17 Australians, six Koreans, three Japanese and two Americans, a hospital official said,

It's just so pointless...

SYDNEY, Oct. 1. — The father of a victim of the 2002 Bali bombings, described the latest attack as "revolting." Mr Brian Deegan, whose 21-year-old son Josh was among the 88 Australians who died in the 2002 blasts, said he had been grimly awaiting the third anniversary of his son's death. "It's just devastating," he told over the phone from Adelaide. "It's just so needless, it's just so pointless," he said, his voice cracking. **AP**

adding that the others were yet to be identified.

The bombs went off around 7:30 p.m. (Indonesia time) at two restaurants packed with foreign and Indonesian diners. Mr I Wayan Kresna said he witnessed the first bomb go off at a seafood restaurant on Jimbaran beach. "I helped lift up the bodies," he told the private El Shinta radio station. "There was blood everywhere."

Another explosion hit the three-story Raja restaurant in the busy outdoor shopping centre of Kuta, about 30 km away. Smoke poured from the building, which was badly damaged. The bomb apparently went off on the second floor of the restaurant, said an AP reporter, who saw three bodies and at least five wounded persons. There was no crater outside the building, an indication that it was not a car bomb. The exact number of blasts was not clear. Some witnesses said they heard at least two explosions at each location.

Since the 2002 Bali blasts, Jemaah Islamiyah has been linked to at least two other bombings in Indonesia, both in the capital, Jakarta. Those blasts, one at the JW Marriott hotel in 2003 and the other outside the Australian Embassy in 2004, killed at least 23. Western and Indonesian intelligence agencies have consistently warned that the group was plotting more attacks.

Bird flu could kill 150 million: WHO

ASEAN endorses plan to fight disease

TAGAYTAY (PHILIPPINES): Southeast Asian nations vowed on Friday to curb bird flu in the next three years as the United Nations warned the virus could mutate and kill up to 150 million persons.

The 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) also pledged \$2 million for a regional fund to curb animal diseases, including avian influenza. Bird flu has killed 66 persons in four Asian countries since late 2003 and millions of birds have been destroyed, causing estimated losses of \$10 billion to \$15 billion for the poultry industry.

"The ministers agreed that the HPAI [highly pathogenic avian influenza] outbreak requires an all-out coordinated regional effort," said the ASEAN Agriculture Ministers in a statement at the end of their meeting in this resort city south of Manila.

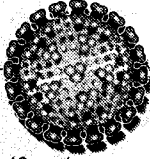

Emergency measures

The task force, recommending eight measures, proposed that Thailand lead surveillance and diagnosis, and Malaysia take charge of containment, emergency measures and disease-free zones.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), the U.N. health agency, said that if the bird flu virus spreads among humans, the quality of the global response would determine whether it ends up killing 5 million

Influenza pandemics

The United Nations has warned that a flu outbreak could kill up to 150 million people if the H5N1 bird flu virus mutates into a form which can be transmitted by humans

1902	H3N2 strain of flu virus detected	
1918	Spanish flu: H1N1 virus subtype kills 20-40 million people within 16 weeks. Origin: Human + pig virus	
1957	Asian flu: H2N2 pandemic starting in southwest China leads to worldwide death toll of up to 1 million. Origin: Human + avian virus	
1968	Hong Kong flu: H3N2 kills 700,000-1 million people. Origin: Human + avian virus	
1997	H5N1 avian flu virus infects 18 people, killing 6 in Hong Kong	
2005	H5N1 has spread to 10 countries claiming over 60 lives	

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persons or as many as 150 million. Experts say a lack of funds is hampering the fight against it in countries such as Indonesia, where a fifth victim died on Monday. ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea said they would work closely with the world animal health body OIE, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the WHO.

The three agencies plan to hold a bird flu conference in December. — Reuters

Vietnam economy in trouble

S. B. Arin. n.t

HANOI, Oct. 1. — There is a Vietnamese saying that means "what you are planning may not be in God's mind." It aptly describes the government's predicament with regard to this year's economic performance.

The half-yearly economic numbers came as a disappointment to policy-makers despite the impressive GDP growth of 7.6 per cent, the highest in the last five years. The target for this year is 8.5 per cent.

While GDP growth threatens to fall short of the target, other major indices might actually shoot past it, posing more worries for the government. The consumer price index (CPI) rose 5.2 per cent in the first half despite resolute efforts to contain it. The target for the whole year is 6.5 per cent.

The government might stubbornly cling to its targets but

economists believe only a miracle will keep inflation below 6.5 per cent while the GDP gallops at 8.5 per cent or thereabouts.

Difficulties ahead

Mr Voo Tri Thach, a senior economist at the government-funded Central Institute of Economic Management, said: "I must say it is a very, very difficult situation. ... I imagine the government will spend more on development projects to boost GDP. But that will cause greater pressure on prices."

Half-yearly performances of some key GDP growth drivers, such as industrial production and exports, indicate the growth target might be elusive. Industrial output, which accounted for a third of the GDP, grew at 15.6 per cent, or almost the same level as last year.

Local manufacturing has been on the downward trend, declining by 4.3 per cent in

mainly because of the skyrocketing crude prices. Vietnam's crude oil exports earned 34 per cent more in the first half despite a 10 per cent fall in volume. But its oil wells are already pumping at full capacity and economists doubt if the country could raise crude output to cash in any further on the surging prices.

At the same time, the high prices are hurting the economy given Vietnam's lack of refining capacity and dependence on imports.

High hope

However, economists and businessmen are still upbeat about the future.

Possibly buoyed by Vietnam's bid for WTO (World Trade Organisation) membership by year-end, FDI (foreign direct investment) worth \$2.7 billion was committed in the first six months, 70 per cent higher than last year. The target for the whole year is \$4.5 billion.



June. First half growth was 1.5 per cent, far below the seven per cent last year. Exports rose by just 17.4 per cent per against almost 20 per cent last year.

Vietnamese exports also face fierce competition from Chinese products, as well as the protectionist barriers put up by major importers. Most key export items, including textiles and garments, footwear and seafood, only registered modest growth of 0.1 per cent to eight per cent.

Exports have achieved growth