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NEWS & ISSUES

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Police: al-Qaida funded Indonesia attacks

Associated Press - February 28, 2006

Zakki Hakim, Jakarta — Osama bin Laden's terror network helped fund suicide bombings in Indonesia over the past four years, a senior police official said Tuesday, highlighting links between al-Qaida and the regional militant group Jemaah Islamiyah.

The mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, personally arranged for a courier to deliver money to leaders of Jemaah Islamiyah to help fund attacks in the world's most populous Muslim country from 2002-2005, said Col. Petrus Reinhard Golose of Indonesia's counterterrorism task force.

Jemaah Islamiyah is blamed for the 2002 nightclub attacks on the resort island of Bali that killed 202 people, attacks in the capital Jakarta in 2003 and 2004 that together killed 21, and triple suicide bombings on Bali in October that killed 20.

Indonesian authorities have claimed since 2003 that al-Qaida helped finance the terror campaign in Indonesia, but they never before provided the level of detail given by Golose.

Golose said several members of Jemaah Islamiyah met directly with bin Laden in Afghanistan and signed agreements with him before launching the attacks, but he did not elaborate.

It was not immediately clear from which country the funds originated, but he said the money passed through Thailand and Malaysia before reaching Indonesia.

"Thirty thousand US dollars was sent for the first Bali bombing," Golose said, adding that "tens of thousands of dollars" was sent for the 2003 bombing of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta.

Some of the leftover cash was used for the 2004 attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, he said. He said he was uncertain how much al-Qaida money was used for the latest attack on Bali, targeting three crowded restaurants.

Woman sells daughter to pay up debts, buy furniture

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Jakarta — It may be a cliché, but grinding poverty continues to force women into sex work. It also drives children on to the streets. Dahlia, not her real name, was just 15 when her mother sold her to a woman for Rp 2 million.

She worked in the sex industry until she was 18 and could no longer bear it. Upon returning to her studies, Dahlia's mother threatened to kill her if she did not skip school to meet "clients".

Desperate for help, Dahlia told other members of her family, who were unaware of her past, she was working as a prostitute. Dahlia and her family members reported the case to the police, leading to Wednesday's arrest of her mother and the woman she worked for.

To police, the 44-year-old mother, identified only as KH, said she was in debt and tired of living a life of poverty. She then met the woman, NS, who lived nearby in Kampung Bulak, Central Jakarta.

In a statement made available to The Jakarta Post on Friday, NS was said to have been running her business since 2002 through word of mouth. She received orders for girls over the phone.

Most of her workers were under the age of 18. She sold their services for between Rp 500,000 and Rp 1 million. Dahlia's mother was able to pay her debts and buy new furniture and a TV set from prostitution money.

Police said both women would be charged under the 2002 Child Protection Law and Article 297 of the Criminal Code on child trafficking. If convicted, they could face up to 10 years' imprisonment and a Rp 200 million fine.

When asked to comment, women's rights activist Rita Kalibonso said forced prostitution was an ongoing problem here. "This is not just about law

enforcement but also about people's awareness of children's rights," she said.

Family members and neighbors must be ready to take action if they believe a child is being abused.

"We cannot rely on the police to address this issue because such crimes happen in homes," she said.

Water rate hike met with deluge of protest

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Jakarta — Dozens of people, many of them mothers with small children in tow, protested outside City Hall on Friday the water rate increase.

The protesters grouped in the Movement of Indonesian Consumers Rights demanded the Jakarta administration revoke the 8.39 percent increase, which was announced Feb. 17.

"The rate increase only benefits the foreign partners of the city water utility. It hurts us consumers," protest coordinator Tono said.

No official was available to meet with the protesters as they were all busy overseeing bird flu checks.

The administration increased water rates so it could pay its debts to its two foreign partners.

Family blocks road to dispute land

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Jakarta — Members and supporters of a family blocked on Friday a section of the BSD turnpike linking Bintaro, South Jakarta, and the Bumi Serpong Damai satellite city (BSD), demanding payment for land acquired for the road's construction.

Traffic ground to a halt when Natigor Pandjaitan

blocked access at 8 a.m. to a 1,000 square meter section of Pondok Ranji-Serpong turnpike, not far from Pondok Ranji tollgate in Ciputat, Tangerang.

"We demand our rights... We are not the play things of the authorities, who have ignored the prevailing laws," Natigor said.

In their legal battle for a Rp 2.9 billion (US\$3.1 million) land payment, which began in 2002, the Pandjaitan family has often placed barricades around the section of the road they claim is theirs.

The Supreme Court awarded them the Rp 2.9 billion on March 25, 2004, while Public Works Minister Djoko Kirmanto ordered on Dec. 21, 2005, turnpike operator PT Jasa Marga to pay the family. "But, until today, we have received not a cent from the company," said the family's spokesman, Rony Pandjaitan.

Jasa Marga acquired the plot of land in 1997 to construct the turnpike without paying any compensation. In 2002, the Tangerang District Court ruled in favor of Natigor, ordering the government and the company to pay Rp 1.5 million per sq m of land, totaling Rp 2.9 billion.

The company has asked the Supreme Court to review the decision based on new evidence.

Indonesians give up their birds but grumble over cash

Agence France Presse - February 25, 2006

Jakarta — Until a team of government workers sniffing out bird flu descended on his slum by a railtrack in the Indonesian capital, Setia Budi, 45, was the proud owner of a dozen preening turtledoves.

"I have been raising turtledoves pretty much all my life, feeding and taking care of them regularly. It is a lovely sight to watch them soar in the sky," says Budi as the workers mill around the hodge-podge of neighbourhood cages.

But four birds out of more than 250 owned by the residents here have just tested positive to avian influenza according to the team, which last week launched a door-to-door campaign in Jakarta to stamp out the virus here.

Bird flu has killed 20 Indonesians since July last year, mostly in the capital and its surrounds, but this is the first mass culling campaign of this size — even though by global standards it's still very small scale.

Agricultural officials initially said they would kill all birds in a one-kilometre (half-mile) radius of any infections, but now they are saying they will be selective, killing all only if they believe there is a real risk that they are infected. Vaccinations are slated to occur within a three-kilometre radius.

Positive test results, carried out using a South Korean kit costing about 100,000 rupiah (about ten dollars) per bird, leads to all the birds here today being destroyed. They are transported to a nearby incinerator before their throats are slashed.

"This is for our own interests. Go ahead, take down the names of the bird owners and how many birds each man has," subdistrict chief Hidayatullah tells the task force workers.

"It is the lives of the people that we have to save. I'm not going to lie to you by declaring unhealthy birds healthy," he tells the residents, with those owners present reluctantly agreeing to the birds being destroyed.

As in many places in Indonesia, the birds here are kept in close proximity to people's homes, which in this teeming slum in the Central Jakarta area of Kramat are constructed of nothing more than cardboard and corrugated iron.

Setia Budi is upset both about losing his birds and his money. "What I regret is that the government is only willing to pay 10,000 rupiah" for each bird, he says, gesturing to a pair that cost one of his neighbours 1.5 million rupiah. His own cheapest pair were 300,000.

The amount is a huge sum for the slum dwellers,

most of whom are unemployed or working as scrap collectors. Naked children squeal as they run freely down the narrow, rubbish-strewn lanes. "If I could choose, I would be more willing to set them free," Budi says angrily.

Edi Maryono, a 44-year-old parking attendant, is more philosophical. "If they have truly tested positive, then it's okay for them to be killed as long as the other bird owners agree to do the same thing," he says. "I too am afraid of being infected with bird flu, although I have never heard of anyone from this neighbourhood being treated as a suspected patient."

Sixty-year-old Ichsan, who owns 20 birds, is also willing to give them up for the sake of people's health, but complains about the compensation. "I think it's a little bit too heavy for me to take because I have paid quite a lot of money for my birds," he mutters.

And he points out an alarming practice that may be contributing to Indonesia's bird flu death toll. "Whenever we find unhealthy birds we just kill them. We slaughter them, but sometimes we eat them," he admits.

While cooked poultry kills the virus, coming into contact with infected carcasses can pass on the virus to humans, increasing the possibility that the virus will mutate into a form easily transmissible from human-to-human.

Experts fear that this will eventually occur, sparking a pandemic that could kill millions around the world.

Setia Budi, downcast, blames the government, which many have accused for being slow to act in Indonesia. "The government is at their best when it comes to giving us problems," he grumbles.

Employers, workers threaten to boycott electricity payments

Tempo Interactive - February 25, 2006

Imron Rosyid, Surakarta — Employers in the Central Java city of Surakarta (Solo) have threatened to send thousands of their workers onto the streets if the government goes ahead and increases electricity rates. Workers have agreed to hold joint actions with employers and students including launching a boycott on paying electricity bills.

"If the government is still determined to increase electricity rates, then businesspeople won't pay the electricity [bills]", said the executive secretary of the Solo Indonesian Employers Association, Pank Supardi, on Friday February 24.

Supardi said that not long ago that Solo employers, trade unions and student organisations made an agreement to form a joint coalition against the planned increases to electricity rates. The coalition, named the Student Employer Worker Movement (Gerakan Mahasiswa Pengusaha Buruh, Gemuruh), plans to hold a street action on Saturday March 4. The planned action was confirmed by the chairperson of the Solo National Workers Union (SPN) Hudi Wasisto who said that workers were given permission not to go to work but to go into the streets instead. "Students oppose [the price increases] moreover workers as well", he said.

According to Aji Kurnia from the Indonesian Muslim Students Action Front (KAMMI), increases to basic electricity rates are unacceptable to the public on any grounds. He said that it is unreasonable for the public to be burdened because of the inefficiencies of the state-owned electricity company PT PLN. In fact the basic supply cost of electricity set by PT PLN of as much as 1,052 rupiah per Kilowatt-hour is the highest in Asia. "Increasing rates on the grounds of filling the [shortfall] in PLN's operational costs as a consequence of fuel price increases is totally wrong", he said.

[Translated by James Balowski.]

Ex-guards demand severance pay

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

Jakarta — Dozens of former security guards of city-owned company PT Pulomas Jaya demonstrated in front of City Hall on Thursday, demanding of Governor Sutiyoso their severance pay.

Chairman of the Indonesian Independent Labor Union (SPMI) and coordinator of the demonstration, Sultoni, said the company had ignored the security guards' working hours, excluded them from the Jamsostek insurance scheme and denied them severance pay after it outsourced their jobs.

"The Sutiyoso administration failed to meet its contractual obligations and outsourced jobs, which was detrimental to the guards' future," Sultoni was quoted by Detikcom as saying.

He demanded the governor sanction the directors of PT Pulomas Jaya for violating the Labor Law.

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ACEH

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Transvestites unfazed by Sharia

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Banda Aceh — If you happen to pass an alleyway in the Banda Aceh's Kuta Alam area at night, don't be surprised if you bump into beautiful, flirtatious and scantily dressed "women".

Ignoring Aceh's sharia laws, which enforce strict dress codes on women, the transvestites emerge after 11 p.m. and hang out in the area until dawn. Many have been seen openly soliciting passers-by on Jl. T. Hasandek, Antara reported Friday.

"They don't seem to be aware of sharia," an annoyed resident, Abdurrahman, said. "They make a lot of noise in the middle of the night when people need to rest." Banda Aceh sharia enforcement office chief Nasir Ilyas said he was aware of the problem. "We will act when the right time comes," he said.

Aceh legislators take issue with revised bill

Jakarta Post - February 28, 2006

Muninggar Sri Saraswati, Jakarta — The Aceh legislative council is displeased with an article on the bill on governance in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam that would give Jakarta broader powers to issue regulations in the province.

A representative of the council, speaking during a hearing Monday with the House of Representatives, discussed revisions to the council's draft of the bill by the Home Ministry. The council is particularly concerned by Article 7, Paragraph 3, that allows the central government to issue regulations in Aceh concerning issues other than foreign policy, defense security, judicial affairs, monetary and fiscal matters.

In the peace agreement signed by the government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Helsinki last August, Jakarta was restricted to handling the six areas of policy, with the rest the responsibility of the Aceh administration "The article would create problems in its implementation and looks very centralistic," said councillor Azhari Basar, who is the spokesman of the Aceh legislative council.

He said the law on Aceh governance must only be implemented through qanun, or Aceh administration bylaws, instead of a government regulation or presidential decree.

If the central government issued the regulations, there would be the chance they would override those of the Aceh administration, said Azahari, who was speaking on behalf of the general Aceh community, including the legislature and GAM.

Among those at the hearing were Aceh acting governor Mustafa Abu Bakar, Aceh legislative council chairman Sayed Fuad Zakaria and GAM representative Faisal Putra.

The hearing ran smoothly, with no mention of other potentially contentious issues, such as

independent candidates, local political parties and the partitioning of the province.

In his address, Faisal said the GAM recognized Aceh as a part of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia operating under the Constitution. He joined other legislators and the Acehnese delegation in singing the national anthem at the end of the hearing.

Legislator Permadi of the Indonesia Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), whose party has opposed the bill because, it says, it sells out to the GAM, said it may support a compromise on several issues for the welfare of the Acehnese.

"But we consider articles about the anthem, flag or local political parties as too political, they don't seem to help improve peace and welfare," he said.

Mustafa said the House should not rush to complete the deliberation of the bill in accordance with its deadline of March 31. "The most important thing is the deliberation of the bill produces an effective and substantial law," he said.

Corruption undermines Aceh tsunami aid

Sydney Morning Herald - February 27, 2006

Matt Wade — Government aid to the tsunami-devastated province of Aceh has been undermined by corruption, poor communication with locals and a failure to protect the environment, a report has found.

The document, by the aid-monitoring group Aidwatch, is critical of the Australian Government's assistance to Aceh, saying it has been painfully slow and excessively secretive.

"AusAID and the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development are the least transparent donor agencies," it said.

After the tsunami, the Prime Minister, John Howard, announced that aid of \$1 billion would go to Indonesia in what is Australia's biggest aid

program.

But the report said that just \$156 million — about 16 per cent of the paid — had been committed of the \$945 million in grants and soft loans so far allocated.

The report's co-author, Tim O'Connor, said that not enough of the Australian Government's contribution was reaching affected communities. "It is more about the strategic interests of Australia than about the needs of the people in Aceh," Mr O'Connor said.

The Aidwatch research team evaluated almost 50 projects, visited more than 100 villages and towns in Aceh and spoke to more than 2000 people in compiling its report.

The team focused on big aid donors such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the European Commission. These agencies were providing the "big money" for tsunami reconstruction and deserved more scrutiny, Mr O'Connor said.

The report found the big donors had often failed to monitor or evaluate projects, and researchers were told of many blatant examples of corruption. "Corruption, collusion and nepotism are widely present in Aceh, including in the reconstruction environment," it said.

Agencies involved in reconstruction were failing to protect the environment, especially Aceh's forests, Mr O'Connor said. "There have been alarming levels of environmental damage," he said. "There is huge demand for timber, and the logging going on to feed that demand is of real concern. There is a real danger of Aceh losing its forests."

The report also said many local communities had not been properly consulted about reconstruction, and there had been a failure to build local capacity. Reconstruction efforts had also increased social tension in Aceh, while turf wars between donor agencies, competition for project areas and a reluctance for donors to exchange information had dogged the reconstruction effort, the report said.

"Basic aid practices like including local people

in design, implementation and evaluation are being forgotten, and this will drastically undermine the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the reconstruction efforts," Mr O'Connor said.

The report found that many Acehnese citizens were left feeling powerless and were frustrated about unexplained delays, and easily avoided mistakes such as design flaws in houses or boats.

Labor's spokesman on overseas aid and Pacific island affairs, Bob Sercombe, said the Government had "taken its eye off the ball" in Aceh.

"The Howard Government is happy to take the credit for big announcements, but isn't interested in following through and actually helping people in affected areas," he said.

EU extends peace mission in Aceh by three months

Agence France Presse - February 27, 2006

Banda Aceh — European Union peace monitors in Indonesia's Aceh province said Monday the EU has extended their mission by another three months until June 15.

"The mission has been extended by another three months, although the official announcement will be made in Brussels," said Faye Belnis from the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM).

The AMM, composed of some 200 monitors from the European Union and five Southeast Asian nations, had been due to end its mission on March 15 but the Indonesian government on Feb. 15 requested the extension.

It was formed following a peace pact between Jakarta and the separatist Free Aceh Movement in Helsinki last August, which is aimed at bringing nearly three decades of conflict to an end.

The AMM's mandate is to help ensure that the agreement, spurred along by the deadly 2004 tsunami, is implemented by both sides.

Both parties have already successfully achieved

the first stage, the withdrawal of non-local Indonesian troops and police in return for the surrender of the rebels' weaponry.

The mission has also assured a smooth start for thereintegration of former rebels into Acehese society.

Aceh agency criticized, again

Jakarta Post - February 27, 2006

Nani Afrida, Banda Aceh — Activists have slammed the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency for Aceh and Nias for failing to perform its duty, asserting that many of its working units are totally inactive.

The finding was disclosed by the Anticorruption Movement (Gerak) and several non-governmental organizations in Banda Aceh, Aceh.

"There are 145 working units from various sectors which still have not made payment orders (for projects funding)," Gerak's chairman Akhiruddin told The Jakarta Post. Progress was almost nonexistent, he said.

"Even for the most important sectors, like education, there has been no progress although the money is there," he said.

He said that last year, the agency received Rp 3.9 trillion from the state budget, of which Rp 3.4 trillion was still untouched. For the year 2006, the agency received Rp 9.6 trillion from the state budget.

Akhiruddin said many of the agency's staff and working units did not know what to do, and were plagued by poor coordination.

He cited the situation in Lampaseh village as an example. "The tsunami survivors have submitted all the necessary requirements to rebuild their village, including a blueprint and land documents. But it has not been rebuilt," he said.

He also lashed out at the agency for claiming to

have built 35,000 houses. "I see they pay attention more to quantity than quality. Are they also counting all of the houses which are not fit to live in?" he said. He cited several houses in Neuhen village in Aceh Besar regency, that collapsed after being built due to poor quality construction.

The agency's communication director Mirza Keumala said the working units had not performed well as they were set up late. "So they haven't started working yet," he said. The agency's deputy communications director, Sudirman Said, said earlier that it would take at least four years from the time the tsunami occurred to complete the rehabilitation of Aceh and Nias.

It would be an impossibility, he added, to complete all the work within a year after the tsunami struck in December 2004.

Responding to the statement that most of the agency's budget had not been spent on projects, he said the agency did not spend it as scheduled since it received the money only in mid 2005 and the working units received it in September 2005.

AMM asks government to investigate and disarm Aceh militia

Detik.com - February 27, 2006

Banda Aceh — The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) has asked the Indonesian government to immediately conduct an investigation into the illegal groups that were behind the recent attack on the Aceh Referendum Information Center (SIRA) in Blang Pidie, West Aceh. This is because it smacks of the behaviour of an illegal group resembling a certain type of militia group.

"And the Indonesian government has a commitment to conduct an investigation and if it is open, the Indonesian government also has a commitment to disarm them", explained AMM chief Pieter Feith at a press conference at the AMM offices in Banda Aceh on Monday February 27.

AMM said it wants to receive confirmation from the government in relation to the militia. If they are indeed an illegal group, Feith is asking them to be disarmed immediately. "We require confirmation from the Indonesian government before we can leave", said Feith.

He added that it is absolutely disgraceful for both the European Union and ASEAN who have members in the AMM to just leave this problem with the Indonesian government so when the AMM has left and these illegal groups come to the surface again.

"With regard to illegal groups we have already asked the Indonesian government to conduct and investigation and to deal with the incident at Blang Pidie, there is a possibility of a militia connection behind this and it is up to the Indonesian government to draw a conclusion", he said.

Nevertheless said Feith, it must also be remembered that SIRA is a civilian group in Aceh that must also be paid close attention to as an institution that gives the impression of struggling for a referendum for Aceh because of the use of the word "Referendum". "We must pay close attention to SIRA's presence here, and if so we must pay close attention to SIRA's program where there is the word 'referendum' that could lead towards independence and a referendum which is not in accordance with the Helsinki MoU [Memorandum of Understanding]", he said at great length.

The AMM has therefore invited the chairperson and members of SIRA to discuss its program and bring it into line with the Helsinki MoU. (asy)

[Translated by James Balowski.]

AMM asks police to investigate attack on SIRA offices

Aceh Kita - February 26, 2006

Rilis, Banda Aceh — A meeting of the Commission for Security Arrangements (COSA) on Saturday

February 25 has discussed a number of crucial issues that have taken place in Aceh such as violence against members of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) and the vandalism of the Aceh Referendum Information Center (SIRA) offices in Blang Pidie, West Aceh.

According to the AMM, the vandalism of the SIRA office by the illegal group is a violation of Article 4.9 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). "AMM is asking the Indonesian government to investigate and report back to the AMM by March 9 and to discipline those involved", said AMM press officer Juri Laas in a press release received by Aceh Kita on Saturday February 25. "The AMM will propose a number of steps to ensure that SIRA is fully conforming with the MoU."

In addition to this, the AMM also conveyed its dissatisfaction with provocation and violence against AMM members during incidents that occurred in Alue Leuho in the Cot Girek sub-district of North Aceh. "The AMM is also asking the Indonesian government to investigate the identities of the perpetrators", continued Laas.

The COSA meeting, that was chaired by AMM chairperson Pieter Feith and attended by Major General Bambang Dharmono (Indonesia) and Irwandi Yusuf (Free Aceh Movement, GAM), took place in a cordial atmosphere. They also discussed the issue of the reintegration of GAM members, the distribution of new identity cards for the Acehnese people and the issue of GAM members who have yet to be granted amnesty by the Indonesian government.

"With regard to the delayed amnesty cases, the AMM states that progress has been made in the clarification of 20 cases, were in 13 of the cases they will be released", said Laas. The two parties also took the opportunity to commit themselves to safeguarding the momentum of the peace process and provide direct information to each other in assist in solving cases. The AMM also expressed its satisfaction with the Indonesian government's desire to form a human rights court on June 15.

[dzie]

[Translated by James Balowski.]

Aceh bill constitutional: Government

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Muninggar Sri Saraswati, Jakarta — The new bill on Aceh governance is in line with the Constitution and the Helsinki peace pact signed last August with rebel leaders, the government said in its briefing to the House of Representatives on Friday.

Critics of the controversial draft bill say it is unconstitutional because it allows Aceh to have its own flag, provincial symbol and hymn, and permits the creation of local political parties.

"The substance of the bill is in line with the Constitution and the Memorandum of Understanding (peace accord)," Home Minister M. Ma'ruf told a hearing with a House special committee formed to discuss the bill.

At the session, Ma'ruf was accompanied by State Secretary Yusril Ihza Mahendra and Communications and Information Minister Sofyan Djalil. Djalil was a government negotiator in the peace talks in Finland with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).

"The local elections (in Aceh) will be held by (the provincial elections commission) KIP. Foreign observers will be welcome to monitor the poll," Ma'ruf said. Aceh would hold regional elections after the bill was passed into law and the elections commission was established.

Ma'ruf said the Acehnese could also set up political parties as mandated in the bill and the peace accord. However, local parties could only run for elections once central government issued a regulation on the matter, which would happen by February next year at the latest, he said.

All factions in the House but the Indonesia Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) are supporting the bill, although a National Awakening Party (PKB) leader and former president Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid remains against it.

Several leading Acehese figures met Friday with Gus Dur to ask him to accept the bill. Aceh legislative council member Abdullah Saleh said the Acehese people had no intention whatsoever of separating from Indonesia.

Gus Dur ordered the PKB to reject the bill because he doubted GAM's commitment to the peace accord. During the Friday meeting, Gus Dur seemed to mellow his opposition to the bill, promising to study it again, Antara reported.

Acehese representatives also met with former president and PDI-P leader Megawati Soekarnoputri to canvass her support. Megawati has warned that if the bill was passed into law, it could lead to the separation of Aceh from Indonesia.

Testing times ahead for tsunami recovery - envoy

Reuters - February 23, 2006

Jerry Norton, Jakarta — Sustaining world interest in aid to areas devastated by the December 2004 tsunami is about to get tougher, a top recovery official said on Thursday as he visited Indonesia's hard-hit Aceh province.

The giant wave from a Dec. 26, 2004, undersea earthquake which smashed into Indian Ocean coastlines damaged Aceh the most, leaving some 170,000 dead or missing and disintegrating the homes of half a million more.

The reconstruction and recovery effort in Aceh alone is expected to take years and cost around \$5 billion. Billions more are required for India, Thailand and Sri Lanka to rebuild.

"... in the wake of the one-year commemoration it shouldn't be surprising that we have a sustained level of interest," Eric Schwartz, deputy to Bill Clinton in his UN role of keeping tsunami aid flowing and insuring it is well-spent, told Reuters by telephone from Aceh.

But as that anniversary attention fades in the months ahead "when some of the most difficult

recovery challenges are ahead of us", Schwartz said: "I think it's going to be more and more difficult" to keep the world focused on the need for a continuing effort.

One key task for recovery is housing. In Aceh around 300,000 people remain in temporary housing, Schwartz said, ranging from tents to barracks to lodging with friends and relatives.

Some analysts have criticised such large numbers as showing the pace of rebuilding is moving far too slowly.

Schwartz said while everyone would like things to go faster, "you have to appreciate the obstacles that the government has", citing the extent of the devastation, logistical requirements, difficulties in establishing land titles, and a desire not to move so fast the process goes seriously wrong. "To put it in very simple terms, if you want it bad, you'll get it bad."

Schwartz said he was very encouraged with efforts to end 30 years of civil conflict between Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels and the government. On a visit to Aceh last year, Schwartz's boss former US President Clinton had warned a complete recovery required a settlement of that simmering civil war.

Since then the two sides have signed an agreement, GAM has turned in its weapons and Indonesia has withdrawn many of its troops.

While difficult issues remain, "I think most of the indications are very positive", Schwartz said, pointing to government cooperation with international peace monitors and encouragement of aid for displaced victims of the conflict. "I'm confident that the spirit of reconciliation will prevail," he said.

Regarding another worry about the recovery process, the danger of funds going astray in a country where corruption is endemic, Schwartz said an anti-corruption programme that has been put in place in Aceh would probably not mean an end to graft.

However, "what it does do is it enhances the likelihood that malfeasance will be deterred, and

it enhances the likelihood that when bad stuff happens it's going to be uncovered."

Aceh peace process at crossroads

Radio Australia - February 23, 2006

The peace process in the Indonesian province of Aceh is about to face its next big test., with parliament setting up a special committee to debate a draft law granting a level of autonomy to Aceh. The committee's 50 members hold their first meeting this week. The draft law is one of the commitments made when Jakarta signed a peace pact with the separatist Free Aceh Movement GAM, in August. But there are still concerns within GAM that parliament may cause the peace process to falter.

Presenter/Interviewer: Sen Lam

Speakers: Dr Damien Kingsbury, former adviser to the Aceh separatist peace negotiating team.

Dr Kingsbury: Certainly the cross roads, this legislation is fundamental to ensuring the peace process goes ahead as agreed. The piece of legislation in question contains all of the provisions from the peace agreement. It's a very complex piece of legislation. Within it there are three outstanding issues, one of which is the potential for the division or unity of the province which was a basic element of the agreement. The second point is the creation of local political parties which will require a shift in Indonesian political law and the third point is the capacity for independent candidates to contest local elections.

Lam: Well, the peace deal or the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the government and GAM last August states that the law must be passed by the end of March. It's a very tight deadline, isn't it?

Dr Kingsbury: Well, it is a tight deadline. Of course there's always a capacity to slow these processes down intentionally as well, and

certainly I think there's some people in Jakarta who would like to see that happen. It may be delayed and indeed the election schedule for 26 April may be delayed. At this stage, we don't have confirmation on that, but it may be pushed back.

And I think that GAM would probably accept that if they believed that the process was being handled appropriately. They would not accept it if they thought it was just a delaying or wrecking tactic. But at this stage, the legislative process does look like it's going to go ahead okay. Sofian Djalil, the Indonesian Information Minister has stated categorically that Aceh will not be divided, so that's one of the main problems that looks like it's out of the way.

The issue of independent candidates I believe is now basically been resolved and that they will be allowed to go ahead if they meet certain conditions.

The real question is the creation of local political parties and this is absolutely central to the agreement. This was what the agreement hinged on, whether or not there was an agreement. So I suspect that this will actually also go through, but there will be considerable debate about it.

Lam: And from where you sit, do you think it's likely to face much opposition in parliament when it's finally presented?

Dr Kingsbury: Oh yes, there will be considerable opposition, but I suspect it will fall along party lines and if that's the case then the legislation should be passed with about 53 or 54 per cent of the vote.

Lam: Mm. And what's the situation in Papua Province right now?

Dr Kingsbury: Well, the situation in Papua is that the government has indicated that they also want to reach a similar type of agreement.

They basically want to resolve the outstanding problems there which have been going on for decades. The various Papuan organisations have also indicated that they would like to do something like this, but they need to become a bit

more unified, a bit more organised to be able to present their claim. There is a move in that direction at this time. We will know within the next couple of weeks I think whether or not such a claim will be able to be presented and whether such an agreement may be able to be at least discussed if not actually reached.

Lam: In both these issues in Papua and Aceh, are we seeing a tussle here between the administration in Jakarta and sections of the TNI who are perhaps loathed to give up its influence in the Archipelagoes political affairs?

Dr Kingsbury: Absolutely. They're also loathed to give up their economic investments in both of those provinces and that's a significant source of revenue for the military.

The Indonesian Government does have in place a program of civilian control over the military and it is going forward. The TNI, the military is on the back foot in this regard, but they still have the capacity to spoil these processes, particularly through the use of militias and creating problems, which they have a history of doing in the past. The question really now is whether or not the administration can sufficiently control the military and ensure that these types of problems don't derail the peace process in Aceh or the possibility of agreement in Papua.

Acehnese accuse religious police of 'arrogance' and thuggery

Jakarta Post - February 23, 2006

Nani Afrida, Banda Aceh — The religious police are earning a bad reputation among some Banda Aceh residents for arrogance and thuggery.

Known locally as Wilayatul Hisbah, the sharia police were set up under a 2001 regulation on Islamic law, part of the special autonomy granted to Aceh by the central government. As part of the regulation, a special "religious police" unit was established to enforce religious norms, such as the ban on alcohol, gambling and "intimacy"

between unmarried couples. Those found violating these norms can be punished by caning.

However, some residents of the provincial capital believe the sharia police have become arrogant and overzealous. "They (the sharia police) should show some consideration when enforcing the law and not be so arbitrary," a cafe owner, Malkin, 27, told The Jakarta Post.

Members of the sharia police raided Malkin's small cafe as he was attending customers and took him to the local public order office for questioning, along with his chairs and tables as evidence. "They said my cafe was dimly lit and could become seedy. But it's located right next to a main road, where no one would think of doing anything immoral," he said.

Malkin said all he did at his cafe was sell food. He also accused the members of the sharia police, as well as officers from the municipal public order agency, of treating him roughly during the raid. "If they pray five times a day, OK, but I'm not sure they do," he added.

The religious police also have raided beauty salons and restaurants, reportedly looking for prostitutes, but only finding hair stylists, waitresses and diners.

"Mira", for example, was eating at a restaurant one night with several friends when the sharia police and public order officers burst into the place and surrounded them. "It was unbelievable, and a violation of privacy. They acted like we were doing something immoral simply by having dinner together in a restaurant," she said.

Sharia police, with public order officers, have rounded up girls not wearing headscarves and seized dozens of bottles of alcohol during raids over the past several days.

The head of the Banda Aceh Sharia Administration Office, Raja Radan, said the sharia police still had to be accompanied by public order officers or the police on raids, because they were not yet full civil servants and were thus unauthorized to carry out raids alone. "In the future they will conduct the raids by themselves. As to the charge of arrogance, that is just not true," said Radan.

He said the sharia police would focus their attention on the dress code and immoral acts such as gambling, drinking and premarital sex. "Most cases so far have been related to sexual promiscuity, which has influenced our youths," said Radan.

Asked if corruption cases eventually would be tried in sharia courts, Radan said there was still no bylaw on corruption that would allow the religious courts to hear these cases. "But we are considering the matter," he said.

Students still in tents one year after tsunami

Jakarta Post - February 22, 2006

Nani Afrida, Aceh Jaya — Thousands of students in Aceh Jaya regency, Aceh, are still attending lessons in tents more than a year after the deadly tsunami destroyed many of the regency's schools.

At least 98 of 161 schools in Aceh Jaya regency were destroyed in the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami, Aceh Jaya Regent Zulfian Ahmad said.

"We are still waiting for help from the German Red Cross and Samaritan Purse to rebuild the schools," Zulfian said.

However, with much of the road network in the regency also destroyed in the tsunami, it is impossible to get building supplies to the area with any kind of speed.

Whatever the reasons, the children of the regency just want a proper place to study. Srikandi, 12, who attended Keude Teunom elementary school before the tsunami, said: "I wish I had a classroom like the one before the tsunami." Srikandi, a fifth grader, now attends a "school" that consists of two large tents and a hut where the textbooks and classroom supplies are kept. Eighty students have attended this makeshift school for the past year.

The students were only recently provided with chairs and desks, before that they sat on mats or on the dirt.

There are two classrooms to a tent, forcing the teachers to take turns leading lessons. For example, when one class is quietly doing math exercises, the other class will have an Indonesian lesson.

"It's hard to concentrate, especially when there's an aftershock or a storm, because the school is near the sea," Srikandi said, pointing toward the beach just 100 meters from the tent.

Principal Syamsuddin said the German Red Cross had promised to rebuild the elementary school, but the work had yet to begin. "The quality of education here has dropped drastically since the tsunami," Syamsuddin told the Post.

Students at a private Islamic junior high school in Panga district also find themselves still attending lessons in a tent. And perhaps even more distracting than being located meters from the beach, this tent sits along a main road in the district.

When asked about the delay in rebuilding the school, principal Abubakar Arhas could only guess. "Perhaps it's because we're a private school." There are about 100 students studying in the battered tent, all that is left of what was the best private Islamic junior high school in the regency before the tsunami.

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WEST PAPUA

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Protesters want Freeport's Indonesia mine closed

Reuters - February 28, 2006

Achmad Sukarsono, Jakarta — Hundreds of native Papuans are demonstrating to demand the closure of a huge mine in Indonesia's Papua province run by the US company Freeport-McMoran Copper & Gold Inc, police and witnesses said on Tuesday.

In Jakarta, 100 protesters trying to enter a building that houses Freeport offices scuffled with anti-riot police, who eventually used a water cannon to help disperse the crowd.

Protesters also have staged rallies in Papua's provincial capital of Jayapura and in Timika, the nearest town to Freeport's Grasberg mine, Papuan police spokesman Kartono Wangsadisastra said.

"Yesterday, we had 700 protesters in Jayapura. Today, around 200 of them have showed up again to demand the closure of the Freeport mine while around 50 residents have erected tents in Timika to display their grievances," Wangsadisastra said. "They want other residents to join the rallies and we are guarding them. Everything is under control over here," he said.

Antara national news agency reported members of Papuan local councils have promised the protesters a discussion with the Jakarta government on the future of the controversial mine, located in the snow-capped Papuan highlands.

Operations at Freeport's Grasberg mine, believed to have the world's third-largest copper reserves and one of the biggest gold deposits, came to a standstill for four days last week before protesters, mostly illegal miners, left the site near the town of Timika, about 3,400 km (2,100 miles) east of Jakarta.

Rock-throwing mob

Papuans in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, have vented anger against Freeport over a range of issues by damaging parts of the building housing company offices last week and by protests this Monday and Tuesday.

On Tuesday, hundreds of police in anti-riot gear exchanged blows with the outnumbered protesters, who tried to strip officers of their riot helmets and plastic shields, some of which were shattered in the scuffles.

Police sprayed water at the rock-throwing protesters but that only pushed them out of the building compound. Steps away, on one of Jakarta's busiest streets, they continued their rally loudly condemning Freeport, Indonesia's largest taxpayer.

"The police have over-reacted. This is just the beginning of our fight because we have not received anything good from Freeport. We are going to protest until Freeport is shut," said rally spokesman Marthen Goo.

So far, protesters have not reached the actual Freeport offices that occupy the higher floors of the building.

The Freeport operation has been a frequent source of controversy in Indonesia over issues ranging from its impact on the environment, to the share of revenue going to Papuans and Papua, to the legality of payments to Indonesian security forces who help guard the site.

Illegal miners often enter mining areas in Indonesia, a sprawling archipelago that is the world's fourth most populous country with huge metal deposits such as copper, gold and tin.

[Additional reporting by Telly Nathalia.]

Protesters want Freeport to stop operation in Papua

Jakarta Post - February 28, 2006

Jakarta/Jayapura — Police used a water cannon and fired tear gas to disperse hundreds of protesters who gathered in Jakarta on Monday to denounce US gold mining giant Freeport, saying its mine in Papua province had brought no benefits to local residents.

In the rally outside the offices of the Indonesian unit of US company Freeport-McMoran Copper & Gold Inc., 500 protesters smashed the ground-floor windows of the Plaza 89 office building in Kuningan, South Jakarta, but none reached Freeport's offices on the fifth and seventh floors.

A policeman and a protester were hurt during the rally, a Reuters photographer on the scene said. "Close Freeport! Close Freeport!" chanted the protesters, who briefly clashed with police before authorities brought in the water cannon, AP reported.

Authorities succeeded in calming the protesters, who responded by sitting cross-legged in front of the high-rise building, but still refused to

leave.

Meanwhile, in Jayapura, the capital of Papua province, some 500 students marched from Cendrawasih University to the provincial council building Monday, demanding the provincial administration stop Freeport's operations. The students also demanded the release of Papuan students held after they vandalized Plaza 89 on Thursday.

The detained Papuan students went on a predawn rampage inside the building Thursday, setting fire to a travel agency on the ground floor. There were no casualties in the incident.

Responding to the protesters' demand, the chairman of the council's human rights commission, Yance Kayame, said the administration and the council did not have the authority to stop Freeport's operation; only the central government had such power.

He said the council could only issue recommendations to the House of Representatives. "We support the students' aspirations, but the Papua provincial council can only issue a recommendation on the matter to be delivered to the House of Representatives." In the town of Timika, near the Grasberg mine operated by Freeport, about 100 protesters staged a rally but did not disrupt mining operations, which resumed Saturday afternoon after being suspended last week following protests outside the mine.

The Grasberg mine — the largest gold mine in the world and the third largest copper mine, which opened in 1973 — has long had an uneasy relationship with locals, some of whom are desperately poor and argue that they should be able to retrieve and sell tiny amounts of gold and copper from waste rock dumped by the mine, AP reported. Freeport says the practice is illegal and dangerous.

Coordinator of the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence, Usman Hamid, said earlier the regional government and legislators were partly to blame for the frequent disputes between locals and the mining company, because they had not striven to overcome misunderstandings between the communities.

Papuan Front's five demands

Tempo Interactive - February 28, 2006

Muchamad Nafi, Jakarta — The Peoples' United Front Struggle of West Papuan proposed five demands regarding PT Freeport's continuation on their land. The proposal was read when the Front held a demonstration at the Plaza 89 building in Kuningan, South Jakarta, the office of Freeport's Rio Tinto.

The action's coordinator, Marthen Goo, said that the five demands were to close the PT Freeport-Rio Tinto operation completely; audit and investigate the company entirely, pull back all of the non-organic Indonesian National Army (TNI) and the Police in Papua, and strictly investigate the statement of the Indonesian government through Vice President Jusuf Kalla. "This concerns the instruction to add TNI troops to secure the mining area of PT Freeport-Rio Tinto," said Marthen.

The fourth demand is the unconditional release of all the captives in the Timika and Plaza 89 Kuningan cases. The last one is critical of the US-European Union domination on the possession and destruction of the natural resources and the economy-politics in Papua.

Marthen emphasized that if the demands are not fulfilled, they will generate solidarity action of a total national strike in Papua in the form of stopping all kinds of activity. In Jakarta, the demonstration lasted three days. "We will fight and it must be closed," said Marthen.

The demonstration was joined by about two hundred people. They brought various posters and banners, among them was written: 'Close Down Freeport Now', 'Freeport is the Root of Papuan Problems', and 'Stop Sending the Troops'.

Plant's shutdown adds pressure on Freeport

Financial Times - February 28, 2006

Shawn Donnan, Jakarta — When hundreds of illegal miners last week blocked the access road to Freeport McMoRan's gold and copper mine in Indonesia's remote Papua province, it was tempting to describe the incident as just another clash between a multinational miner and its indigenous neighbours.

For Freeport, however, the four-day shutdown of the Grasberg mine that resulted from the blockade was the latest piece of unwelcome news in what is already emerging as a difficult year.

With gold and copper prices notching record highs in recent months, Freeport is well-positioned for another lucrative year after reporting profits of \$934.6m in 2005 on revenues of \$4.2bn.

But the miner is under growing pressure in Indonesia and the US over its environmental practices and its relationship with the Indonesian military.

US authorities have launched preliminary investigations into reports that it allegedly paid millions of dollars to individual Indonesian officers in recent years — on top of what it pays the military for security at the Grasberg mine. And Jakarta recently sent a team to investigate Freeport's environmental practices. The company denies any wrongdoing on all fronts.

Increasingly, the mine is also re-emerging as a target in the long-simmering battle for Papuan independence. Police in Jakarta yesterday used tear gas and water cannons to try to disperse hundreds of protesters outside Freeport's offices there and protests against the miner have become increasingly common in Papua.

Last week's blockade ended peacefully on Saturday after Freeport apparently agreed to extend the reach of its community programmes to the several hundred squatters-cum-illegal miners at the centre of the dispute. Freeport said production at the mine, which processes 200,000 tonnes of ore a day, resumed on Saturday evening.

The blockade began last Wednesday, a day after an operation by security forces to clear illegal

miners away from the banks of a river into which Freeport dumps its tailings. The operation led to a clash during which police fired rubber bullets while the miners reportedly used bows and arrows. At least five people — including two of the illegal miners — were injured, according to police.

The incident and subsequent blockade highlighted the company's often awkward relationship with local communities in Papua. But current and former Freeport employees, say the incident also pointed to a relatively new issue for the US miner, which has been operating in Papua since the early 1970s.

Illegal mining was never a problem at Freeport before small-scale panning of the river near the mine began about 2000 or 2001, they said.

Since then the number of illegal miners around the mine has risen as gold prices have soared. Working in teams, the panners can recover one to two grams of gold a day, making the venture a lucrative business in a country where more than half the 220m people live on less than \$2 a day. At current prices, one gram of gold is worth about \$18.

"All of that has become a major problem," says Tom Greene, a former American diplomat who until 2004 was a Freeport executive. And, he says, "it's not going to be an easy problem to fix".

The attraction of a lucrative pay day has led to other social issues. Most of the panners are Papuans and live in a dishevelled camp near the Freeport mine. Many are gold rush migrants to the area and Dani tribesmen, historic enemies of the Amungme people, the original landowners.

A similar influx in the 1990s led to a 1997 tribal war between Dani and Amungme tribesmen that left 11 dead. It also resulted in a costly fix for Freeport, which spent millions funding the resettlement of 2,500 squatters. Many believe the security forces play some role in the increasingly organised illegal mining around Freeport's operations.

Mama Yosepha Alomang, a Papuan activist, says access to the area in which last week's clash occurred is heavily restricted. Local people cannot go there, she says, "if they don't have a

link with the security forces". Allegations like that are hard to prove. But such links are common in Indonesia and Freeport has long had an uneasy relationship with the security forces.

Many believe the military played a role in at least inflaming 1996 riots near the mine. The 2002 ambush of a convoy of Freeport employees, which left three dead, has also been blamed by some on the military, although eight Papuans are due to go on trial soon.

Asylum-seekers top agenda in Jakarta

The Australian - February 27, 2006

Patrick Walters — Alexander Downer will meet senior Indonesian officials today in a bid to calm Jakarta's concerns over Australia's handling of 43 Papuan asylum-seekers now on Christmas Island.

There is a growing expectation in Canberra that most, if not all, of the 43 could end up staying in Australia after having their cases examined by the Department of Immigration.

The issue is extremely sensitive for the Yudhoyono Government, with senior Indonesian officials warning recently that conferring refugee status on the Papuans would undermine bilateral relations with Canberra.

"Their applications are being considered one by one by the Immigration Department and they will make an assessment consistent with the legal obligations that Australia has," Mr Downer said yesterday ahead of leaving Australia for Jakarta.

The Foreign Minister will have breakfast with his counterpart, Hassan Wiryuda, this morning at the start of a 16-hour visit to the Indonesian capital.

Mr Wiryuda raised the Papuan case in a recent telephone call with Mr Downer following a similar call from President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to John Howard last month. A grant of asylum by Australia would confirm in the minds of some

Indonesian policy-makers that Canberra was seeking to undermine Indonesian sovereignty over West Papua and encourage secessionist sentiment.

Immigration officials have interviewed all the group who landed near Weipa, in northern Queensland, after a five-day canoe voyage. The department will make a final assessment on their applications by mid-April.

Dr Yudhoyono personally guaranteed to the Prime Minister that the asylum-seekers would not be harmed if they returned to Indonesia.

Dr Yudhoyono and Mr Wiryuda say that Indonesia has steadily improved its human rights record in West Papua.

The 43 Papuans, who included independence activists, say they could be killed or persecuted if they are forced to return home — a claim rejected by Jakarta.

Mr Downer will also discuss strategies for curbing illegal fishing in Australian waters by Indonesian fishing vessels and raise the issue of clemency for Bali Nine ringleaders Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran — sentenced to death by a Bali court two weeks ago — with Mr Wiryuda.

Six arrested at Freeport demonstration in Jakarta

Detik.com - February 28, 2006

Iqbal Fadil, Jakarta — Apes. Perhaps this is what six demonstrators at Plaza 89 in Kuningan, South Jakarta, were thinking earlier this afternoon. Because it was precisely when the demonstration was ending that police arrested them.

The arrests occurred in front of Plaza 89 on Jl. HR Rasuna Said on Tuesday February 28 at 5.30pm. At the time police had been repeatedly asking the demonstrators to disband before 6pm. All of a sudden, several plain-clothed police officers dragged a number of demonstrators to the side of the road.

The arrested are Islah from the Commission for

Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras), Wahyu from the Action Study Circle for Indonesian Democracy (LSAD), Ari Arianto from Aceh-Papua Solidarity (SAP), Awing and Ridho from the Indonesian Legal Aid Association (PBHI) and Ruis.

Sensing they were about to be arrested, they even struggled to get free. They were not released however with several police officers instead assisting in 'securing' them. Although several of their colleagues had been arrested, the hundreds of other demonstrators were undaunted and continued to sing spirited songs of struggle.

South Jakarta municipal police chief, Police Superintendent Wiliardi, claimed to knowing nothing about the arrests. "The police only arrest people who are guilty", he said diplomatically. Several police officers that declined to give their names said that the six were arrested on suspicion of provoking anarchy.

Protest ends peacefully

After repeated attempts at persuasion, the 200 or so demonstrators finally disbanded. Earlier they had stubbornly insisted on staying in front of the building where PT Freeport has its offices. After lengthy negotiations they finally ended the action. "You can come here tomorrow and we will stand watch", said Wiliardi through a loudspeaker.

Police had prepared three trucks and two medium size busses to transport the demonstrators away but the majority declined and chose to walk to the Indonesian Environmental Forum (Walhi) offices in the Mampang Prapatan area of South Jakarta. Protesters used only one of the trucks.

As a result the flow of traffic from Mampang in the direction of Menteng slowed to a crawl because only the fast lane could be used with the slow lane being taken over by the march. (ton)

[Translated by James Balowski.]

Police fire tear gas to disperse Freeport

protestors

Agence France Presse - February 27, 2006

Jakarta — Police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse hundreds of protestors outside the offices of Freeport Indonesia in the capital Jakarta, as demonstrators demanded the closure of its mine in Papua.

About 300 protestors clashed with security personnel and several police and protestors were injured, an AFP photographer at the scene said. "Close down Freeport!" the protestors shouted.

Glass panels at the security post outside the building were smashed, but the protestors did not enter the lobby of the building, which houses the offices of the local unit of US-based giant Freeport-McMoRan on a higher floor.

The move followed the peaceful ending at the weekend of a four-day blockade of a road near Freeport's mine in Indonesia's remote Papua, after the company said it would allow local miners to continue prospecting through its waste.

The blockade by hundreds of the miners brought production at the world's largest gold and copper mine to a standstill.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had directed his energy minister to coordinate with the security minister to resolve the dispute, fearing a loss of national income if the mine stayed shut.

One of the leaders of Monday's protest accused the company of abusing human rights, fostering corruption and damaging the environment. Some protestors also demanded that non-local soldiers and police officers be withdrawn from Papua.

About a dozen Papuan students last week vandalised the building in a pre-dawn attack that led to nine of them being arrested.

In Abepura near Papua's capital of Jayapura, about 100 people took to the streets also demanding Freeport's closure, Papua police spokesman Kartono Wangsadisatra told AFP. The march disrupted traffic near Jayapura's airport but after negotiations the protestors took their protest to the provincial parliament, Kartono said. No

violence was reported, he added.

Freeport is one of the top sources of revenue for Indonesia's government. But it has repeatedly come under the spotlight following disputes with local residents, allegations of human rights violations and queries about its payments to the military to provide security.

Freeport back in operation after three-day shutdown

Jakarta Post - February 27, 2006

Jakarta — With activities resuming at PT Freeport Indonesia's mine in Papua, activists called for the release of Papuan students detained for vandalizing a Jakarta high-rise that is home to the gold and copper company's Jakarta office.

"We are very pleased to report that the situation at the Grasberg Mine in Papua has been resolved peacefully and our operations resumed at approximately 6 p.m. on Saturday," spokesman Siddharta Moersjid was quoted as saying by Reuters.

Operations at the Grasberg mine, believed to have the world's third-largest copper reserves and one of the biggest gold deposits, were suspended Wednesday after illegal miners armed with bows and arrows clashed with security officers, soldiers and police the day before after a dispute over their sifting through the company's tailings.

Siddharta said that only one individual — a security officer for Freeport Indonesia — had been hurt. He said losses due to the disruption had not been determined. "There are a number of factors needed to be taken into consideration," he said, without elaborating.

After reaching an agreement with the company, protesters obstructing access to the site left on Saturday after conducting a tribal ceremony. The Freeport spokesman said the protesters had wanted to benefit from the initiatives and programs established by the company for locals in the vast

province of Papua.

Meanwhile, a human rights activist demanded the immediate release of nine students held after an early morning attack Thursday on Plaza 89 office building in Kuningan, South Jakarta.

"The legal matters in Jakarta cannot be separated from incidents in Papua," coordinator of the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras) Usman Hamid was quoted as saying by Antara news service. "If activities have returned to normal in Timika, there must be the consideration to free these students in Jakarta."

Usman said the regional government and legislators were partly to blame for the frequent disputes between locals and the mining company because they had not striven to overcome misunderstandings between the communities.

He said he did not condone the student's use of violence but added the incident, sparked by reports of the shooting of three civilians during a protest Tuesday, resulted from a buildup of "disappointment" at the allegedly high-handed approach of security forces in dealing with locals.

A total of 13 students went to the Kontras office after the attack at the office building. The students, at the urging of Kontras, later turned themselves in to the Central Jakarta Police. Police named nine out of 13 people suspects in damaging property and the remaining four would only become witnesses.

Papuan asylum process dragging: Jakarta

Australian Associated Press - February 27, 2006

Indonesia complained that Australia's processing of asylum applications for 43 Papuans on Christmas Island was "dragging".

In Canberra, Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone said she was unable to confirm when a decision would be made about the asylum claims.

"Domestic law in Australia takes time. It is dragging a little a bit," said Indonesian Foreign Minister Hasan Wirayuda after a Jakarta meeting with visiting Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer. "It is a time-consuming process," he said.

As well as signalling Indonesia's impatience over how long the cases have run, Dr Wirayuda also made little headway with calls for face-to-face consular access to the Papuans.

He said Indonesian official access to the group so far had been limited to telephone conversations. "Telephone access is not satisfying enough. We are trying again to have direct access," he told AAP.

Mr Downer said the Papuans have not received Indonesian consular visits because they had not wanted them. "If they don't wish to have access we will not give them access," Mr Downer said.

He said he explained the asylum process to Dr Wirayuda and said the applications, regardless of the outcome, would not affect Australia's support for Indonesia's territorial integrity and rejection of Papuan separatist claims.

"We fully support Indonesia's territorial integrity. We fully support the province of West Papua remaining part of the Republic of Indonesia," he said. "We offer no sympathy or support for succession from Indonesia."

The 36 adults and seven children arrived at Cape York earlier this year after spending five days at sea in a rickety boat. They were then taken to Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, where their asylum claims were now being assessed.

Refugee groups have lobbied the government to release the independence advocates into the community on the mainland while the claims were being done.

But Senator Vanstone said the Papuans would go through the normal processes. "Look, they're going through the normal process, that process can take some time," she told reporters. "Getting in-country information is not always easy. That's not something that's done by my department, that's done by the department of foreign affairs and trade. "They will be handled

in the normal way."

'Stone fire' ends Freeport standoff

Jakarta Post - February 26, 2006

Tb. Arie Rukmantara, Jakarta — Hundreds of protesters ended their three-day roadblock at the entrance of PT Freeport's Grasberg mine in Timika, Papua, on Saturday with a traditional outdoor peace ceremony, officials said.

The illegal miners lifted their barricades and abandoned the mine after holding a traditional ceremony in which they burned stones as a sign of peace and read out their demands.

A solution to the standoff was reached Friday night during a meeting between protest leaders, local tribal figures and Freeport management.

The protesters established the roadblock Wednesday outside the mine, one of the world's largest copper and gold reserves, after a clash a day earlier between miners and Freeport security guards. The dispute began when guards stopped locals from sifting through the company's tailing ore.

Mimika legislative council speaker Yoseph Yopi Kilangin said the protesters dispersed after the Papua administration promised to issue a bylaw allowing local miners to prospect Freeport waste.

"The local administration and Freeport will also soon set up a cooperatives unit to facilitate the miners," Yoseph told The Jakarta Post by phone.

The Amungme tribe leader said he had assured Freeport management there would be no more trouble at the mine as long as Freeport and the government were committed to hearing the protesters' demands. The Amungme is one of several tribes living near the mining area.

Freeport spokesman Budiman Moerdijat welcomed the peaceful settlement, saying the company would resume operations as soon as the barricades were lifted.

Yoseph, who attended the Friday-night meeting that resulted in the agreement, said the protesters had also demanded they meet Freeport chief executive James Moffet so he could hear their aspirations personally. "The company said it would try to meet the demand within a month," he said.

Locals wanted Freeport to improve their welfare by offering them more employment opportunities in the mine and promotions for existing employees, Yoseph said.

The protesters also urged Freeport to stop using soldiers as its security guards. "The locals want the nine Freeport security guards from military backgrounds replaced with civilians," Yoseph said.

A recent US report revealed the company has made direct payments to soldiers who guarded the mine, leading to allegations Freeport had acted improperly and was fueling corruption in the military.

Yoseph said the protesters wanted the government to revise its working contract with Freeport by involving local tribespeople. The government extended Freeport's 1967 working contract in 1991, allowing the firm to exploit the area for 30 years until 2027.

Freeport's independent commissioner and local Amungme tribal leader Tom Beanal said he did not expect all of the protesters' demands to be met by the company and the government. However, revising the contract was the best way to avoid further protests in the future.

"This should be a lesson to the government not to hand over the management of the country's rich natural resources to foreigners without involving local people," he told the Post.

Meanwhile, National Police spokesman Sr. Comr. Bambang Kuncoko said Papua Police officers would continue guarding the mine until the company resumed production.

The end to the standoff in Timika would not affect police charges against 10 students for disorderly behavior outside Freeport's main office in Kuningan, South Jakarta, he said.

Troop reinforcements sent in as Freeport standoff continues

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Tb. Arie Rukmantara, Jakarta — The government was sending hundreds of troops Friday to safeguard PT Freeport Indonesia as a roadblock continued at the mine site in Papua province, halting its production for a third consecutive day.

"Today, the government has mobilized 300 police personnel and one battalion of (about 700) Army soldiers to secure Freeport," National Police spokesman Brig. Gen. Anton Bachrul Alam said in Jakarta.

The deployment of troops was ordered by Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Widodo Adisucipto, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro said separately.

"Police can't handle the security alone. The chief security minister has asked the military to handle it and it will be returned to police after things are back to normal," he was quoted by Reuters as saying.

Earlier, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono asked Purnomo to coordinate with the chief security minister to end the standoff, fearing a sizable loss of national income if the mine stayed shut.

The government, which owns 9 percent of the company's shares, calculates the halt in operations is costing it US\$3 million in tax and non-tax revenue every day.

Hundreds of Papuans maintained barricades at the main entrance of the Grasberg mine, forcing the local arm of US-based Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. to stay closed. They are demanding that Freeport allow local people to sift through the firm's waste ore.

"If they are prevented from doing so, they demand compensation from the company," Freeport's

independent commissioner Tom Beanal, who is also a local Amungme tribal leader, told The Jakarta Post.

Tom once sued Freeport in a United States court for allegedly polluting the environment.

"Actually, shifting through tailings, which consists of toxic (materials), is dangerous to human health. But we are still looking for a way out to settle the problem," he said.

Negotiations with the company's management, local government, security officials and tribal leaders were deadlocked.

The director of local human rights group Elsham Papua, Aloysius Renwarin, said the demand for compensation was merely an expression of anger from locals who long felt they were ignored by both Freeport and the government.

"If they demand compensation, that's normal because it's their land, which they inherited from their ancestors," he told the Post. "Freeport is just a company that acquired a contract to make use of the land, not to own it." He said the problem was not simply about locals looking for a handout. Aloysius said that Jakarta should realize the current tension in the area resulted from the buildup of many problems, due to political, social, economic and environmental causes.

"Protesters have demanded a dialog with Freeport's director James Moffett and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to discuss how to improve the welfare of Papuans," he said.

Aloysius warned that ignoring the demand for dialog could further fan separatist sentiment among Papuans.

"Freeport's operations have brought a huge fortune to Jakarta. Papua has been its 'kitchen' of development. The government must pay more attention to Papuans... otherwise they will be very disappointed to be part of this republic," he said.

He also said some protesters demanded the company's operations be stopped permanently because they said it failed to better the welfare of local people.

Protesters end blockade at Freeport mine: police

Agence France Presse - February 25, 2006

Jakarta — A blockade by alleged illegal miners that has halted production at the world's largest gold and copper mine in Indonesia's Papua province has ended with an outdoor party for peace, a police spokesman said.

The stand-off between 500 protesters and police near the massive Freeport-McMoRan mine ended in a celebration that was held after the group read out a peace statement and a statement on their demands to Freeport, said Colonel Kartono Wangsadisastra.

"They are now having a party, locally known as the 'fire stone' celebration, in which they burn stones as a sign of peace," Wangsadisastra told AFP.

He said the protesters agreed to end the blockade during a closed-door meeting with local religious leaders and administrative officials Friday night in the town of Timika.

The protesters promised to remove wooden planks from the road near the mine and leave the premises "as soon as the party is over", Wangsadisastra said, but he was unable to specifically say when it would take place.

"They are not a group of people who can be easily trusted as they are an unpredictable lot. But they have promised to leave the area once the party is over some time today," the spokesman said.

One of the demands to Freeport, Wangsadisastra said, included "a permission for the miners to continue" prospecting through the waste tailings produced by the mine. He said he had no immediate information whether Freeport would meet the demands.

However he said production was expected to resume at the mine as soon as the protesters leave the premises. No Freeport officials or spokesmen could be immediately reached for comment.

"What is important now is once Freeport can have its engineers and workers back to the mine, they should resume production there," Wangsadisastra said.

Freeport has been one of the top sources of revenue for Indonesia's government, reportedly providing it with 33 billion dollars in benefits from 1992 to 2004.

The mine blockade, which has halted production since Tuesday, is the latest headache for Freeport-McMoRan in Indonesia.

The company's payments to the military to provide security have been under intense scrutiny amid allegations that they amounted to corruption, while the environment ministry claims it is investigating pollution allegations against it.

International media are banned from travelling freely in the easternmost province of Papua, where a simmering separatist conflict persists.

Prosecutors are preparing court dossiers for the preparation of trials for eight alleged members of the Free Papua Movement (OPM) rebel group held in Jakarta for the August 2002 shootings of two Americans and an Indonesian in Papua.

The three victims were working as teachers for Freeport at the time of the shooting, which took place on the road to the mine in Timika.

OPM rebels have been fighting a sporadic and low-level guerrilla war since 1963 when Indonesia took over the huge mountainous and undeveloped territory from Dutch colonisers.

Papuan backlash closes gold mine

Sydney Morning Herald - February 25, 2006

Tom Allard and agencies — Indigenous Papuans scraping a living from the tailings at Freeport's goldmine, the world's biggest, have halted production after injuring two armed security guards and blockading a road.

As the blockade grows and the halt to Freeport's production enters its third day, it emerged yesterday that the Indonesian military is being sent in to break up the protest, sparking fears of more violence in the province.

The Papuans attacked the guards with stones and arrows fired from bows earlier this week after they were told to stop mining the waste flowing from Freeport. The mining is illegal but has long been tolerated by Indonesian soldiers, who often buy the gold. Four of the Papuan miners were also injured in the incident.

The crackdown by the security guards is the culmination of months of unrest and sparked a protest by locals resulting in the main road to the open-cut mine being blockaded.

Papuans have long complained they get little money and few jobs from the huge gold and copper mine, and yet suffer from the severe environmental damage.

They are also incensed that eight Papuans were arrested and taken to Jakarta last month on suspicion of murdering two American teachers and an Indonesian — all workers at the mine — during an armed ambush in 2002. Most local Papuans blame the Indonesian military, which is paid for security at Freeport, but has periodic disputes with the company over pay.

The unrest extended to Jakarta this week with students, some dressed in traditional Papuan outfits, attacking the office of Freeport-McMoRan, the US company that owns the mine, leading to 13 arrests.

Indonesia's President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, has told his Energy Minister, Purnomo Yusgiantoro, to sort out the dispute. Dr Yudhoyono is under pressure from parts of the Indonesian media to acknowledge and address the aspirations of Papuans and a history of rights abuses.

US lawmaker wants Indonesia to ease access to

Papua

Agence France Presse - February 24, 2006

Jakarta — A US lawmaker Friday urged Indonesia to ease access to its easternmost province of Papua, the site of a long-simmering separatist movement, amid allegations of military abuse.

Human right groups claim some 100,000 people have died in the province as a result of military action or atrocities by Indonesian troops during the decades-long rebellion.

The government makes it difficult for foreigners to visit Papua, the country's most remote region, geographically and politically, so allegations of abuse are difficult to confirm.

Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wisc., said he told Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono "any degree of openness and ability to examine what happened there would be helpful."

Granting some sort of access would demonstrate Indonesia's "dedication to trying to solve this difficult problem," he told reporters after a meeting at the presidential palace.

Indonesia seized Papua province in 1963 and formalized its occupation in 1969 following a UN-sanctioned ballot that rights groups have labeled a sham.

Ever since, the poorly armed Free Papua Movement has fought a sporadic campaign for independence. The military has been accused of widespread abuses in its effort to defeat the group.

"The question was whether the people... can be made feel comfortable in their region and had the openness and the protection from many possible abuses by the military," Feingold said.

An attack in 2002 on a convoy of teachers working at the mine that killed two US citizens disrupted moves to normalize military ties between Jakarta and Washington.

However, Washington lifted a six-year embargo on arms sales to Indonesia in November as a reward for Indonesia's cooperation in fighting terrorism.

In January, police arrested eight suspects in the killings, all members of Papua's tiny separatist army who were said to have intended to kill soldiers who patrol the road.

Indonesia to press on Papuans' return

Sydney Morning Herald - February 25, 2006

Indonesia is expected to press Foreign Minister Alexander Downer for consular access to 43 Papuan asylum seekers when he visits Jakarta next week to discuss clemency for the Bali Nine and counter-terrorism.

Indonesia's chief foreign spokesman Yuri Thamrin repeated that the Papuans would be welcomed to return to Indonesia. He said that supporters of the group or Australian parliamentarians would also be welcome to visit them to verify they have not been persecuted.

"We are open to consider sympathetically the possibility of supporters, parliamentarians to come to Indonesia in order to verify that there is no persecution at all," said Mr Thamrin, who also heads a section within the ministry which deals with Australia.

Mr Downer and Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty arrive in Jakarta on Monday for a counter-terrorism conference to be opened by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Prior to making a keynote address to the conference, Mr Downer will have a breakfast meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda.

Indonesian foreign ministry officials said while no agenda had been agreed, Wirayuda expected Mr Downer to raise the issue of clemency for Bali Nine ringleaders Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, who have been condemned to death. The asylum claims of the Papuans would also likely come up, Mr Thamrin said.

Indonesia has challenged the Australian government to prove the group, whose asylum claims are being assessed on Christmas Island, are really fleeing persecution.

The Papuans, who included pro-independence activists and their families, arrived in northern Australia last month after a five-day voyage in an outrigger canoe.

Their leader Herman Wainggai says they fear they may be killed if returned to Papua, where separatists have been waging a low-level insurgency for decades.

Mr Thamrin said Australia must give Indonesia consular access to the group under UN conventions and warned a briefing given to Indonesian officials by Australian immigration officers on the asylum claims process was not enough.

"It's a legitimate right of a sovereign country to have access to meet their citizens," he said.

He backed a suggestion by Papuan MPs from Merauke to visit the group and reinforce a promise by Mr Yudhoyono to Prime Minister John Howard that the group would not be harmed if they were returned.

"This is a really good idea," Mr Thamrin told AAP. "The parliamentarians (want to) explain to the Papuans... they are not the target of persecutions. I would like to really underscore that no persecution will be directed against our brothers."

Mr Thamrin said appeals launched by the Bali Nine would be dealt with according to the law, which was aimed at ridding the country of a serious and growing drug problem.

Indonesia's police chief said this week that an estimated 3.2 million Indonesians, or 1.5 per cent of the population, use illegal drugs.

"What is important is that we need a certain due process of law, a credible process, a transparent process, whose outcome is believable," Mr Thamrin said. "We believe we have followed that path."

Mr Downer will be keynote speaker on Monday at a conference hosted by the Indonesian Crime Prevention Foundation focusing on suicide

bombings.

Blockade continues at giant gold mine

Radio Australia - February 24, 2006

A blockade by protesters at the giant gold mine in Indonesia's Papua province has entered its fourth day. Small-scale miners who have been prevented by police and security guards from scavenging in the mine's tailings say they are determined to keep up the blockade until their demands are met. The mine is operated by a subsidiary of the US-based Freeport McMoRan and provides substantial income to the Indonesian Government.

Presenter/Interviewer: Karon Snowdon

Speakers: Torry Kuswardono, Mining Campaigner with Indonesia's Friends of the Earth.

Snowdon: Unconfirmed reports on the first day of trouble, Tuesday said several people had been injured when security tried to remove protesters from blocking a road to the mine. Since then there's been a stand-off with no-one arrested.

The closure of the mine's operations would have cost millions of dollars every day in lost earnings for Freeport. But the protesters say they won't budge until the US based boss of Freeport, Jim-Bob Moffat meets with them.

They want to continue their scavenging in the waste tailings of the world's biggest gold mine.

Torry Kuswardono is the mining campaigner for Indonesia's Friends of the Earth. He says the unusual self-control of the hundreds of security personnel facing off the protesters is a reflection of Freeport wanting to avoid more attention.

Kuswardono: It is quite unusual, because usually years ago, police could easily crush every protest in Papua, but I think it's because Freeport has been in attention for months since the New York Times released their report, particularly on the connections between Freeport and Indonesian

military and police. So I think the police and the security forces are quite careful to handle these situations.

Snowdon: And is it your understanding that the protesters intend to blockade the mine for as long as it takes to get what they want?

Kuswardono: Yes, they demand to have negotiations with James Moffat the Commissioner of Freeport.

Snowdon: James or Jim-Bob Moffat has been to Freeport that was ten years ago to talk with the local people, thousands of whom have been forcefully removed from their tribal lands. Others have died at the hands of the notorious Indonesian security forces employed by the mine.

Freeport shifts hundreds of thousands of tonnes of rock a day, dumps contaminated waste into the river which serves the locals, earns billions from gold and copper and employs mostly non-locals in its 9-thousand strong workforce.

Freeport said it needs to prevent the small scale miners from working in the tailings because of the presence of potentially harmful chemicals.

I asked Friends of the Earth representative Torry Kuswardono if this wasn't reasonable.

Kuswardono: Yes, this is quite reasonable for Freeport, but quite un reasonable for poor people who are living in the round mining. Because for years, Freeport didn't bring any change to the betterment of life of local people around the Freeport area.

Snowdon: So your saying the small miners have no choice, this is their only form of livelihood?

Kuswardono: Yes.

Snowdon: But is it dangerous?

Kuswardono: It is dangerous, but for poor people they don't care about the dangers if they can get some money to survive. Local people they don't have skills to compete with the modern economics with the cash economy, and Freeport failed to improve their situation.

Snowdon: Given the danger, Friends of the Earth

doesn't support the small miners returning to scavenging for gold. Torry Kuswardono says the current dilemma should be an opportunity for Freeport and the Indonesian government to clean up their economic, social and environmental acts.

Kuswardono: Well, our position is that Freeport has to be made responsible for many things, including financial management, and parliament accountability and also their connections with the military and also they have to be audited on the system how to give responsibility to the people. So it might be good for the people to scavenge in the tailing to seek some gold, but support and the government of Indonesia should do something to maintain a sustainability of livelihood in the area.

Papuans take out anger at Freeport

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

Jakarta — The police have vowed to tighten security at key foreign facilities in the capital following a violent attack Thursday morning at the office building where PT Freeport Indonesia is located.

The Jakarta Police spokesman Sr. Comr. Ketut Untung Yoga Ana said the police would deploy more officers to guard foreign premises, including embassies. "We will do our job proportionally," he told The Jakarta Post.

Earlier this week, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) attacked the US Embassy in protest of the US Supreme Court's 90-year-old sculpture that features the Prophet Mohammad and several other important lawgivers in history.

Head of the general crimes unit at the city police, Sr. Comr. Muhamad Jaelani, said the police had named 10 Papuan students as suspects in the attack in the lobby of Plaza 89 in Kuningan, South Jakarta. Three more students were allegedly implicated in the attack, but are still at large.

The office of PT Freeport Indonesia is located on

several upper floors of the building. A total of 25 students from various universities here arrived at the building to protest against Freeport over clashes of local people and security officers during a demonstration Wednesday at the company's mine in Timika.

At about 3:30 a.m., 13 of them stormed into the lobby of the building by destroying the glass windows with flower pots. The other 12 remained outside.

There were only two security guards in the building, and they were unable to stop the students from entering, but managed to extinguish a fire set in the lobby by the students, who were armed with Molotov cocktails.

As city police officers began to arrive, 10 students hopped into a public minivan they had rented, while three others sped away on motorcycles. The students sought protection at the office of the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras).

The police followed them to the rights activists' office and negotiated with Kontras, who will now act as their legal representatives. The activists agreed to hand the students over for arrest, said Kontras' executive Abu Said Pelu.

The students are all members of the Papua Students Council, according to the council chairman Yan Matua. "The attack was not premeditated. It was a spontaneous act triggered by accumulated disappointment toward Freeport and the Indonesian government, as we believe that Freeport paid the police..." he argued.

Freeport's mining operations remained suspended Thursday as residents continued to block access to the site for the second consecutive day. Freeport is trying to negotiate with the residents.

About 400 independent local miners set up barricades Wednesday at a road near the mine, which is owned by the local unit of US-based Freeport-McMoran Copper & Gold Inc., forcing the halt in production, after security forces attempted to evict them from the mine a day earlier.

The company's corporate communications senior manager Siddharta Moersjid said that the situation remained unchanged from Tuesday and that talks were being held between representatives of the protesters and Freeport officials.

The local miners have been demanding permission to sift through the waste pumped from the mine.

Meanwhile, in Papua's capital of Jayapura, some 300 people staged a protest at the local council building as well the Freeport office, demanding the company shut down its operation.

The incident near the mine is the latest snag in Indonesia for Freeport-McMoran, which has been under scrutiny for making payments to Indonesia's military for protection.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has instructed Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro to coordinate with the security minister to resolve the dispute, fearing a loss of national income if the mine stays shut.

The company is the largest taxpayer in Indonesia, reportedly contributing at least US\$33 billion to government coffers in recent years.

Don't blame locals for incident in Freeport area

Antara News - February 23, 2006

Jakarta — A University of Indonesia sociologist said the indigenous Papuan people should not be blamed in the clash that occurred in the mining area of giant US-based mining company PT Freeport Indonesia in Timika on Tuesday.

"We should not put the blame (for the incident) on the indigenous people but on PT Freeport Indonesia, the central and provincial governments who have not given enough attention to the fate of those people," Thamrin Amal Tamagola said on Thursday.

He said the incident was the culmination of their annoyance about the mining company that had shown an unfriendly attitude towards the local people by

using military and Police Mobile Brigade personnel to guard its premises.

"The local people also want to enjoy the benefits derived from the exploitation of Papua's natural resources," he said.

He suggested that PT Freeport change its way of thinking and pursue a more friendly approach to the local people. "It should also stop using military and police personnel against the local people," he added.

Previously, it was reported that security personnel of the company and Police Mobile Brigade members clashed with illegal miners at Mile 71 in Tembaga Pura, Mimika district, Papua on Tuesday afternoon. Five people, including two company security guards, were injured.

The incident began when company security guards asked the illegal miners to stop their activity in the area of the company. The illegal miners responded by throwing stones and blowing arrows at the company security personnel.

All the injured people are now being treated at the Tembaga Pura Hospital.

Meanwhile the company ceased its operation following the closing of the road at Mile 72, 74 by the government. "We can not give any confirmation on when we will resume our operations," a company spokesman, Sidharta Mursid, told Antara News in Irian Jaya on Thursday.

On the total loss of the ceased-operations he said the company could not confirm the amount of the loss.

Protesters vandalize mining company offices

Associated Press - February 23, 2006

Zakki Hakim, Jakarta — Students attacked the building housing offices of a US gold mining giant in Indonesia's capital on Thursday, as the company's mine in western Papua province remained shut for a second day due to protests, police

said.

Up to 20 Papuan students broke windows and damaged facilities in the lobby of the building in the pre-dawn attack, said police chief Gen. Sutanto. Thirteen people were arrested.

Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. was forced to shut its massive gold and copper mine in Papua on Wednesday after locals — some of them carrying bow and arrows — set up barricades and demanded permission to sift through waste ore pumped out by the mine.

The New Orleans-based company, already under fire over pollution allegations and its practice of paying security forces to guard its open pit mine, said it hoped to resume operations soon, but the mine remained close Thursday.

The blockades followed clashes Tuesday after police and company security guards tried to prevent locals from sifting through the waste rock. Six people were injured.

Adrianto Machribie, head of PT Freeport Indonesia, the company's Indonesian subsidiary, told Metro TV the closure could cost the company \$10 million to \$12 million a day.

The mine, which has long had an uneasy relationship with local people, many of whom are desperately poor, last temporarily closed in 2003 after a landslide killed several workers. Although illegal, many people earn their living retrieving and selling tiny amounts of gold and copper from waste rock, or tailings, dumped by the mine.

Security practices at the site have come under renewed scrutiny since a 2002 attack on a convoy of teachers working at the mine killed two US citizens. Local and foreign rights groups claim soldiers took part in the attack, allegedly to extort more security payments from Freeport.

Papua is also home to a separatist rebellion, further complicating Freeport's security.

The Grasberg mine, the largest gold mine in the world and third largest copper mine, opened in 1973. Freeport estimates the mine, some 2,300 miles east of Jakarta, has decades of future

production.

West Papua and East Timor parallels

East Timor and Indonesia Action Network - February 22, 2006

[Talk by Scott Burchill, senior lecturer in international relations, Deakin University Forum for West Papua, RMIT University, Victoria, Australia] February 15, 2006

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you briefly tonight about this important subject. For those of you disheartened by the immensity of the struggle for freedom in West Papua, let me say at the outset that I still have vivid memories of addressing meetings just like this — many on a smaller scale — throughout the 1980s and 1990s when East Timor was our priority. This is how change is ultimately effected.

We were told then, as we are now, that we were wasting our time on a “lost cause.” Our critics were wrong then and they seem determined to repeat their mistakes today.

The picture of human rights abuses in West Papua is all too depressingly familiar, especially to those who know what went on in East Timor between 1975 & 1999. It has been:

- systematic & state sponsored (more accurately state terrorism, but of the kind that doesn't excite or even interest Western political elites, including the use of militias to target independence activists)
- grave (bordering on genocide according to a Yale University Law School study, perhaps 400,000 unnatural deaths over four decades)
- crimes against the West Papuans have been committed with impunity (no appetite for prosecution in the Indonesian legal system, no accountability)
- characterised by political persecution of independence activists (OPM — clearly the crucial

issue of the moment for those who recently arrived here by boat)

- involved cultural attacks against Melanesians (including attempts to alter the demographic balance in the territory through transmigration)
- also involving resource exploitation (the enormous mineral wealth of the country should have made the West Papuans the wealthiest people on the planet, not some of the poorest) and environmental destruction (pollution of river systems, illegal logging, and so on)

The good news is that these crimes have been extensively documented in studies by Yale University's Law School and the centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney, amongst others.

No-one, especially neighbouring governments, can plead ignorance about the plight of the indigenous people in the territory. In my view, the evidence of human rights violations in West Papua has been more systematically recorded and comprehensively documented than they were in East Timor during its period of Indonesian occupation. But then again, the crimes have been going on much longer.

This means that although the Department of Immigration must assess all claims for refugee status on a case by case basis, it can be in no doubt about the context in which the 43 asylum seekers are making their appeals. No-one, including the Indonesian Defence Minister — and who knows even the Foreign Editor of The Australian, now denies that these crimes took place. Importantly, they continue today and have not been mitigated by Indonesia's recent democratic transition.

It should be interesting to watch events in Canberra. It's not often that one department of state — in this case the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs — gets to pass judgement on another department of state — the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Vanstone v Downer for the South Australian heavyweight title!

Let there be no mistake about what is at stake here. This is not just an assessment of the

international legal rights of 43 people. It is a judgement about both the state of political freedom in Indonesia's eastern province and the success or failure of Australian diplomacy towards Indonesia since 1969.

The granting of refugee status will formerly acknowledge that Jakarta is guilty of crime against humanity in West Papua. The refusal to grant refugee status to the 43 would not only further damage our international reputation — especially with the UNHCR — but would confirm yet again the triumph of tawdry and myopic politics over humanitarian concerns and ethical obligations.

Successive Australian Governments have adopted the mistaken belief that political stability across the Indonesian archipelago — which they believe is bedeviled by inherent centrifugal forces — can be secured through military repression. Precisely the opposite is true. Military repression is a cause of political fragmentation and secession in Indonesia. A few points about this deserve elaboration:

- fears about the Balkanisation of Indonesia is irrational and unfounded (beyond Aceh & WP, what?)
- promoting stability in a territory is meaningless unless you understand what is being stabilised (in WP repression and human rights violations)
- Canberra looks foolish when it appears more committed to West Papua's retention within the Republic of Indonesia than the people of the province are
- the political boundaries of states are not immutable, they change all the time (USSR, Germany, Yugoslavia, ET, Czechoslovakia — Palestine, Korea, Cyprus, Kurds) — they are not as sacred or sacrosanct as often claimed
- self-determination is not a once and forever event — people have the right to reconsider their political arrangements, especially when the bonds of nationalism are broken by state violence and exploitation
- before we consider the possible consequences of

altering state boundaries, we need to first ask: what are the human costs of maintaining the status quo? Does Australia believe what is going on in WP is tolerable and sustainable?

- Canberra should also consider answering the one question they always try to avoid asking: what do the people of West Papua want?

Now let me make some remarks about our responsibilities in this issue.

1) Outsiders shouldn't reflexively support independence for West Papua or integration with PNG or Indonesia or any other option. Outsiders should support the right of the people of West Papua to decide their own political arrangements — their right to self-determination. The freedom they are entitled to is the freedom to choose their political future.

This is the political principle at stake here. This right — to fashion their own preferred forms of political community — has been denied to them by outsiders:

- Indonesia's territorial claim as inheritor state of the Dutch East Indies (paradox of sanctifying the borders of a colonial system they despised and violently resisted) — the UN's complicity in holding and validating a sham plebiscite — the Act of Free Choice in 1969, which has no moral or legal legitimacy

- the diplomatic preferences and conveniences of others, including Australia, which reinforce Indonesia's territorial claim (as we did with ET), thus denying the West Papuans the opportunity to make their choices. Our complicity extends to the tolerance, and therefore de facto encouragement, of serious international crimes.

2) If the West Papuans are to enjoy the rights we take for granted, their struggle needs to be internationalised. This will not be easy.

The East Timorese eventually received the patronage of their former colonial overlords — the Portuguese. The West Papuans cannot expect similar levels of support from the Dutch. A starting point is for the United Nations to acknowledge the error of its ways in 1969 and

revisit the issue so that an authentic expression of political intention (beyond the rejection of special autonomy) can be made. This is a responsibility New York cannot avoid. But which state will sponsor this? A Scandinavian state?

3) The demilitarisation of the province, an end to corruption, terrorism, exploitation, and cultural repression in the territory, together with investigations into crimes against humanity committed in West Papua must take place simultaneously and regardless of what transpires in the short term on the political front. Accountability for these crimes is a pre-requisite to any political solution. These are matters of justice.

4) Australia should stop buckling to pressure from the political elite in Java which gets nervous each time its crimes in West Papua are exposed to the international community. Questions of Indonesia's territorial integrity are no business of Australia's. Ritualised commitments need not be made each time the Australian foreign minister or Prime Minister visits the country, nor should they be written into any future bilateral security agreement.

Why does Jakarta have so little confidence in the commitment of some of its citizens to the Republic that it needs to elicit Canberra's support in persuading them otherwise? As if we have either influence or the best interests of the West Papuans at heart.

Canberra should be telling Jakarta that it has a problem in WP because of its own behaviour there and not because of unruly activists in the province or solidarity groups in Australia. Until it civilianises political rule in the territory, enforces the rule of law there and treats its indigenous inhabitants with dignity, nothing will change.

For its part, the Australian Government should reflect on the recently released UN report into Indonesia's horrendous behaviour in East Timor, its complicity in those crimes, and ask whether it has learnt from its diplomatic mistakes there or is determined to repeat them in West Papua.

West Papuan asylum seekers need protection

Green Left Weekly - February 22, 2006

Gillian Davy, Melbourne — A powerful video message from Herman Wainggai, spokesperson for 43 West Papuan asylum seekers incarcerated on Christmas Island, was a highlight of a Free West Papua Collective public forum attended by 120 people on February 15.

Wainggai made a passionate call for Australian and international support for his peoples' struggle for independence from Indonesia. He explained that he and fellow independence activists had fled West Papua because they were being targeted by the Indonesian military (TNI).

Uncle Kevin Buzzacott welcomed the meeting to Indigenous land and Kimberly Smith, a member of the Council of the Anglican Diocese, said a petition calling on the church to investigate claims of TNI human-rights abuses in West Papua, and to explore the call for a United Nations review of the 1969 "Act of Free Choice" has been presented to the Melbourne Anglican Synod.

Scott Burchill, senior lecturer in international relations at Deakin University, recalled addressing similar meetings throughout the 1980s and 1990s in support of the East Timorese independence struggle when critics argued that he was supporting a lost cause. "They were wrong." "The issue of terrorism is new for Canberra. But for 43 years West Papuans have been terrorised", Australian Jacob Rumbiak, West Papua Association spokesperson, explained, adding that West Papuans wanted to solve the independence issue through peaceful means.

Greens Senator Kerry Nettle, who recently visited the asylum seekers on Christmas Island, recounted their personal stories of persecution and abuse. One asylum seeker spoke of being poisoned while imprisoned for his pro-independence activities; another spoke of the murder by the TNI of his 14-year-old child. Wainggai explained that he put his three-year-old twin girls onto the handmade boat

that took five days to make the crossing to Cape York, because he wanted them to survive the TNI's repression.

Nettle called for a national day of action in support of West Papuan independence on April 2.

Jimly reaffirms legal status of West Irian Jaya

Jakarta Post - February 22, 2006

Jakarta — Despite opposition from Papuan community groups, the Constitutional Court has reaffirmed the status of West Irian Jaya as a province, saying it only lacks a legal operational basis to regulate government activities there.

West Irian Jaya Legislative Council chief Jimmy Demianus Itjie and West Irian Jaya caretaker governor Timbul Pudjianto were part of a delegation that met Tuesday with Constitutional Court Chief Justice Jimly Asshiddiqie and justice Achmad Rustandi to ask about the legal status of their province.

In 2004, the Constitutional Court was asked to rule on the validity of West Irian Jaya province, established in 1999, following the enactment of the 2001 Papua Special Autonomy Law.

The latter stipulated that any partitioning of Papua province would require the approval of the Papua People's Assembly (MRP). The court ruled the 1999 law was unconstitutional, but said the 2001 law could not be applied retroactively because West Irian Jaya was already established as a province.

"Establishment of a gubernatorial government is an act of law which cannot be rescinded," Jimly said. His comment drew cheers from the delegation.

He noted that under the Constitutional Court's ruling, the government needed to establish a legal basis regulating operational matters for its activities there, not a legal basis for the province itself.

The government missed its deadline of Feb. 20 to

reach a solution with groups opposed to the partition of Papua to establish West Irian Jaya.

The MRP has cited the 2001 law in its objection to the establishment of the province, saying it also received overwhelming support from community groups.

MRP chairman Agus Alue Alua said Monday the council would only be willing to negotiate on the issue if all matters related to the easternmost province referred to the special autonomy law.

Jimly reiterated that because West Irian Jaya was established by the 1999 law and legitimized by the court in 2004, the special autonomy law of 2001 was not pertinent.

He added that he believed every party involved in the issue understood the 2004 Constitutional Court's decision. "It is just a matter of determination from the government," he said. "The Constitutional Court cannot dictate to the government what to do."

Jimmy said he was relieved by the explanation, and the province would go ahead with gubernatorial elections on March 10 concurrently with Papua polls.

Production suspended at US gold mine in Indonesia

Associated Press - February 22, 2006

Jakarta — Production at the world's largest gold and copper mine was suspended Wednesday after illegal miners blocked the road leading to the site in Indonesia's remote Papua province, a company spokesman said.

Around 400 illegal miners have set up wood and stone barricades on the road leading to the Grasberg mine in Indonesia's Papua province, which is run by a local unit of New Orleans-based Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. (FCX), said police spokesman Kartono Wangsadisastra.

"Mining and milling operations have been temporarily suspended as a precautionary measure,"

said Freeport spokesman Siddharta Moersjid in Jakarta. "The Indonesian authorities are working to resolve the situation in a peaceful and expeditious manner."

The last time the mine closed down was in 2003 after a landslide killed several workers.

The protest followed clashes Tuesday after police and company security guards tried to disperse the miners, who earn their living retrieving gold from waste rock dumped by the mine, said Wangsadisastra. Three Freeport employees, one policeman and two illegal miners received minor injuries in the clash, said Moersjid.

The mine in the remote province has long had an uneasy relationship with local people, most of whom are desperately poor. Papua is also home to a separatist rebellion, complicating Freeport's security still farther.

Security practices at the site have come under renewed scrutiny since a 2002 attack on a convoy of teachers working at the mine killed two US citizens. Local and foreign rights groups claim soldiers took part in the attack, allegedly to extort more security payments money from Freeport.

Hidden wars West Papua: Manifest destiny redux

Nonviolent Activist - February 22, 2006

Charles Scheiner — Imagine a vast land mass, laden with gold and timber and populated only by a few "primitive" tribes. Imagine an overpopulated, expansionist neighbor eager to reap the harvest next door. In North America from 1492 through 1849, the result was enslavement and genocide of Native Americans and a United States that now stretches from sea to shining sea and exerts global economic, military and political power.

Indonesia aims to repeat the saga, and the parallels are striking.

But instead of the Homestead Act giving Native land to Easterners who move West, the Indonesian

government subsidizes transmigration from Java to Indonesia's outer islands. Instead of rugged individualist 49ers rushing to California with pickaxe and pan, New Orleans-based multinational corporation Freeport-MacMoRan uses the latest in 20th-century technology to run the world's largest gold mine in West Papua. Indonesia's treatment of the West Papuans, particularly its lack of respect for their human, civil and economic rights, is a macabre reminder of our own national history, with the US Cavalry superseded by the tanks, helicopters and machine guns of ABRI, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia — and with the corpses black instead of red.

We can no longer avert the genocide that accompanied European expansion over our continent. But we can be aware of the repetition of that history now occurring in West Papua — and of the key role the United States played in laying the groundwork for this reprise. It is not too late to stop history from repeating itself to the bloody end.

The colonial history

Most of Southeast Asia was colonized by Western powers in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Japanese occupation of the area (French Indochina, British Burma and Malaya, the US Philippines, Dutch Indonesia and Portuguese Timor) during World War II, coupled with the growth of indigenous liberation movements, led after the war to revolutions and independence for many of those countries.

Indonesia (formerly the Dutch East Indies) was no exception, declaring independence in 1946 and achieving it three years later. The United States encouraged the Netherlands to leave the colony, thereby opening it up to freer international trade.

In neighboring resource-rich Dutch New Guinea (West Papua), which had been ruled as a separate colony, independence did not come so readily, as much of the territory was still isolated from international contact. But by 1957, the Dutch — with deliberate slowness — promised West Papua it would be self-governing by 1970 and belatedly began to develop local infrastructure and skilled personnel.

Indonesia was not so patient, however; assimilating West Papua became a major cause for the Sukarno government, despite the fact that the 1.5 million West Papuans who live in the territory are religiously, culturally and racially distinct from Indonesians. In 1962, the United States averted a possible war by negotiating the so-called "New York Agreement" between the Netherlands and Indonesia. It provided for eight months of transitional UN rule, then Indonesian control, to be followed by a plebiscite to be held before 1970. Jakarta named the territory "Irian Jaya," an acronym for "Follow Indonesia Against Holland."

Although West Papuans were not included in the negotiations leading up to the New York Agreement, the pact was sanctioned by the United Nations and the world community. Indonesia took over the territory May 1, 1963. Two years later, Indonesia itself was taken over in the cataclysmic military coup that put still-reigning General Suharto in power. Suharto followed up with mass killings of alleged supporters of the mass-based, formerly legal Communist Party of Indonesia; the slaughter claimed upwards of a million lives.

No choice

The misnamed "Act of Free Choice" of 1969 that ostensibly implemented the New York Agreement gave the people of West Papua no choice at all. In a travesty of a plebiscite, Indonesia allowed only 1,025 carefully selected "traditional leaders" to vote on the question; they unanimously chose for their country to remain a province of Indonesia. Journalists were excluded from the meeting, although leaked UN and diplomatic reports convey its coerced, uninformed and undemocratic nature.

Angered by this betrayal and receiving no support from the international community, West Papuans began to organize guerrilla resistance under the Organisasi Papua Merdeka, the Free Papua Movement. Although the OPM occasionally engages the Indonesian military, usually resulting in reprisals against neighboring civilian populations, its resistance is primarily symbolic; it is difficult, with spears and captured handguns, to win against a modern army equipped with the latest in US-supplied helicopters and munitions. But the OPM knows West Papua's jungles

and mountains far better than ABRI does and continues to control significant areas in the bush.

Casualties are hard to estimate, but the pattern is familiar. In addition to military retaliation, forced relocation, coerced labor and imported diseases have taken their toll; a hundred thousand or more West Papuans have died from the Indonesian occupation, and tens of thousands of Indonesian troops remain in West Papua to preserve control and order.

Transmigrasi policy

One of Indonesia's greatest needs (and part of West Papua's attraction for Indonesia) is relief for overpopulated Java, an island with 30 percent the area of West Papua but almost 100 times as many people. Since the early 1970s the 20th-century version of the Homestead Act (often financed by the World Bank) has enticed more than 200,000 people to move to West Papua, threatening to outnumber the locals.

Inaria Kaisiepo, a young West Papuan woman living in exile in the Netherlands, put it this way:

"The Papuans have always led a self-sufficient way of life. They have their own agricultural systems. The Indonesian authorities do not show any respect for the Papuans and are only interested in [West Papua's] minerals and other natural resources. They say West Papua has little people and is practically empty. The multinationals are being allowed to come in. Papuans have no place in this development process. They are considered backward and primitive, and they become second-class citizens in their own country.

"There are 240 languages in West Papua, and even more tribes. The people try to defend their land. For instance, the Moi people are very strongly resisting a logging company in their area. There is also the transmigration policy in Indonesia. A lot of immigrants come to West Papua, and the Papuans are being pushed aside for the immigrants, who have better education opportunities. There is a lot of discrimination going on. At the moment it is difficult to get exact figures because the Papuans are not allowed to call themselves Papuan, and everyone is supposed to call themselves

Irianese. But there are estimates of a 3.5 percent population growth in West Papua but only 0.2 percent among the Papuans, so in a few years, the Papuans may become a minority in their own country.

"Papuans have no right to their own culture. They are not allowed to practice their own culture except when they are forced to practice it for tourism, like in woodcarving, where they are forced to do woodcarving all day and then these are sold for a hundred times more than they were paid for it.

"It is difficult to organize for indigenous peoples because they are not recognized. There are supposedly no Papuans in Papua so they are not allowed to organize. We are struggling for a right to self-determination."

Resistance continues

In addition to the military resistance, the West Papuans often use nonviolent and cultural tactics — and are met with violence. In 1984, for example, West Papuan anthropologist Arnold Ap was killed by Indonesian troops after a ceremonial raising of the West Papua flag in Jayapura, the capital. Subsequent Indonesian military "exercises" caused 10,000 refugees to flee over the border to Papua New Guinea.

In December 1988 Dr. Thomas Wainggai (a US- and Japanese-educated Papuan scholar) led about 70 people, including many church leaders, in a similar flag-raising at a Jayapura sports stadium.

Although military leaders were invited to attend, they chose to participate by arresting those present. Dr. Wainggai was sentenced to 20 years for his peaceful protest. After his March 1996 death (probably of natural causes) in a Jakarta prison, 4,000 people rioted when they were prevented from holding a public funeral.

The cracked golden egg

Although West Papuan land and lumber are valuable commodities, the real prize is the gold and copper reserves estimated to be worth more than \$60 billion. And the winner is: Freeport Pacific Indonesia, a joint venture of the Indonesian

government and Freeport MacMoRan, the largest US investor in Indonesia. Freeport's huge gold mine in West Papua processes more than 120,000 tons of ore daily, netting \$200 million profit in 1995 alone. With the help of Freeport director and consultant Henry Kissinger, they recently obtained rights to an even larger area of West Papua and have arranged with the British RTZ mining company to increase by half again their rate of conversion of West Papua's mountains into gold, copper — and river silt. More than 90 percent of the mined mountains end up as tailings, clogging rivers and destroying the environment for miles and miles downstream.

Freeport was the first US company to rush into Indonesia after Suharto's brutal takeover, and it continues to front for the regime.

Its active presence in the US Congress — opposing any pressure on Indonesia (and lobbying to hasten the demise of the Endangered Species and Clean Water Acts, among other environmental protections) — is little noticed outside the Beltway. But the bluntness of Freeport CEO James R. "Jim-Bob" Moffett is having repercussions as the company has come increasingly into the spotlight for its involvement in human rights violations.

In April 1995, the Australian Council for Overseas Aid documented the killing or disappearance of 15 alleged OPM guerrillas and 22 civilians in Freeport-controlled territory. In one incident, ABRI attacked a peaceful flag-raising ceremony on Christmas Day, 1994, killing at least three and arresting and torturing more than a dozen. Although Freeport denies that its own people were involved, it works closely with ABRI, providing equipment and transport for the soldiers who "protect" Freeport's facilities. Other reports (including one by the usually compliant Indonesian National Human Rights Commission) have confirmed the Australian Council's findings, as well as the fact that ABRI used Freeport-provided containers as torture chambers.

At the same time, Freeport's destruction and dishonesty about its operations effects on the West Papuan environment became better known back in the United States, where the company is renowned for flouting local and federal anti-pollution rules. Things got so bad that the

Overseas Private Investment Corporation of the US government took the precedent-setting action of canceling Freeport's \$100 million "political risk insurance" policy, even after President Bush personally urged President Clinton to forestall the action.

Freeport appealed the ruling, and an arbitrator worked out a settlement that restored the insurance only until the end of 1996 — but not before anti-Freeport riots this March shut down the mine for several days.

Following the riots, Moffett met with local leaders, and Freeport's aggressive public relations people falsely claimed a settlement had been reached. Tom Beanal of the local Amungme Tribal Council is currently suing Freeport in New Orleans federal court.

Meanwhile, at the University of Texas in Austin, Moffett promised a multimillion donation in return for a building to be named after him and his wife. As student and faculty activists raised questions about the appropriateness of an academic institution honoring such an individual, Freeport wrote several professors and journalists, threatening lawsuits if they continued to write about Freeport's activities. The controversy grew so intense that the University's Chancellor William Cunningham had to resign his \$40,000/year post as a Freeport director.

At Loyola in New Orleans, Freeport had endowed a \$600,000 chair in "environmental communications." But after some students demonstrated at Jim-Bob's home (some signs read "Jim-Bob Moffett kills for profit"), he demanded the return of the money. The Wall Street Journal opined that Freeport's "Wielding a Howitzer against a mosquito is a dangerous strategy," but Forbes Magazine depicted Freeport as victim, railing against the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and US and Indonesian environmental groups for "using their power in the US bureaucracy to impose their own standards on other countries."

Desperate measures

Freeport is not the only West Papua story deemed more newsworthy than ongoing genocide. An OPM guerrilla group near the Freeport mine seized 26

hostages Jan. 8, including seven Europeans, and demanded independence for West Papua. Although a few were released quickly, half were still captive four months later, as the Red Cross tried to resolve the situation, promising to keep the military out. A settlement had nearly been reached when Indonesian military helicopters came flying over the site in violation of the Red Cross promise. In response, OPM guerrilla leader Kelly Kwalik (several of whose relatives had been killed by ABRI/Freeport forces in 1994) withdrew his promise to free the hostages. The Red Cross gave up May 9, and a few days later a massive Indonesian military operation freed all of the European and most of the Indonesian and West Papuan hostages. Several OPM people were killed by the military, and two Indonesian hostages were apparently killed by their captors. At this writing, the actual events are still unclear, and many fear military reprisals against the neighboring civilian population.

The hostage drama and its ambiguous ending illustrate the despair felt by many West Papuans at their inability to effectively challenge the Indonesian and corporate rape of their land and people. Many OPM leaders in exile criticized the hostage-taking as wrong and/or counter-productive, but the personal histories and isolation of some guerrillas in the jungle made them unable to see that Indonesia would not accede to their demand for independence.

Although the incident did put West Papua's independence struggle on the front pages (especially in the British, Dutch and German home-country press of the captives), its resolution was a serious setback for the OPM.

As in East Timor, invaded and occupied by Indonesia since 1975 with genocidal results, it will take sustained pressure from many quarters — international solidarity, foreign governments, the developing democratic movement in Indonesia and the West Papuan people themselves — to bring Jakarta around. But the first step, for Americans, is learning about a drama that is disconcertingly similar to one of the most shameful aspects of our own nation's history.

Fast Facts about West Papua:

<http://www.warresisters.org/nva796-5.htm>

Further Information:

<http://www.warresisters.org/nva796-5.htm#moreinfo>

[Charles Scheiner, formerly of the WRL Executive Committee, has worked on Pacific peace and sovereignty issues for more than a decade and is national coordinator of the East Timor Action Network. The opinions in this article are his own and not those of ETAN.]

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MILITARY TIES

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Kopassus, SARS resume joint exercises

Antara - February 28, 2006

Jakarta — Indonesia's army special forces, Kopassus, has resumed a joint exercise with Australia's special forces SASR after the program was stopped in 2002.

"The joint exercise between Kopassus' 81 Gultor and SASR was code-named Dawn Kookaburra in Swan Bourne, Perth, Australia and lasts 10 days," Kopassus' general commander Major General Saiful Rizal said on the sidelines of an army leadership meeting here on Tuesday.

The exercise included attacks on buildings, raids on aircraft, snipers, react shooting, mount attacks, improvisation of explosives and procedures of troop leadership.

He said the exercise was aimed at maintaining and increasing capability as well as skills of the soldiers in combat tactics and techniques.

It was also aimed at promoting the relationship and cooperation between the Kopassus and the SASR in particular, and between the two countries in general.

Saiful said the exercise focussed on an anti-terror exercise as a manifestation of the two countries' commitment to combat terrorism.

He said the Kopassus sent 31 personnel led by Major Suhardi, the present chief of Battalion 812, to the exercise which lasted from February 13 to

Rights group blasts plans for expanded military cooperation

Associated Press - February 27, 2006

Jakarta — The United States will undermine efforts to reform Indonesia's armed forces if it sharply increases military sales to the world's most populous Muslim nation next year, rights activists said Tuesday.

"Arming the military is not the way to promote democracy and human rights in Indonesia," said Karen Orenstein, National Coordinator of New York-based East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN).

"Congress should zero out the Bush administration's unwarranted gift to Indonesia's unreformed military."

The administration of US President George W. Bush allocated nearly US\$1 million dollars for military sales to Indonesia in 2006, and has asked Congress for a six-fold expansion of the program next year.

Washington, which sees Indonesia as a close ally in the war on terror, last year lifted a six-year military embargo that was imposed on the Southeast Asian giant because of alleged rights abuses.

"Impunity for serious human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, still reins supreme in Indonesia," ETAN said, adding that unrestricted military sales will signal an end to efforts to reform the armed forces. More than 100,000 East Timorese were killed, abducted, starved or died of illnesses under Indonesia's occupation from 1975-1999, according to a truth commission report submitted to the United Nations last month.

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HUMAN RIGHTS/LAW

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SBY still seeking political support for truth body

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

Tony Hotland, Jakarta — The government continues to drag its feet on setting up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR), despite a law ordering its immediate establishment. When questioned about the body, State Secretary Yusril Ihza Mahendra said Thursday President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono wondered whether there was sufficient "public support" to establish the commission, which was supposed to have been up and running by April last year.

Under the law, the commission will be tasked with probing past human rights abuses that took place from 1945-2000. Many high level government officials and security chiefs from the New Order era are implicated in these abuses.

The KKR will also seek to draw up a truth-telling mechanism to deal with the perpetrators and compensate the victims of past human rights cases.

Yudhoyono met the KKR selection team on Thursday, more than six months after it screened and submitted 42 candidates to the President. Yudhoyono is supposed to pick 21 names for the commission, a list which will then be sent to the House of Representatives for approval.

However, Yusril said the President still planned to meet the selection team and senior officials one more time to canvas their political support for the commission. The government was also preparing auxiliary regulations to implement the much-debated law, he said.

"The President will try to meet and consult with heads of state institutions, such as the House of Representatives, the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court on the working mechanism. (He) needs (more) political backing," Yusril said.

He reiterated the President's commitment to establishing the commission. "We are aware that the process is overdue... (but) we are considering the social and political situation. Please understand this," he said.

Human rights observers have criticized the

government for delaying the establishment of the commission. They particularly took issue with Kalla's comments on the affair last week.

Comparing the situation at home to that in South Africa, Kalla said there was no need for Indonesia to have such a commission because there were no longer any alleged human rights abuses that needed to be resolved. Kalla also heads the Golkar Party, the home to many former Soeharto loyalists.

Also on Thursday, Yusril announced the President had selected three police experts and three public figures to join a commission tasked with supervising the police. Yusril declined to name the six, pending the issuance of their appointment letters.

Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Widodo Adisutjipto, Justice and Human Rights Minister Hamid Awaluddin and Home Minister M. Ma'ruf will also sit on the Police Commission.

Human rights a non issue to elite

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

Tony Hotland, Jakarta — Doing the necessary work to address human rights issues has never held much appeal for any administration in Indonesia. During the many decades that Sukarno and his successor Soeharto were in power, rights abuses of all types occurred. Subsequent presidents — B.J. Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri — had little time for such issues.

Indeed, human rights were never discussed when Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Megawati were campaigning for the presidency in 2004.

On the legislative side, it does not take a genius to determine the House of Representatives has never lived up to its billing as the representatives of the people, especially regarding rights issues.

While the future protection of human rights in the

country remains an uncertainty, settling past atrocities seems to be even less likely.

Already frustrated by a lack of action over the 1998 Trisakti and Semanggi student shootings, families of the victims were dealt another blow last Thursday when the House decided to do nothing about a recommendation issued by lawmakers from the previous term.

Legally flawed, the recommendation says there were no elements of gross human rights violations in the shootings, although an investigation by the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) found otherwise. The commission implicated the military in the shootings.

Unlike the commission, the House does not have the authority to make such a determination, and now this recommendation poses a hurdle to the Attorney General's Office as it tries to follow up on the case.

House Commission III overseeing human rights issues promised last June to have the recommendation revoked, providing a glimmer of hope for the families of the victims. But months passed with no news until Thursday's decision, which was reached in a leadership forum.

House Deputy Speaker Zaenal Maarif quoted fellow Deputy Speaker Soetardjo Soerjogoeritno, who is said to be the person most familiar with the issue, as saying that revoking the recommendation would be unethical. Speaker Agung Laksono says there is no precedent for revoking earlier House recommendations.

It can be dangerous to make assumptions, but let's try these: Fact No. 1: Soetardjo is a top figure in the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), which has close ties with the military, at least when it was the ruling party under Megawati's administration.

Fact No. 2: Agung is the vice chairman of the Golkar Party, an inseparable ally of the military during Soeharto's reign.

"Funny, even the Constitution and laws can be revised and revoked," said National Awakening Party legislator Nursjahbani Katjasungkana, who

dealt with human rights cases before moving into politics.

"The idea that a decision by a commission can be overruled by four people is ridiculous. The leadership forum is only a substitute for a House consultative meeting, which deals only with scheduling issues."

Another avenue for probing past human rights cases, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR), is still a long way from being formed, almost a year since the April 2005 "deadline" for its creation passed.

The KKR eventually will investigate alleged human rights abuses that occurred between 1945 and 2000, with its main tasks being to seek the truth behind alleged abuses, facilitate a reconciliation between perpetrators and victims, and provide compensation and amnesty for both parties.

Stuck with the President is a list of 42 names to be screened for possible inclusion on the commission, as he is too busy to arrange a meeting with the screening team.

Yet, the President has time to travel the world. He even plans to visit Myanmar to preach democracy in another country accused of gross human rights abuses, as well as to South Korea to help reconcile the two Koreas.

He can spare time to play golf with colleagues and even has time to meet with a group of librarians to discuss a private library at his residence.

It is again shaky to make assumptions, but who's to blame? Fact No. 1: The President, infamous for his indecisiveness, is a retired military general. Fact No. 2: Vice President and Golkar leader Jusuf Kalla has openly expressed his objection to the KKR, calling it unnecessary.

Still waiting for justice are hundreds of families and victims of the 1984 Tanjung Priok massacre, the 1989 Lampung incident, the 1997 forced disappearances of government critics, the May 1998 riots and others.

This makes one wonder if the President's show of interest in the Commission of Truth and Friendship

jointly formed with Timor Leste was only a result of international pressure.

Yet the House remains more interested in toying with political issues rather than questioning the President's commitment to the national truth commission that has eluded the country. Usman Hamid of the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence said no one had the courage to hold people accountable for past abuses.

Ifdhal Kasim of the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy agreed. "Reform isn't only about clean governance. It's also about respecting the right to speak up, as well as coming clean about the past," said Ifdhal.

With all the human rights cases so far heard in court having ended with the acquittal of the accused perpetrators, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission looks to be the last chance for victims and families of atrocities to seek justice.

[The writer is a journalist at The Jakarta Post.]

Abducted activists disappointed in Komnas HAM

Detik.com - February 23, 2006

Ken Yunita, Jakarta — It has not just been once or twice that the families of pro-democracy activists that were abducted in 1997-98 have expressed their disappointment with the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) Ad Hoc team. This time around they are conveying the same thing, annoyance and disappointment with the sluggishness of the team's work.

"Whereas shouldn't the team finish in June 2006, but as of this month why hasn't there been a single summons of those suspected of [carrying out the] abductions", said one of the victims, Mugiono (sic), during a meeting with Komnas HAM at their offices in Jakarta on Thursday February 23.

The mothers of two abducted activists and a member of the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras) accompanied Mugiono.

The delays have made Mugiono wander because the team has already gathered information from a number of witnesses. "Is the information from the witnesses that has been gathered so far [still] not enough", he said.

In response the deputy head of the Ad Hoc team, Martono, said that in fact the team's working program has been on schedule. Martono admitted however that so far it was still at stage I, the compiling data and listening to testimonies from the victims and their families and friends.

Starting in March the team will begin visiting the locations where victims say they were detained. "We may perhaps visit the national police headquarters where friends previously said they had been detained, or perhaps the Jakarta metropolitan police", he said.

Mugiono added that Komnas HAM must ask for political support from the president or the House of Representatives in order that the case can be resolved properly and quickly. "Komnas HAM must demand the fulfillment of President SBY's [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono] promise to complete [the investigation into] cases of human rights violations, both those in the past and now", he said.

In response Martono said that Komnas HAM as actually already sent letters to Yudhoyono and the TNI (Indonesian military). The letter basically appealed to and informed them that the Komnas HAM Ad Hoc team was currently conducting and investigation into the abduction of pro-democracy activists and asked that it be heeded because it is mandated by legislation. (umi)

[Translated by James Balowski.]

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CORRUPTION/COLLUSION/NEPOTISM

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Six officials quizzed over 'Embassy-gate'

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Jakarta — Police have questioned six Cabinet Secretariat staff members in connection with

Cabinet Secretary Sudi Silalahi's controversial letters recommending a company for an embassy renovation project.

Police intelligence officers also went to the Foreign Ministry on Friday to obtain the original copies of the two letters that Sudi sent last year.

In the letters, Sudi asked Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda to attend a presentation by PT Sun Hoo Engineering on a planned renovation project for the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul. PT Sun Hoo does not exist as a legal entity in Indonesia.

Sudi now claims the letters were altered by his staff after he signed them. National Police spokesman Brig. Gen. Anton Bahrul Alam refused to identify the six state secretariat employees but he said they knew about the correspondence.

Anton said Sudi recognized his signature on the letters but denied the content. "Pak Sudi acknowledged the signature was his but maintained that the content was not the same as the letter he read and signed," Anton said.

The investigation follows Sudi's report to the police that the content of the letter had been altered by his staff to make the letter read as if he was recommending PT Sun Hoo for a job — a serious abuse of his authority as state secretary.

Sudi, a confidante of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, has alleged that the controversy surrounding the letters is politically motivated and aimed at tarnishing the reputation of the Yudhoyono administration, which has been campaigning to combat corruption.

In the letter dated Feb. 21, 2005, Sudi appears to have written, "Mr. President asked that you (Minister Hassan) kindly accept the presentation of PT Sun Hoo Engineering management and dully follow it up."

In a hearing with the House of Representatives on Thursday, a legislator from the National Mandate Party, Andi Yulandi Paris, confronted Sudi with another memo he had written to Forestry Minister M.S. Kaban. In that letter Sudi had appealed to Kaban to help a timber company belonging to a

well-connected businesswoman, Hartati Murdaya, which was in danger of losing a concession. Sudi said he “couldn’t remember” issuing the letter.

Anton said the police had also coordinated with the foreign ministry to cross-check information about the letters.

The foreign ministry has said it never had any intention of renovating the embassy in Seoul.

Antara reported that police investigators met Friday with Foreign Ministry administrative bureau chief and spokesman Desra Percaya. Desra said that the officers asked for the letters that Sudi had sent to the ministry and other related documents.

Court a ‘graveyard’ for anti-graft efforts

Jakarta Post - February 22, 2006

Jakarta — The South Jakarta District Court is coming under increasing fire from officials and legal activists for its many questionable acquittals of high-profile graft suspects.

Activists branded the court Tuesday a “graveyard” for justice, after its latest verdict exonerating former president of state-owned Bank Mandiri ECW Neloe and two other former directors, I Wayan Pugeg and M. Soleh Tasripan in a corruption scam.

The court found the three not guilty Monday of corruption in the disbursement of a Rp 165 billion (US\$18.5 million) loan from the bank to PT Cipta Graha Nusantara. Prosecutors had sought 20 years for the men.

"This acquittal increasingly strengthens the image of the South Jakarta Court as a graveyard for efforts to combat corruption," Indonesia Corruption Watch deputy coordinator Danang Widoyoko told Antara.

Danang said the judges’ decision to acquit the three because their lending had incurred no losses to the state was “extremely illogical”. The judges ignored the fact that the loan later turned into a bad debt in 2002, he said.

Attorney General Abdul Rahman Saleh said he was not surprised by the acquittal of the three former directors. The South Jakarta District Court was "notorious" for its many controversial verdicts involving big-time graft suspects, he said.

The AGO would soon appeal the verdict to the Supreme Court, spokesman Mashyudi Ridwan announced.

Judicial Commission chairman Busyro Muqoddas said he planned to summon the panel of judges led by Gatot Suharto to look into whether the judges had violated their code of ethics when releasing the men. However, he said his commission would first examine the verdict before summoning the judges.

The controversial acquittal also drew a reaction from President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who asked the court to explain its verdict to the public.

Responding to the call, new South Jakarta District Court chief judge Andi Samsan Nganro said the public scrutiny of the verdict was a healthy, positive response. "We will open public access to all verdicts the court has and will hand down," he told The Jakarta Post on his first day of work.

"The transparency and public supervision of all trials is absolutely necessary to restore the court's tarnished image." He said improving the court's image would be his biggest challenge.

Andi said he had met the panel of judges who tried the case to seek a legal explanation for the acquittals.

"I will first learn about the case and the verdict before deciding whether there is a need to set up a special team to look into it." Andi replaced the court's former chief Sudarto, who was promoted to a senior judge in the Denpasar High Court in Bali.

Quoting the statements by the panel of judges, Andi said there was no legal requirement the judges must punish the three defendants.

"Three key elements that must be fulfilled in corruption charges have not been met. Referring to Law No. 31/1999 on corruption, the three breached standard procedures because they approved the disbursement of a loan for a private company

without any feasibility study. However, there was no evidence that the approval enriched (the judges), or others, and it did not cause any material losses to the state,"he said."Nor was the credit problematic because the company (Cipta Graha) had no financial problems repaying the loan to the bank," Andi said.

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MEDIA/PRESS FREEDOM

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Controversial broadcasting regulations to be revised

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Tb. Arie Rukmantara, Jakarta — The government, the House of Representatives and the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission agreed Friday to end their dispute over the four controversial government regulations on broadcasting, saying they will team up to revise the laws.

The agreement was reached in talks mediated by the Constitutional Court, which advised the three disputing parties to find an out-of-court settlement, commission member Sasa Djuarsa Sendjaja told The Jakarta Post.

"(The commission) will drop its plan for legal action to review the regulations and has decided to allow a team of five people to work together with the government to revise the regulations within a month," he said.

Lawmakers, commission members and other broadcasting organizations have criticized the four regulations — No. 49/2005 on foreign broadcasters, No. 50/2005 on private broadcasters, No. 51/2005 on community broadcasters and No. 52/2005 on foreign broadcasters — which they said violated the 2002 Broadcasting Law.

They argued that the regulations authorizing the government to license broadcasters and banning local media from directly relaying news programs provided by foreign networks would curb media freedoms in the country.

The regulations also provide frameworks to allocate broadcast frequencies, monitor programs,

sanction errant broadcasters and put limits on foreign ownership of local media.

Sasa said the revisions to the regulations would hopefully benefit all parties. "We would like to encourage local TV and radio stations to grow and allow people to get information from abroad. The regulations should be revised to fulfill these needs," he said.

Legislator Dedi Jamaludin Malik said although the agreement was informal in nature, it was a step forward to designing better regulations for the country's broadcasting industry.

"We believe that the (current) regulations infringe on the authority of other institutions and therefore we want the government to postpone the implementation of the regulations until the revisions are made," he said. "The revisions should place the government and the KPI on the proper (equal) footing as mandated by the broadcasting law," Dedi said.

Government bid to control media has public feeling anxious

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

Abdullah Alamudi, Jakarta — The eyes and ears of broadcast organizations focused on the Constitutional Court building Friday, anxiously waiting for the outcome of a meeting between four government agencies that will decide the fate of the broadcast media in the country.

Independent regulatory body the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), Information and Communications Minister Sofyan Djalil, members of House of Representatives Commission I on information, and Constitutional Court judges met, after a dispute between the KPI and the information ministry over who should do what in handling the broadcast media reached an impasse.

KPI has stopped processing applications from broadcasting organizations until all the seven controversial government regulations on broadcasting are revoked, after Sofyan insisted on

enforcing the regulations while debate on them continued.

The boycott leaves the government without documents to process and its desire to control the broadcast media thwarted — at least for the time being. Under the Broadcasting Law, all applications must first be verified by the KPI.

On its part, the newly set up legislative caucus, whose members include all political parties represented in House Commission I except President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Democratic Party, threatened to boycott the information ministry's budget deliberation if the government failed to review the controversial regulations, a process which the politicians said had to involve the KPI.

In another twist, the Constitutional Court is coming under pressure following reports which questioned the integrity of two of its judges who heard the motion for a judicial review of the 2003 Broadcasting Law.

Judge Achmad Syarif Natabaya, who was an expert advisor of the Justice and Human Rights Ministry and member of the government team that drafted the Broadcasting Bill, and court president Jimly Asshiddiqie, admitted to owning shares in Global TV, one of the television stations which requested the judicial review.

Jimly claimed that although the shares, with a nominal value of Rp 500,000 each, were registered under his name, they actually belonged to an Islamic organization of which he was the secretary-general. A total of Rp 375 million had been deposited for the shares. Jimly said the shares still existed.

To uphold impartiality, both the law on judiciary power and the Constitutional Court Code of Ethics prohibits a judge from hearing a case in which he or she is indirectly or directly involved. Jimly denied that the shares registered under his name had influenced his decision.

The Constitutional Court ruling in 2003 revoked two of the 22 articles brought for a review by six broadcast-related organizations. There was no dissenting opinion.

The broadcast organizations requested the judicial review over fear of what they called KPI's "monstrous power". The broadcasting industry has had decades of experience dealing with government officials and bureaucrats but not with the nine independent-minded members of the KPI, which must always defend the public's right to information.

Article 62 of the Broadcasting Law stipulates that rules and regulations on broadcasting shall be jointly formulated by the KPI and the government, and be enacted through government regulations. The judicial review awarded the monopoly to form such regulations to the government, at the expense of KPI's status as an independent regulatory body.

Empowered by the court's decision, many believe the information ministry, which is in fact run by bureaucrats of the New Order's powerful information ministry, maintains the old paradigm of exercising control over broadcast media through government regulations.

Civil society, and members of the House, are of the opinion that the regulations run counter to the Broadcasting Law and article 28 of the Constitution on press freedom and the public's right to information and article 33 on social welfare.

President Yudhoyono signed the regulations last year, but their implementation was postponed for two months following public protests, to enable the information ministry and the KPI to review them.

There has been no meeting between the two, however. There was a suggestion to postpone the enactment of the regulations for another month to give the conflicting parties extra time to review the controversial regulations. The government, however, insisted that the review should not delay the enforcement of the regulations on Feb. 6. KPI has lost confidence in the ministry, particularly after it was left in the cold during the drafting of the regulations.

The opposition groups insist that information is a public domain. They assert that allowing the government to encroach upon that would only mean the government would be tempted to regain control over the press.

The public is now anxiously waiting for the outcome of the meeting at the Constitutional Court building. Whatever the result may be, public interests cannot be sacrificed.

[The writer is a senior journalist, who teaches at Dr. Soetomo Press Institute. He can be contacted at abdullahalamudi@yahoo.com.]

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ENVIRONMENT

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Some local banks finance illegal logging

Antara News - February 29, 2006

Jakarta — Some banks in regencies have been involved in financing illegal logging, though the forestry industry has been regarded as a sunset industry and put in the negative list for the extension of bank credits, according to a researcher.

The Executive Director of Wana Aksara Research and Study Agency, Agung Nugraha, said further here Tuesday that besides giving contribution to illegal logging, banks in certain regencies have also served money laundering for funds derived from illegal logging.

From interviews, observation and investigation performed in a sub-district in Kota Waringin Timur regency, Central Kalimantan province, the research and study agency has recorded some 1,500 units of trucks serving the transportation of illegal logs.

The agency has observed that most of those trucks belong to leasing companies and illegal loggers have leased the trucks with funds borrowed from banks, according to Agung Nugraha.

The very big profit offered by illegal logging has tempted banks to channel loans for the provision of equipment for illegal wood cutting and vehicles for logs transportation, especially with the support given by civilian and military officials, including the local elite, he explained.

Agung estimated that logs and sawn timber transported from the locations of those unlawful

activities can reach about 4,000 cu.m. a day. With the assumption that the log average price Rp1 million per cu.m., illegal logging backed by banks and the local elite has inflicted a total loss of Rp120 billion on the state per month, he added.

Based on Wana Aksara Research and Study Agency's observation, 20 units of trucks have left illegal wood cutting locations in the forest every one hour.

They work 24 hours a day, except in Ramadhan Islamic fasting month and during rainfall.

Illegal logging has been prevalent in Indonesian forests since the beginning of the current reform period, according to Wana Aksara executive director. "It is ironic that about 40 percent of companies in the forestry industry are currently troubled by stagnation and 60 percent of those operating in the upstream forestry sector are on the brink of bankruptcy," he said

The intensity of illegal logging has begun down since the launching of the first and second Sustainable Forest Operation (OHL) by the Forestry Ministry.

NGOs call for moratorium on mining projects

Jakarta Post - February 27, 2006

Tb. Arie Rukmantara, Jakarta — An alliance of environmental activists have called on the government to stop all mining operations in the country until their negative environmental, social and economic impacts are properly tackled.

The call came amid pollution allegations leveled at international mining firms, which have spilled over into protests against the companies. Illegal local miners are also involved in disputes with legal operators.

Mining Advocacy Network director Siti Maimunah said the mining industry was doing more harm than good in the country. The regulations on mining must be revised, she said.

About 100 clashes occurred every year between mining firms and local residents or environmental authorities, she said.

"Recently, many environmental and social issues involving mining companies have surfaced. This is because the operations have not been environmentally friendly and because they have neglected the welfare of local people," Siti told a discussion on mining and poverty here last week.

Papuans have protested outside PT Freeport's main office in Jakarta and at its mine in Timika.

Locals set up a roadblock outside the Timika mine for three days last week. Papuans had fired arrows at Freeport security guards earlier, forcing the world's largest copper and gold mining firm to suspend production.

The clash broke out after Freeport prevented local people from sifting through waste rock to retrieve tiny amounts of gold there.

Siti said that aside from triggering frequent clashes, mining industries contributed comparatively little to the country's economy.

"In 2004, their tax and non-tax contributions to state revenues were no more than Rp 7.8 trillion (US\$842 million). But the social and environmental costs are much higher," she said.

The millions of tons of tailings produced by mining operations had polluted the country's land, seas and rivers and sickened people living near the tailing areas.

"Therefore, the government needs to declare a moratorium on new mining investment and review the contracts of about 70 mining firms presently operating in Indonesia.

"The purpose is to find solutions on how to save the environment, eliminate social clashes and increase the state's revenues," Siti said.

Greenomics executive director Elfian Effendi said he preferred a temporary halt to selective mining operations.

During the suspension, Elfian said, the government should calculate how much mineral resources the

country had and should oblige mining firms to allocate money for environmental development, including land reclamation and reforestation costs.

He said firms whose operations needed to be suspended should include those that were not specifically allocating money to tackle environment problems.

Elfian said in the Philippines, a court had ordered a mining firm to pay US\$100 million to clean up an area after leaks were found in its tailings disposal system.

"In this case... the Philippines judiciary fined a mining firm a huge amount... Here, I wonder why Freeport can use a whole river to channel its tailings for free?" he said. Lawmaker Kahar Muzakir, who is a member of the House of Representatives' working committee on the draft mineral and coal bill, said formulating stricter regulations on licenses for mining companies could ease environmental destruction and social tensions.

"Therefore the new bill should also regulate those authorized to issue mining licenses," he said.

Illegal wildlife trade running wild: NGO

Jakarta Post - February 23, 2006

Jakarta — It's long been known that animal markets in Jakarta are the place to pick up endangered animals at bargain prices to add to a personal menagerie.

While hunters may only get a few hundred thousand rupiah for catching a rare animal, organizers of the illegal wildlife trade are assured a princely sum, a non-governmental organization said Wednesday.

ProFauna Indonesia estimates Rp 9 trillion (US\$9.2 billion) is made annually from illegal sales of endangered species at East Jakarta's Pramuka bird market and Jatinegara market, and Barito market in

South Jakarta.

It said the most sought-after primates were the Javan langur (*trachypithecus auratus*) and slow loris (*nycticebus coucang*), as well as the green-winged king parrot (*alisterus chloropterus*) and yellow striped cockatoo among birds.

"We want the government to be more serious in stopping the wildlife trade," said the group's conservationist, Eni Nurhayati, during a rally here Wednesday.

Although trading in the animals is prohibited under the 1990 government regulation on the natural ecosystem and the 1999 regulation on animal preservation, Eni said it was going on unchecked.

"They are not making any effort to stand up against the illegal animal trade." The group, established in 1994 in Malang, East Java, campaigns for the protection of wild animals, investigates trade in wild-caught animals throughout the country and conducts animal rescues.

She claimed the bird markets were covers for wide-scale trading in other endangered animals, with reptiles and primates, including orangutans, also on sale.

The traders, she said, can even take care of sending rare animals to a foreign destination, where they can earn even greater rewards.

"Pramuka market is the biggest bird market in Indonesia. Wildlife traders at the market are casual about exporting animals overseas," Eni said.

"One orangutan, for example, is priced from Rp 3 million to Rp 5 million in local markets, but in a foreign market it could soar to \$45,000." The Jakarta market agency overseeing traditional markets, including the bird markets, denied rare wildlife was up for sale, although it admitted it may have happened in the past or sales were conducted in secret at other locations.

Agency spokesman Nurman Adhi said regular inspections were held in 2005 to ensure there were

no endangered species among the animals for sale.

"These traders have networks. It is possible that they do the transactions somewhere else, but I can assure you no illegal wildlife trading takes place in Pramuka market or any other bird markets managed by our agency," he said.

The Forestry Ministry's director of biodiversity conservation, Adi Susmianto, said there were sales of protected species, but he could not confirm the total amount from illegal sales in 2005.

The wildlife trade is thriving, especially for export, because people who formerly dealt in illegal logging are looking for another income source.

Adi said Malaysia and the Philippines were among the illegal importers of Indonesian animals.

"There is no particular demand for a certain type of animal from these countries. Everything sells. It's easy to smuggle the animals there, a mere small boat is enough," he said.

The ministry, he added, had taken action to curb the illegal trade, including signing an MoU with the international group TRAFFIC in 2004 to join forces in wildlife protection.

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MORALITY & GENDER ISSUES

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Legislators to reach out to critics over indecency bill

Jakarta Post - February 27, 2006

Jakarta — Legislators of the House of Representatives are moving to appease opponents of the pornography bill. They plan to approach Bali, Papua and Batam, regions where the strongest opposition to the bill has come from.

Yoyoh Yusroh, deputy chairman of a special House committee in charge of deliberating the bill, said the visits to the regions this week would be part of the efforts to obtain and share first-hand information.

"We'd like to explain the bill. They will get the information directly from us rather than from other parties or from the media," Yoyoh, a legislator from the Islam-based Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) told Antara on Sunday.

Among contentious issues is the definition of pornography in the bill, which critics say is too loose prompting strong protests in regions such as Bali and Papua where nudity in certain contexts is part of the culture. Nudity or partial nudity in paintings, statues and dance, are part of the culture in Bali and Papua.

Being the country's gateway to Singapore, the industrial island of Batam is likely to reject the bill for fear that it would adversely effect its tourism industry.

The arts, however, are among the exceptions in the bill's numerous prohibitions on displays of sensuality, eroticism and sexuality, if they are performed or on display in a "government-sanctioned arts center." Yoyoh said that more input was expected after people were more familiar with the bill so that the committee can finalize it.

"The finalization process is set to begin on March 8," he said. Until then, he added, people still have the opportunity to give their views.

"We will accommodate each input. So far, aside from formal hearings, we have also received written suggestions from people from various professional backgrounds, from designers to lay people and models," Yoyoh said.

If everything works out as planned, he said, the bill will be passed in June.

Meanwhile, legislator Agung Sasongko of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) said that the bill will not be passed if objections are strong, particularly from diverse ethnic groups in the country.

"It has to be acceptable to the majority of Indonesians, who have diverse religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. If resistance is so strong to the point that the law would cause more harm than good, we may well not pass the law," he

said. Pornography, he said, is a very subjective matter, and involves people's personal lives in which the state cannot interfere. "If the law leads to disintegration, then why pass it."

Sexy clothes a no-no in Batam

Jakarta Post - February 27, 2006

Fadli, Batam — Police in Batam, Riau Islands province, began trawling the city's malls Thursday looking for women wearing revealing clothes. However, police insist they are not out to punish the women, but to protect them from sex-related crimes.

Policewomen deployed as part of the campaign have stopped women in at least five shopping centers in the city and warned them against dressing provocatively.

Adj. Comr. Dewantoro of the Batam Police said Saturday the operation was launched as a way to deal with a rise in crimes against women. "This is part of our efforts to reduce crimes against women. We hope to continue the operation, though it is now being evaluated following protests," said Dewantoro, declining to provide statistics on the number or types of crimes against women in the city.

However, some residents have complained about the operation, which they say was introduced without first informing the public, has no legal basis and is nothing more than an attempt by the police to prepare the people of Batam for life under the new pornography law currently being debated by the House of Representatives.

Dewantoro acknowledged the police operation was launched at the same time the House was deliberating the pornography bill, but said the timing was coincidence. "We are not only warning women for wearing sexy outfits, but we also are calling on stores to stop selling such outfits," Dewantoro said.

Santi, a shop attendant at Mega Mall Center in

Batam, said the operation had upset both female shoppers and the people who work in the shops. "We don't know which outfits are sexy and which aren't. My boss is afraid to sell women's clothes, fearing it might be against the law," she said.

One female shopper said there was nothing wrong with women wearing sexy clothes, which she said were fashionable. "Besides, the weather in Batam is very hot. If a top that is open in the back is considered pornographic, what clothes can we wear?"

The head of the Batam office of the Indonesian Tour Guides Association, Edy Surbakti, is concerned the police operation could harm tourism to the city. "Lots of Koreans visit Batam every day. You see how they dress. If they're warned by the police, they might not come back to Batam. Hopefully, this is only a trial operation," he said.

However, the operation has won the backing of some residents, including the chairman of the Batam branch of the Indonesian Ulema Council, Asyari Abbas. "I thank God for the operation, because exposing one's body is not part of our culture, and especially not our religion," Asyari said.

Pornography debate heats up

Radio Australia - February 22, 2006

A debate about pornography is growing in Indonesia. The controversy has been sparked by news that Playboy magazine has signed a deal to produce a local edition. Parliament's expected to pass a law this year banning sensual displays of the body. But there are fears Indonesia could be heading back into the dark ages of censorship and repression.

Presenter/Interviewer: Marion MacGregor

Speakers: Dr Ahmad Syaffi Maarif, former head of Indonesian Muslim group Muhammadiyah; Women's rights activist Smita Notosusanto; Janet de Neeffe, director of the Ubud Writers festival in Bali.

MacGregor: You don't need to look hard to find porn in most countries, and modern Indonesia's no exception. So called 'soft porn' photos can be found in calendars, magazines and tabloid papers just about everywhere, and the hardcore stuff on DVD is now readily available on the street. And of course, any kind of porn you want is only as far away as the local internet cafe.

As early as 1995, the Indonesian government was trying to block porn on the internet, without success. Now, they're getting serious, introducing laws against all kinds of public display of flesh, and more.

Dr Ahmad Syaffi Maarif is the former head of the Muslim group Muhammadiyah which has 40 million members. He says the country is in a state of moral decline.

Syaffi Maarif: Because you see Indonesia is a Muslim country, and most of the people practise rare religions, Islam Catholic Christianity, Buddhist and so on. They do not want to see the younger generation go into a moral decadence. This is the main reason why the law the regulation of anti-pornography should be implemented. Because we don't want to lead the nation into moral relativism. You know Indonesia is a trembling nation now. Corruption is here, is rampant here, mismanagement is with us. If the moral problem cannot be overcome, I think it would be very difficult for this nation to survive.

MacGregor: But not everyone is happy about the law which would mean that in a few months time, it could be an offence to show your belly button, hips or thighs. Wearing low-cut jeans or shorts and a crop top could land you in jail for two years. Women's rights activist Smita Notosusanto says it's hard to see what this has to do with pornography.

Notosusanto: What they are proposing is actually two things: First is to regulate individual morality regulating on how people should wear. What kind of things that they should wear. And the definition of the proper way of dressing up is that you don't arouse a desire on the part of the opposite sex. That's just a bizarre definition I think. How could you really be sure that even if you cover yourself up that you don't attract a

sexual desire from the opposite sex.

MacGregor: Opponents of the law which sees no difference between pornography and nudity have pointed out that it would make criminals of most of the population of Papua and Bali. It will also mean the end of traditional Balinese dance. Indeed, Janet de Neefe, the director of the Ubud Writers festival in Bali, says all forms of art and expression risk coming under attack.

De Neefe: People are saying well the parliament they don't even know the difference between film and dancing and all of that... and then artists also are concerned that it will affect their artwork, representation of nudes, life drawing. I think the art community the writing community, I know in Bali they're even saying well if they bring this in then better we become independent. So people are very concerned about this.

MacGregor: Public opinion in Indonesia may be divided over the anti-pornography bill, but the parliament is not. It's almost certain to pass the bill some time this year. Janet de Neefe says large demonstrations are already being planned.

De Neefe: I know that there will be big demonstrations over this because people are seeing that it's going back to the dark ages at a time when Indonesia really needs to move forward and project a more modern perspective in a way they just feel that this is a huge slap in the face.

Puppeteer wonders if 'wayang' will pass porn law inspection

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

Ati Nurbaiti, Jakarta — Shadow puppet master Ki Manteb Sudarsono has joined the ranks of seductive singers and erotic models wondering if they could fall foul of the proposed pornography law.

"I've got a couple of puppets and they don't wear pants," he told a discussion at the House on Thursday. "And they have these things and they move when I maneuver the wayang (shadow puppet)," he added, gesturing to indicate male

genitalia."Will I get into trouble?" The frank comments of the famous figure from the traditional arts, dressed in his "uniform" of Javanese attire, drew chuckles at a discussion held by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P).

But actually ending up behind bars amid a wave of moralistic crusading would be no laughing matter, opponents of the bill say. The arts are among the exceptions in the bill's wide-ranging prohibitions on displays of sensuality, eroticism and sexuality, so Ki Manteb and his graphic puppets would probably escape arrest if they performed in a "government-sanctioned arts center".

Apart from the arts community's objection to subjective definitions of what constitutes obscenity, feminist groups also expressed fears it would be used to subjugate women. Support for the bill has mainly come from Islamic groups, who were not present at Thursday's discussion.

The event's main message was that PDI-P, claiming to be considerate of communities likely to be affected by the proposed pornography law and emerging protests against it, might try to have the bill scrapped. It was notable that the communities identified included traditional sources of PDI-P votes but where votes dropped in the 2004 general elections compared to 1999.

"We are taking into account the impact that the future law might have on our nation's diverse ethnic groups, such as those in Bali, Central Java and Papua," party legislator Agung Sasongko said. "And if resistance increases to the point that the law would cause more harm than good, we may attach an academic draft to the bill" to try to delay its passage, added the deputy of the House special committee for the bill.

A delegation from Bali, the birthplace of the fraternal grandmother of PDI-P leader Megawati Soekarnoputri, said the display of body parts, such as in paintings, statues and dance, was part of their culture. Myra Diarsi of the National Commission for Women said the bill must clearly target industries involved in producing pornography instead of individuals, who would likely be women. "Besides, (the definition of) pornography must involve all three criteria: Graphic portrayal, excessively vulgar presentation and subordination and humiliation of women." Some

others also found the bill lacking. A total of 14 community group and non-governmental organizations said the bill did not do enough to protect minors from porn in the media and the Internet; and that adults were equated with children, thus hampering their right to information on reproduction and sexuality.

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ISLAM/RELIGION

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Activists to continue 'surveying' foreigners

Jakarta Post - February 26, 2006

Yuli Tri Suwarni, Bandung — Twenty-seven Muslim activists, who were released by police in Bandung on Saturday after being detained for “disturbing” foreign nationals during a protest, vowed to continue with their actions.

The activists said they would continue distributing questionnaires to foreign nationals to gauge their opinions of the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad.

However, police said the activists would again be detained if they attempted to hand out the questionnaires, which they said was a violation of the privacy of foreign residents and tourists.

Among the 27 people detained Friday were Muhammad Mukmin, the coordinator of the Anti-Apostasy Movement, a group involved in shutting down churches in West Java, as well as members of the Islam Defenders Front and other hard-line groups.

Police made the arrests outside the Holiday Inn hotel on Jl. Juanda, where the activists were searching for foreign nationals to question.

A minor scuffle broke out when some of the activists refused to get into trucks to be transported to Bandung Police Headquarters. However, police quickly gained control of the situation and the men were taken to police headquarters.

The activists said the questionnaires were intended to gauge the opinion of the foreign

nationals to the Prophet cartoons, with anyone found to be "hostile toward Islam" to be ordered out of Indonesia.

Mukmin told a press conference Saturday police questioned the activists for five hours, and released them after determining "the protest was legal". "After cross-checking with the permit section, they found our letter (informing the police of the planned protest). We even sent copies of the letter to West Java Police Headquarters and the West Java Military commander," Mukmin said.

He said the activists would distribute the questionnaires at international hotels in Bandung, including the Hyatt Regency and the Holiday Inn.

However, Bandung Police chief Sr. Comr. Edmon Ilyas said officers would prevent the activists from handing out the questionnaires because it had the potential to cause unrest and disturb tourists.

"They do not have any authority to do this. If they were allowed to just do what they liked, everybody would be able to do whatever they wished as well. The security of foreign tourists must be ensured to prevent our image from being tarnished internationally," Edmon said.

Police arrest activists who targeted foreigners

Jakarta Post - February 25, 2006

Yuli Tri Suwarni, Bandung — Police arrested at least 27 Muslim activists in Bandung on Friday for targeting foreigners during a protest against the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad in cartoons first published by a Danish newspaper.

Muhammad Mukmin, the coordinator of the Anti-Apostasy Movement, a group involved in shutting down churches in West Java, was among those arrested, along with activists from the Islam Defenders Front (FPI) and other hard-line groups.

Police made the arrests outside the Holiday Inn Hotel on Jl. Juanda, Bandung, where the activists

were searching for foreigners so they could distribute questionnaires to them. "We just want to give out questionnaires containing five questions to survey (foreigners') opinions about the publication of the cartoons, about the stigma put on Muslims as terrorists, and about whether the media should be punished for publishing the cartoons," Mukim said. "If they support the cartoons, we will have no other choice but to ask them to leave Indonesia," Mukmin said before being arrested. Mukmin said the protesters had no plan to target foreigners after collecting data on them.

After the activists were detained a minor scuffle broke out when some refused to get into two trucks that were to take them to the Bandung Police headquarters. Police quelled the scuffle and the activists boarded the trucks.

Mukmin said the protesters had planned to go to the Homann Hotel on Jl. Asia Afrika after the Holiday Inn.

The arrests were made after the groups' leaders organized a public rally to protest the publication of the cartoons. Thousands of people from Bandung and neighboring areas joined the event.

The demonstrators marched to the Holiday Inn in two groups. Both were blocked from entering the hotel by hundreds of police officers, headed by Central Bandung Police chief Adj. Sr. Com. Masguntur Laupe.

"They have no authority to survey people like this. Who are they? What if everyone could do this to foreigners? How would this affect business?" Masguntur said.

Bandung Police chief Sr. Com. Edmon Ilyas said the activists were arrested for violating the 1998 Law on Public Gatherings because they did not have a permit to march. Their attempt to target foreigners meant they would be charged under the Criminal Code for disorderly behavior, he said.

Mukmin said he had sent a notification letter to the Bandung Police and the West Java Police headquarters about the demonstration on Friday morning.

Indonesia labors to weed out Muslim radicalism

Reuters - February 22, 2006

Achmad Sukarsono, Jakarta — Indonesia is working to uproot militant Islamic ideas but officials and moderate clerics say they face a long struggle, while also coping with setbacks such as anger over cartoons that lampooned the Prophet Mohammad.

In November, Indonesian police discovered videos showing three young suicide bombers using Islam to justify attacks on restaurants in Bali that killed 20 people the previous month.

Vice President Jusuf Kalla said the videos showed radical ideas had penetrated deep into Indonesia's Muslim community. He ordered Muslim clerics who had been reluctant to criticize militancy to speak up.

Three months later, a team of top Islamic clerics and scholars set up after Kalla's concerns has had some successes.

"We are trying to embrace all, the soft and the hardline, to keep them away from violent acts. Some have resisted, but we have been largely effective in cleansing the general understanding (of militancy)," said Ma'ruf Amin, who heads the team.

"But terrorists are still looking for recruits while we are deflecting their influence. If they succeed, they won't get 10 followers but thousands."

The team has been to Islamic boarding schools across the world's most populous Muslim nation, including some accused of fanning militancy, and convinced some hardline clerics to tone down their rhetoric, said Amin.

New textbooks

Such schools were seen as off limits until discovery of the videos and the intervention of Kalla, who has strong Muslim credentials and is unlikely to be accused of attacking Islam. The

team will also publish books for schools that set out why the use of violence in Indonesia cannot be justified under Islam.

Moderate cleric Ali Maschan Moesa said he had toiled to shield pupils of his Islamic school in East Java, the country's political heartland, from the temptation of radicals.

"There are groups that have twisted the meaning of jihad for their political gain. They are intensifying the agenda to create an Islamic state here," said Moesa, a senior member of the 40 million-strong Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest mainstream Muslim group.

Jihad means "struggle" in Arabic but Islamic militants and some non-Muslims link it to warfare.

Moesa felt his version of jihad and other moderate teachings had sometimes failed to find an audience among disenfranchised Muslim youth, politicians and the media. "How can we stop the wave of radicalism if (moderates) are disregarded," he said.

He is not alone. The leader of Indonesia's second biggest Muslim organization, the 30 million-strong Muhammadiyah, has also chastised the media and some officials for giving radicals too much airtime and room to move.

Cartoon controversy

Hardliners have been energized by publication of cartoons denigrating the Prophet Mohammad, first printed in Denmark last year and then by other European newspapers. The cartoons have angered Muslims across the world.

"Radicals are getting their second wind. The cartoon row has added a burden on the clerics who are trying to defuse radical ideas," Ansyad Mbai, a top counter-terrorism official in Jakarta, told Reuters.

"The reason why the radical propaganda is effective is because they say the West is against Islam. These cartoons give them a kind of vindication and this is troubling our mainstream clerics who are advocating tolerance." Protests against the cartoons sparked violence in Indonesia

and prompted Danish embassy staff to leave.

Government officials, politicians and leaders of moderate Muslim groups in Indonesia have condemned the cartoons while urging that protests be peaceful. However, they have been cautious in attacking those responsible for the violence, with some officials saying such acts were spontaneous.

"We need to avoid provocation... Remember, we don't recognize (the labels of) radicals and moderates," parliament speaker Agung Laksono said when asked what should be done to the radical groups.

Analysts say many Indonesian public figures, especially those without strong Muslim credentials like Laksono, are reluctant to step into any debate that could give the impression they are trying to create a rift over Islam. Hence, Mbai said the ideological war was far from over.

"We still have a long way to go and we need to work hard. One wrong move and the government will be seen as the enemy of the religion," the police general said.

[Additional reporting by Heri Retnowati in Surabaya.]

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ARMED FORCES/DEFENSE

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Jail for soldier who shot student protester

Sydney Morning Herald - February 28, 2006

Jakarta — A military tribunal in Indonesia's Papua province has jailed a soldier for eight months for his role in a shooting last month that left a student dead and two others wounded.

Police have already admitted that their officers and the military fired into a mob of about 100 protesters, but the circumstances surrounding the death of Moses Douw, 13, and two others have been in dispute.

Human rights activists have said Douw was a close relative of one of the 43 boat people who landed

at Cape York last month in an outrigger that featured a large sign claiming military oppression in Papua.

They believe the three people who were shot were students ambushed on their way to school in what appeared to be an unprovoked attack. Australian politicians called for an investigation into the shooting of the teenagers.

The newspaper Kompas reported that Arif Budi Situmeang was found guilty of wounding the two with his firearm. Situmeang was not charged over the boy's death. However, his eight-month sentence was three months longer than recommended.

The court heard that Situmeang fired shots during a protest at a police post in Paniai on January 20, following a brawl between residents and soldiers who refused to contribute money for the repair of a bridge.

Situmeang maintained his innocence, saying the two were wounded when he accidentally dropped his gun after a protester kicked him in the back, Kompas said. He has appealed.

The report did not say whether anyone else was facing charges.

Human rights activists have accused the Indonesian military of widespread human rights abuse in Papua, fuelling a sporadic, low-level separatist insurgency that has lasted decades.

An Australian charged with murdering a two-year-old boy who was killed by a bullet fired during an attack by a raskol gang in Port Moresby has won leave to a judicial review.

Rick Harvey Goodwin, 63, also had committal proceedings against him stayed by the judge, who ruled he had an arguable case that his rights had been breached during an inquest.

Goodwin, the general manager of a security company, was charged with murder after intervening in a raskol car hijacking attempt in the suburb of Koki.

[Agence France-Presse, Australian Associated Press.]

Activists protest against military

Jakarta Post - February 27, 2006

Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi — A rally was held at the Southeast Sulawesi provincial council Saturday to protest against the involvement of military personnel in a land eviction case in Korumba district, Kendari.

"We condemn the Indonesian Military (TNI) for its involvement in the eviction. Some of them pushed and hit people...", Hidayatullah, chairman of the Southeast Sulawesi Residents Council, told several council members who met the protesters.

The protesters, consisting of the victims of the eviction and dozens of activists, demanded that the council summon the local TNI commander and the governor.

Councillor Abdul Hasid Pedansa promised to summon officials from the provincial administration and the military for an explanation.

Meanwhile, Haluoleo military commander, Col. Wahyu Rijanto, said Friday that military personnel had only been assisting the provincial administration in cleaning up the location, which will host a Koran recital competition in June 2006.

Ma'ruf backs soldiers' right to vote

Jakarta Post - February 23, 2006

Tb. Arie Rukmantara, Jakarta — Home Minister M. Ma'ruf supports the idea of soldiers being allowed to vote in the 2009 elections.

Ma'ruf, a retired Army lieutenant general, said Indonesian Military (TNI) soldiers should be allowed to vote in the general elections because it was their democratic right. "In a democratic country no one should be discriminated against," he said.

The debate about whether soldiers should be allowed to vote in the next elections was started by departing TNI chief Endriartono Sutarto. Endriartono said as the military was no longer directly involved in politics, soldiers should be allowed to vote.

Since the 2004 election, the TNI no longer has seats reserved for it in the House of Representatives. Its officers must also retire from active service if they want to join political parties. However, the 2003 Election Law stopped soldiers and police officers from voting in the last election.

Ma'ruf said the country was becoming increasingly democratic. The 2009 election would be the perfect time for soldiers to exercise their rights, he said.

Meanwhile, National Resilience Institute (Lemhanas) governor Muladi suggested the TNI should continue its internal reforms before dealing with the voting question. "There is no need to rush (the changes)," he said.

Activists and experts say the armed forces have yet to settle issues relating to their illegal businesses, alleged human rights abuses involving personnel and the restructuring of territorial commands.

Muladi agreed the right to vote was a basic right for all citizens, including soldiers. However, he suggested soldiers should be educated about politics to ensure they were not manipulated into conflict. "We are afraid the TNI (voters) will serve the interests of certain groups," he said.

Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras) coordinator Usman Hamid also rejected the idea. "So far, the TNI has been an organization that has obstructed human rights campaigns here. I'm afraid they'll use their votes to weaken political parties fighting to uphold human rights principles by voting for parties that are willing to ignore human rights violations carried out by soldiers," he said.

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BUSINESS & INVESTMENT

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51.6 billion rupiah lost in natural disasters

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

Semarang — The financial losses suffered by Central Java province last year due to various natural disasters has been calculated at Rp 51.6 billion, with the death toll at 19. However, there were 133 in January this year due to a massive landslide.

According to the head of the provincial welfare agency, Ristanto, the death toll in January's disaster also included the 76 victims of the Banjarnegara landslide, which covered most of the village of Gunungraja.

The financial mostly due to the damage in infrastructures and public facilities including roads, bridges, irrigation ditches, dams, and the people's houses.

Unfortunately, the funding allocated to cover such problems, like disasters, was Rp 19 billion for 2005 and Rp 25 billion for 2006.

In this case, according to Ristanto, priorities would be given for the rehabilitation of public facilities, including the relocation of disaster survivors.

Ministers disturbed by IMF assessment

Jakarta Post - February 27, 2006

Jakarta — Some top Indonesian officials appear peeved over the latest assessment on the country's economy by the International Monetary Fund, which for six years after the monetary crisis had administered tough and painful medicine to get the country back on its feet.

State Minister for State Enterprises Sugiharto, for instance, said he was disturbed by the remedies suggested by the Washington-based Fund for lingering problems in state-owned banks.

He told reporters Saturday that the government was no longer obliged to follow the economic advice of the IMF as the Fund ended its economic bailout program here in 2003.

"We have our integrity, independence and identity as a nation. The IMF does not necessarily have to be obeyed," Sugiharto was quoted by Antara as saying. He added that the government would only follow the advice of the IMF if it was considered beneficial to the country.

The IMF issued its latest assessment of the country's economy Thursday, which highlighted the need for further strengthening of oversight in respect of state-owned banks' managements and lending practices, particularly in the light of soaring non-performing loan (NPL) levels, high interest rates and lower-than-expected growth.

The IMF board of directors also noted that the strategic privatization of state-owned banks over the medium term should be considered.

But Sugiharto said that the authorities had already imposed tight supervision on the country's banking sector, pointing to the number of institutions involved in the job, such as Bank Indonesia, the accountancy profession and the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK).

"So, in truth, the checks and balances introduced in the banking sector have been the most dramatic. I'm not that overly worried about the supervision issue," he said.

Concerns over the state of the country's banking sector have reemerged following the revelation of soaring NPL levels in Bank Mandiri and Bank Negara Indonesia (BNI), respectively the second and third largest banks in the country by assets.

Mandiri's gross NPLs as of last September stood at 24.57 percent of its total loans, up from 7.49 percent in the same period last year. The equivalent figures for BNI were 14.44 percent and 6.12 percent. With the two state-owned banks accounting for some 27 percent of the market, the banking industry's average NPL ratio has risen to 8.3 percent, compared to only 4.84 percent if Mandiri and BNI were excluded, Bank Indonesia, the central bank, has said.

The authorities are now seeking ways of resolving the NPL problem. One of the proposed measures is the setting up of a special purpose vehicle to take over and restructure NPLs held by state banks. But the plan has been hampered by an obstacle in the form of the 2003 State Finances Law and a current finance ministry regulation, both of which operate to prevent state firms from writing off debts or selling assets at a discount without the consent of the finance minister. In its assessment, the IMF expressed its support for the SPV mechanism.

In other parts of its report, the IMF forecast that the country's economy would grow at a slower rate this year of between 4 and 4.5 percent due to lingering high inflation and high interest rates. The economy grew last year by 5.6 percent.

State Minister for National Development Planning Paskah Suzetta was disturbed by the IMF's pessimistic growth forecast. He stressed that the government was optimistic the official growth target of 6.2 percent was still achievable.

Coordinating Minister for the Economy Boediono also said Friday that the IMF was pessimistic about Indonesia's prospects. "The slowing down of the economy is not as bad as estimated by the IMF," he said. "There will be improvement this year."

IMF upbeat about Indonesia's economic prospects

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

Jakarta — Despite the recent downturn, Indonesia's medium-term prospects for growth remain strong, the International Monetary Fund says, with economic expansion reaching up to 5 percent this year as long as government policies are consistent with achieving macroeconomic stability and pushing structural reform to attract investment.

In its latest economic review on Indonesia, the Fund commended the government and the central bank for hiking fuel prices and raising interest rates

last year to stabilize the rupiah and restore policy credibility in the financial markets.

While the measures had resulted in adverse effects in the near-term, with high inflation and interest rates slowing down last year's economic growth and likely to limit growth in the first half of 2006, medium-term prospects were good.

"The outlook should remain favorable, provided the authorities continue to implement policies consistent with macroeconomic stability and accelerate structural reforms," the IMF said, projecting growth of between 4.5 and 5 percent for 2006. The government's growth target for this year is 6.2 percent.

Indonesia's economy grew by 5.6 percent last year, higher than the 5.05 percent notched up in 2004. The government, however, missed its 6 percent growth target as a result of a slowdown from 6.2 percent in the first quarter to 4.9 percent in the fourth as soaring inflation from a double fuel price hike and increases in Bank Indonesia (BI)'s key rate to 12.75 percent stymied consumer demand and investment.

Looking ahead, the Fund said the priority now for monetary policy was to ensure that inflation was brought down.

The IMF deemed appropriate BI's commitment to maintaining a tight money supply until inflation showed clear signs of abating, and said that BI should be ready to raise rates further if inflation failed to subside.

The Fund noted that "once inflationary pressures subside, interest rates could be reduced." The IMF sees inflation as possibly easing to 8 percent by year-end, which is in line with the government's budget target. BI is projecting inflation of between 7 and 9 percent.

For the government, the IMF recommended a continued emphasis on limiting the budget deficit, which would help to further reduce the public debt burden.

If the recent economic slowdown continued, however, the government could run a higher budget deficit so as to provide a mild fiscal stimulus.

The government plans to carry over Rp 12.95 trillion in unused funds from last year's budget, which officials said could raise the budget deficit to between 0.9 and 1.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) this year, compared to the initial forecast of 0.7 percent. Last year, the deficit came in at 0.5 percent of GDP.

The IMF underscored the importance of structural reform to help boost investor confidence, and welcomed the government's plans to formulate transparent, time-bound schedules for tax and labor market reforms, upgrading the country's woefully deficient infrastructure, and improving legal certainty.

"This will not only provide an important stimulus in the current economic environment but also ensure sustained growth over the medium term," the IMF said.

The IMF also emphasized the need to address vulnerabilities in the banking sector, particularly the recent rise in non-performing loans at state banks. It backed the establishment of an asset management company to restructure the loans, and recommended that the government consider amending the legislative and regulatory provisions that hampered such a development.

Commenting on the IMF review, Coordinating Minister for the Economy Boediono said the government would further intensify policy coordination with BI.

Boediono said he expected that this would result in lower inflation and interest rates, which would enable the economy to kick into gear by the second half of this year. He expressed optimism that the 6.2 percent growth target could be achieved in 2006, while forecasting 6.4 percent growth for 2007.

The economic review, released Wednesday in Washington, is the IMF's fourth semi-annual review as part of its post-program monitoring arrangement with Indonesia following the country's decision to terminate its program with the Fund at the end of 2003.

FDI approvals plunged in January

Jakarta Post - February 23, 2006

Jakarta — The government's hopes of achieving higher growth this year on the back of increased investment has suffered a setback, with official figures showing a slow start to the year for both foreign and domestic investment approvals.

The Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) announced Wednesday that foreign direct investment (FDI) approvals for the first month of the year amounted to only US\$463.2 billion (112 projects), in stark contrast to the \$872 billion (1,226 projects) recorded during the same month of 2005.

A similar downward trend was also evident in the domestic investment figures, with proposed investments declining to Rp 359.8 billion (\$38.7 million) involving only 8 projects, compared to Rp 1.89 trillion for 15 projects last year.

Overseas investors mostly applied for investment licenses in the construction sector (3 projects valued at \$288.9 million), and the commercial sector (42 at \$31.9 million), with one application worth \$27.2 million in the food processing industry. Local investors, meanwhile, were primarily interested in the transportation, warehousing, communications, chemical, pharmaceutical, and timber processing industries.

January's low level of investment approvals appears to reflect uncertainty among investors about Indonesia's business climate, which would be in line with the latest surveys by Bank Indonesia and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), which show that the business community still sees tough going ahead amid high inflation and interest rates, at least until the second half of the year.

The government may, however, take some solace from the fact that actual FDI realizations in January soared to US\$1.31 billion (91 projects), compared to \$118.4 billion (57 projects) for the same month last year. Meanwhile, realized domestic investments tripled in value to Rp 2.58 trillion

(27 projects), from Rp 783.4 billion (17 projects) in January last year.

In total, realized foreign and domestic investments provided employment for 42,782 workers, compared to 8,172 workers in the same period last year.

The government is hoping that realized foreign and domestic investments will grow by 11.1 percent this year from last year's combined value of Rp 113.5 trillion.

The BKPM figures exclude investments in the oil, gas and mining industries, banking and non-bank financial institutions, and the capital markets. Licenses in these sectors are issued by other government agencies.

Total investment grew by only 9.93 percent last year, compared to 15.71 percent in 2004, thus reducing 2005's overall economic growth to 5.6 percent from the government's target of 6 percent.

The government is targeting growth of 6.2 percent this year, and has recently announced various incentives designed to improve legal certainty and provide financial guarantees so as to encourage greater private sector involvement in infrastructure development.

Consumers to keep tight grip on spending

Jakarta Post - February 23, 2006

Anissa S. Febrina, Jakarta — If there is anything that Indonesians all agree on right now, it is the need to put off unnecessary expenditures, two newly released consumer confidence surveys reveal.

An ACNielsen survey for the Danareksa Research Institute on consumer confidence levels in January shows that Indonesians are delaying forking out on non-essential items due to worries over the country's economic situation and job prospects.

The bleak mood has clearly affected people at all levels — from prominent industrialists to blue-collar workers.

"This year will be a tough one. The employment situation is not good and I'm going to postpone spending on things I don't really need, just in case the situation gets worse," 28-year-old Bambang A. Wibawa, a sales executive working for an auto parts manufacturer, told The Jakarta Post.

Having to provide for a wife and child on monthly commissions, he says he would rather save what he can and avoid unnecessary outlay.

In an online survey conducted by ACNielsen last November, the results of which were only released Wednesday, 74 percent of the respondents opted for a similar strategy for coping with the economic situation.

Although Nielsen's consumer confidence index for November improved slightly compared to a similar survey in May, half of the 500 respondents said they would rather save their money than face possible financial hardship later.

"People are now adopting a wait-and-see attitude as regards spending their money," Nielsen's Southeast Asia managing director, Farquhar Stirling, said Wednesday.

The November survey also revealed that the country's economic difficulties and job security topped the list of major concerns for Indonesians.

Meanwhile, Nielsen's January survey for the Danareksa Research Institute, which involved more than 1,700 respondents, paints a more up-to-date picture of consumer confidence, especially in the wake of last year's fuel price hikes.

It reveals that consumers are now cautiously optimistic about the economy, although the index has yet to fully recover to the level prevailing before the fuel price hikes.

"There is also, however, widespread recognition among consumers that the economy is slowing down and unemployment rising," the survey report said.

A proposed hike in electricity prices has further added to consumer concerns, encouraging them to hold on to their money. This, in turn, implies that growth in spending on durable goods could well remain low for the first half of the year.

Currently, spending by upper-income-bracket consumers still dominates overall consumer spending, while those in the lower income brackets are finding it difficult to cope with higher inflation.

Given that consumer spending accounts for 65 percent of Indonesia's gross domestic product, the surveys convey a clear message to the government: it needs to shift from relying on consumer spending for economic growth to more domestic production.

85 percent of SOE shares owned by foreign parties

Tempo Interactive - February 23, 2006

Tito Sianipar, Jakarta — Muhammad Said Didu, Secretary to the State Minister of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), has stated that 85 percent of SOE shares already listed on the stock exchange are owned by foreign parties.

In spite of them being foreign owned, there has not been any negative effect on the SOEs. "It is a fact that 85 percent of the shares of listed SOEs are owned by foreigners," said Said Didu after a discussion at Ritz Carlton Hotel, Jakarta, today (23/2).

With such a large ownership, this means that it is foreigners who benefit from a large portion of SOEs' profits.

Large SOEs that are already listed and always record profits include PT Telkom, PT Indosat, PT Semen Gresik, PT Bank Mandiri, PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia, PT Kimia Farma, PT Adhi Karya, PT Perusahaan Gas Negara (State Gas Company), and PT Bukit Asam.

But Said did not specifically mention which SOE shares were owned by foreigners. He went on to say that although the shares were in the hands of foreigners, it did not mean there was no negative effect.

"If 85 percent of the shares are owned by

foreigners, it is they who enjoy much of the profit, not Indonesia," he said.

The high rate of foreign ownership, Said continued, showed the minimum ability of domestic investors to own SOE shares. "Indonesian people must increase their capabilities so that they can obtain dividends or enjoy profits from SOEs," he said.

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OPINION & ANALYSIS

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West Papua - Horror on our doorstep

The Courier-Mail (Queensland) - February 27, 2006

David Costello — If our leaders were to have a collective brain meltdown and press Jakarta over Papua, the regional fallout would be dramatic

At times, the politicians acting in this nation's interest can take it a long way from our core values. This sums up Australia's position not to seriously challenge Indonesia over its appalling treatment of indigenous Melanesians in Papua province.

There is no doubt that crimes against humanity are being perpetrated on our doorstep. Some believe the policies the Indonesian state is pursuing, through its armed forces (TNI) and police, amount to genocide.

A 2003 Yale Law School paper found the evidence "suggests that the Indonesian Government has committed proscribed acts with the intent to destroy the West Papuans... in violation of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide".

Jakarta took control of what was the Dutch colony of West New Guinea in 1963 and legitimised the seizure in the 1969 Act of Free Choice, in which Papuan representatives were forced at gunpoint to join Indonesia. Since then, the military and police have acted with impunity against the local population.

Reports compiled by the US State Department, the

University of Sydney's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Amnesty International and Papuan rights group Els-Ham have documented arbitrary killings, rape and torture as well as forced labour and relocation.

The Yale study claimed that Indonesian authorities destroyed the property and crops of indigenous people and excluded them from upper levels of government, business and education.

Els-Ham says the documented death toll is more than 100,000 but many observers say it is higher.

No one should be surprised at this catalogue of horror. It is a common pattern in "military operations" areas at the mercy of the TNI and its militia groups.

A recent UN-sanctioned report found up to 180,000 East Timorese died as a result of the Indonesian occupation and that the military used rape and starvation as weapons. Papuan separatists took heart from the events of 1999 when East Timor chose independence in a process started by Australian diplomacy.

But the violence unleashed by the TNI and the subsequent intervention by an Australian-led UN force has left deep scars in Canberra and Jakarta. Sections of Indonesia's elite worry Australia is trying to break up their country and secretly supports Papuan independence.

That is why the Howard Government and Labor Opposition preface remarks on the area by pledging support for the territorial integrity of Indonesia.

They say Jakarta should crack down on military excesses and follow up on the 2001 special autonomy package — even though autonomy is a sham and undermined by Jakarta's unconstitutional move to split the province. But the message from Canberra is that Papuans can forget about self-determination — or any independent investigation of human rights.

This, the major parties believe, is not in Australia's interest. And they are correct. If our leaders were to have a collective brain meltdown and seriously press Jakarta over Papua, the

regional fallout would be dramatic.

Relations with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his government would be frozen and a bilateral security treaty, to be signed this year, aborted.

Other Asian countries — including China — would accuse Australia of lecturing and interfering in a neighbour's internal affairs and our participation in meetings such as the Asia-Europe Summit would be at risk.

Washington would not be impressed given that both the US and Australia are resuming links with the TNI with the aim of fighting Islamist terror groups.

Indonesia views the acquisition of the province as one of its key achievements and has vowed never to let it go. It needs the wealth from projects such as the massive Freeport McMoRan gold and copper mine at Grasberg.

If pushed to the wall by foreign intervention, TNI would take a terrible revenge and create a refugee crisis which would destabilise Papua New Guinea.

But for all Australia's caution, the Papua question is erupting again thanks to the 43 asylum seekers who arrived on Cape York in January and are now on Christmas Island. Queensland lobbyists close to the refugees and their leader Herman Wainggai expect the group will get bridging visas allowing them to stay while their cases are assessed.

Indonesia, which has asked for the return of the asylum seekers, would view such action as an acceptance of their claims of persecution. It would also fear the Papuans would use Australia as a base to further their cause. This concern is well-founded.

Until now, Papua has been an issue for the minor parties, with Democrat Senator Natasha Stott Despoja and Green senators Bob Brown and Kerry Nettle expressing concern. But after visiting Christmas Island, Queensland National Party Senator Barnaby Joyce said the Papuans' claims of religious and ethnic persecution should be assessed.

Watching all this are pressure groups, including the Australia West Papua Association. Jason McCloud, a Brisbane-based AWPAs spokesman, says Australia should investigate reports of atrocities and support an independent review by the UN Commission on Human Rights.

It should also support observer status for the province at the Pacific Islands Forum. He says the Federal Government should acknowledge Australia's role in Papuan history, particularly its support for the flawed Act of Free Choice.

None of this is going to become mainstream party policy any time soon. But there is a price to pay in the world arena for equivocating when civilians are being slaughtered and starved.

Australia is likely to be judged adversely when the definitive history of this mess is written.

[David Costello is The Courier-Mail's foreign editor.]

Let Papuans decide

Jakarta Post Editorial - February 24, 2006

The government, in refraining from forcing its will on Papuans in the protracted dispute over the status of West Irian Jaya, seems to have learned from the past.

Although earlier setting a Feb. 20 deadline for a settlement of the dispute, the government has opted to heed the wishes of the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP) and the provincial legislature.

Vice President Jusuf Kalla, who has facilitated negotiations over the issue, made it clear the central government preferred to defer the issuance of a legal umbrella, including an emergency government regulation, to sanction West Irian Jaya province and its administration. This deferral also means a delay in the West Irian Jaya gubernatorial election until the dispute is resolved.

Both the MRP and the Papuan legislature said they

did not oppose the formation of West Irian Jaya province, but underlined that people in the proposed province were not ready to break away from Papua.

This conclusion was reached after a popular consultation in eight regencies and a mayoralty in West Irian Jaya, which defenders of the new province claimed did not represent the true wishes of people.

In addition, the establishment of the province must first be approved by the MRP, in accordance with the 2001 Papua Special Autonomy Law.

In its seven-point recommendation, the Papuan People's Assembly said any decision to split Papua must not lead to more military soldiers in the territory or result in an influx of migrants. The assembly also said Papua must be maintained as a unified cultural, social and economic entity.

In short, the assembly is seeking a guarantee that any division of Papua would benefit local people and protect their social, economic and cultural rights.

A hasty division would only keep Papuans, particularly those in the western half of the territory, from achieving the underlying objectives of special autonomy status. Under special autonomy, Papua receives 70 percent of oil revenue, 80 percent of mining revenue and 70 percent of natural gas revenue. However, despite these generous divisions, ordinary Papuans have seen little change in the quality of their lives since the special autonomy law was introduced five years ago.

Statistics from the Office of the State Minister for the Development of Disadvantaged Regions speak of the paradox of development in Papua. Of 29 regencies and mayoralties across the territory, 19 are categorized as underdeveloped. This paradox was underlined by reports of famine in remote villages in Yahukimo a few months ago, and more recently in Wamena, Jayawiyaya, Bintang and Gunung Mulia.

With indigenous Papuans lacking the skills and knowledge to compete with migrants in many jobs, the fast-growing migrant population is another

cause for concern for the MRP. The indigenous Papuan population is now only 10 percent higher than the migrant population, prompting concern by the MRP that Papuans will become a minority in their own land within the next decade.

The MRP clearly has strong reasons for calling for a delay of the partition agenda, which dates back to 2003 when then president Megawati Soekarnoputri tried to push through a law on the formation of West Irian Jaya and Central Irian Jaya provinces.

Whatever the motivations of Megawati, however, West Irian Jaya has become a de facto province. It has four elected legislators each in the House of Representatives and Regional Representative Council, and a working administration. These facts were taken into consideration when the Constitutional Court ruled that West Irian Jaya was a legitimate province, even though the legal basis for its formation was questionable.

While the Constitutional Court's ruling is final and binding, it is now the central government's ball to play without ignoring the 2001 Papua Special Autonomy Law.

West Irian Jaya province, and perhaps one or two more new provinces in Papua, is only a matter of time. There is no opposition to the division of Papua, as far as the MRP recommendation is concerned, but a reminder that such a division must reflect the wishes of Papuans, not the politicians in Jakarta.

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BOOK/FILM REVIEWS

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Sulostomo's accountability to 1965 tragedy

Jakarta Post - February 26, 2006

[Di Balik Tragedi 1965 (Behind the 1965 Tragedy)
Yayasan Pustaka Umat. Januari 2006. 179pp.]

Alpha Amirrachman, Jakarta — Sulastomo has presented his personal account of the 1965 aborted coup in his book Di Balik Tragedi 1965 (Behind the 1965 Tragedy). As a chairman of the Indonesian Muslim Association (HMI) from 1963 to 1966,

Sulastomo not only observed the transition of power from Sukarno to Soeharto, but was directly involved in the power game at a time when young Indonesia was bitterly sandwiched between two competing ideologies: communism and capitalism.

The HMI survived amid intense pressure from the PKI to disband the Muslim students' organization. Sulastomo's humble personality and his sharp mind in assessing the situation helped the organization build strategic rapport with the Army as the emerging political force.

Now Sulastomo, a physician whose clean record has never been tainted by the New Order's corrupt practices, is speaking up to challenge the theories surrounding the tragedy. He divides his red-covered book into six analyses. Analysis one, the coup was the result of internal friction within the military, particularly the Army; analysis two, it was orchestrated by Soeharto against Sukarno's leadership; analysis three, it was engineered by Sukarno; analysis four, it was a conspiracy between DN Aidit/Sukarno and Mao Ze Dong; analysis five, the CIA fueled the conflict; and lastly it was the PKI that masterminded the coup.

The first analysis he considers unacceptable because it was the Army itself that was targeted by the PKI. Indeed, there were internal rifts and the kidnappers of the generals killed were Army personnel. However, he considered the kidnappers as mere puppets who exerted little influence on others.

The second analysis is also thrown out by the writer because Soeharto was very loyal to Sukarno and was not ready to accept more authority. Soeharto's attitude reflected a Javanese saying *mikul nduwur mendem jero* (highlight one's good deeds and bury his bad deeds). After the 1965 aborted coup, however, people's demand for regime change intensified.

The third analysis is also not plausible because Sukarno himself was bewildered in the morning of Oct. 1, 1965 after the kidnapping of the generals. Having received the report from Brig. Gen. Supardjo — one of the leftist military personnel — Sukarno denounced the kidnappings. Sukarno himself was very cautious regarding the issue of

the Dewan Jenderal (The Council of Generals).

The fourth analysis purports that because Sukarno's health had deteriorated there was an agreement between DN Aidit, Mao Ze Dong of China, and Sukarno that the latter "take a rest" in Swan Lake, China. Sulastomo refuted this, as it was implausible that the founding father would agree to leave behind his people in such a critical situation. Kruschew of the USSR once offered Sukarno the opportunity to "take a rest" as a government guest during the struggle to reoccupy Irian Jaya, but he refused.

The fifth analysis is also refuted. It is true that CIA intelligence officers might have played role in Indonesian politics, but credible documents show that Western countries were surprised over the "premature" coup by the PKI, which was more likely inspired by political developments in Peking (now Beijing).

The sixth analysis suggests that it was the PKI who masterminded the coup. There are several arguments purported. The PKI was strongly inspired by Peking which was at that time spreading its power throughout Asia. The "progressive" political party was also anxious that Sukarno's health was deteriorating and was concerned that if it did not seize control through a coup, the Dewan Jenderal would do so first. He added that although not all members of the Central Committee of the PKI were aware of the coup, such as Nyoto, the system within the party dictates that the PKI as an organization should bear all responsibility.

Based on his recollections and interviews with other players, including former president Soeharto and Hardoyo, the former chairman of the left-wing Concentration of Indonesian Student Movement (CGMI, a student organization affiliated with the PKI), Sulastomo defends the sixth analysis. His defense is also supported by Harry Tjan Silalahi, a former activist of the Indonesian Catholic Students Association (PMKRI), who helped campaign for the elimination of the PKI. Harry Tjan has contributed his thoughts in Sulastomo's book.

Nonetheless, during the launching of the book at Jakarta Hilton Hotel on Jan. 25, which was marked by a "PKI bashing" poetry reading by a prominent poet Taufik Ismail, the book drew criticism from

Sukmawati Soekarnoputri, the daughter of Sukarno, who was among the audience. She argued that the coup was a result of bitter friction and rivalry within the Army, particularly between Soeharto and Ahmad Yani. The latter was murdered during the coup.

Understandably, the *Di Balik Tragedi 1965* did not attempt to discuss how millions of ex-PKI members, sympathizers and their families were killed, tortured or discriminated against following the coup or how Sukarno was in fact was put under house arrest until his death.

Indeed, when a nation painfully reflects on past wounds, it is always advantageous to hear directly from the people involved, whatever perspectives they might hold. As noted historian Anhar Gonggong said during the book launching, the writing of history never finishes. Equally important is what human rights campaigner Salahudin Wahid said that truthful reconciliation is what this nation badly needs to heal its wounds. Jakarta Feb. 1, 2006.

[The reviewer is a lecturer at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa State University and a researcher at the International Center for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP).]

Pramoedya: Between Fury and Alienation

Jakarta Post - February 26, 2006

[Saya Terbakar Amarah Sendirian! (I'm Enraged Alone!) Pramoedya Ananta Toer talks to Andre Vltchek & Rossie Indira. By Andre Vltchek & Rossie Indira Edited by: Chandra Gautama & Linda Chistanty. Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia (KPG) January 2006 xxix + 130 pp

Tasyriq Hifzillah, Yogyakarta — Indonesia's most-famous living novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer and his works are an inexhaustible source of discussion. Pram, the abbreviated name by which he is usually referred to, is himself like a thick book, containing all sorts of stories. A major icon in Indonesia's literary arena, each of his works always shows some relationship between

history and fiction.

Pram, of course, has lived history, and it has been hard on him. A former member of the Indonesian Communist Party, he was jailed for years during Soeharto's crackdown on communism, while hundreds of his friends and former comrades were murdered in the bloodletting that followed the aborted 1965 coup.

However, since he was freed from prison, the 81 year-old from Blora, Central Java, has earned dozens of citations for his work, including the Pablo Neruda Award, the Wertheim Award and the Ramon Magsasay Award. Since 1981, Pram's name has always been included on the list of nominees for the Nobel Prize for Literature.

But despite being a much-admired and internationally feted writer, Pram has more than a few bitter memories left of his former oppressors and the nation they have left him.

As an unreconstructed communist, who still believes in the power of Marxism to transform, Pram's civil rights continue to be curtailed here years after his books were banned during the Soeharto era.

And the old wounds are healing slowly. Despite his successes in life, it is perhaps not surprising to learn that Pram still describes himself as "being alienated in his own land." Pram's personal literary history is a touching legend. Not infrequently have the words he penned caused guns to be directed at him; his social exile made formal by his imprisonment on Buru Island. But Pram has refused to bow down to these forms of repression. Instead, he has steeled himself and let these experiences enrich his creativity.

Even at his advanced age, Pram is still producing work and the book's researchers, Andre Vltchek and Rossie Indira, have done their best to represent the voice of this great Indonesian writer and his lingering fury. What makes this book interesting is that Pram's rage is not just a personal response to hardship, it is anger about the decay of Indonesia as a nation.

In *Saya Terbakar Amarah Sendirian!*, Pram calls a spade a spade. In his unique way, Pram, as a

principled man imbued with humanity, expresses his response to the historical, political and inhuman oppression that he has personally gone through.

Pram's statements in this book begin and end with a comment that he still burns with fury when thinking about Indonesia, which he says "has set fire to itself". His pent-up rage finds a channel in a discussion of Indonesian society, which he sees as being dominated by consumerism and rampant graft, a collapsing culture whose people, he says, have a form of historical amnesia.

The way Pram voices his ideas urgently and plainly lends great significance to the interviews in this book, which were held between December 2003 and March 2004. One finds not only the angry Pram but also new information about his lot, his attitude to life and his dreams.

It is Pram's desire that there will come a day when Indonesia becomes a unitary state free from all forms of intervention and colonialism. This notion of independent nationalism in opposition to colonialism is central to his ideas. However, in another part of the book, Pram says he would prefer to be ruled by the colonial governments of old rather than his own people if his countrymen grossly abused the powers they were given.

There is a great consistency in Pram's criticism, starting from his highly personal statements — about his relationship with his family for example, to his statements about language, politics and history — aspects that occupy important places in his body of work.

In one section, Pram complains about his children and grandchildren being no longer fond of reading. He expresses wonder at why they are different from him, a bookworm: "My children and grandchildren do not want to read newspapers. It has never occurred to me how they can be like this. They no longer have a reading habit. They prefer watching the television and do not wish to acquire more knowledge." Pram's complaint is not simply one of a disgruntled grandfather who hates to see his grandchildren glued to trashy TV. It is also the response of a man who continues to see the state doing little to improve the education of its people, one of its biggest resources.

However, one of the biggest targets of Pram's spleen is at the center of Indonesian public life, Javanese culture, which he says leans towards fascism. "Javanism" according to the writer, is a culture of subjugation and blind obedience to one's superior.

Pram notes the levels in the Javanese language signify different social classes. Because of the existing linguistic hierarchies, the Dutch and the Japanese could easily control Java, he says.

And Pram sees little difference between the lot of present-day Indonesians and those working in forced labor camps during the Japanese occupation. What is different, he says, is only the labeling, which is now more refined. Many Indonesians are still forced to eke out a living locally, for foreign companies, or as low-skilled migrant workers overseas, he argues. All this, he says, is evidence that governments here have little concern for the welfare of their citizens.

And for Pram the outlook looks bleak. For him, Indonesia is still in a process of decay, which will continue until the oppressive system here is done away with. Justice and prosperity will remain empty words uttered by high-ranking state officials, until a war is declared against the forces of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism, he says. If nothing changes, hope will continue to remain hope.

At the peak of his argument, Pram becomes his most provocative. There is now no time for compromise, he says. The only solution is revolution. An all-out revolution of power.

Not all will agree with his solution. Of course the attitudes in this book run parallel to the themes expressed in Pram's body of work — the importance of the need to disobey, refuse, challenge and guard one's freedom to think.

The winding road that Pram has traversed in his life can also be a valuable lesson learned. That is why this book is a must-read for anyone who wishes to have a good grasp of the root causes of the problems Indonesia is facing today.

From the burning fires of his anger, Pram has welded a coherent argument for his alienation and

the necessity for change in a nation in need of creative solutions.

[The reviewer is a researcher at the Yogyakarta Institute for Liberation Studies.]