

East Timor News Digest #2 - Feb 1-28, 2006

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CAVR REPORT

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Hope lives on to get to the bottom of 1999 mayhem

Jakarta Post - February 24, 2006

The relationship between Indonesia and Timor Leste has again been put to the test with recent border incidents and the submission to the UN Secretary-General of a report on atrocities during Jakarta's rule. Timor Leste Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta discussed efforts to improve ties between the two neighbors with The Jakarta Post's Tiarma Siboro, who is visiting Dili.

Question: What is your opinion about the border incidents recently and how did Timor Leste handle those cases to prevent them from recurring?

Answer: The two governments, in a mature fashion, and in the spirit of friendship and based on our very positive and solid relationship, handled this incident effectively as we had handled other incidents in the past with the equal serenity and based on our good relations. For instance, last year, in the month of September, there were several cross-border incidents in Oecussi where hundreds of villagers from western Timor entered

East Timor, burned crops and houses, attacked our police and destroyed our police posts. We discussed it with Indonesian authorities and the situation has calmed down. The dispute in Oecussi had to do with some misinformation about the border demarcation process. So, in the case of the shooting incident on Jan. 6, we deeply regret the death of three former East Timorese militiamen. Again, we handled it effectively and we will always preserve the trust and goodwill between the two governments.

We have to work with the Indonesian side. Indonesia has to more effectively prevent armed elements, like former militiamen, from entering East Timor, and from our side, our police need to have a better information exchange and coordination with the Indonesian police. Working with the Indonesian side, we can prevent cross-border violence or robberies. Ties between the two neighbors look to depend on settlement of human rights violations against East Timorese during Jakarta's rule.

What do you think about the way leaders of both nations deal with the past, particularly through the joint truth and friendship commission?

I am very pleased with the state of our relations and I am very impressed with the pragmatism shown by the Indonesian side since the time of Gus Dur (President Abdurrahman Wahid) and during the administration of (president) Megawati. Now the relations have been enhanced due to the leadership of our two current presidents, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Xanana Gusmao. I am also happy with the establishment of the commission of truth and friendship, because we believe that this is the best mechanism to address the issues in the past, particularly the 1999 violence, which left many thousands of people displaced, many others killed and between 70 and 80 percent of the towns destroyed. Someone has to take responsibility. Under the 1999 agreement signed with the UN, Indonesia was in charge of security, but then law and order broke down.

Well, I hope the truth and friendship commission will help establish the truth, answering this question: who is responsible? Therefore the victims will know who is responsible, but more importantly, those responsible will apologize to

the victims in the interest of the two countries.

Will the commission's decisions affect the ongoing legal process in Dili against several Indonesian senior military officers?

Well, we have to wait and see about the result of the work of the truth and friendship commission. If the process is transparent and credible, then I am sure it will be accepted by the people here, the people of Indonesia and the international community. And then, yes we can really put the past behind us. So, before they conclude their work, I cannot say whether it will have an impact or not into the ongoing trials in East Timor.

Do you believe that decisions of the truth and friendship commission will give rise to border problems?

We have been doing a lot since 1999 to promote national unity and reconciliation. Many thousands of former supporters of autonomy with Indonesia are now in East Timor. Many are serving in positions in the government. Many are in the Parliament, and in our civil administration. Maybe more than 50 percent of former police, who had served with the Indonesians are on our national police force. This is part of our national reconciliation. We have been working for it very successfully since 1999. There are even many former militiamen — hundreds of them — who were less responsible for the 1999 violence, who have returned to our land, and only the hard-liners are still in (Indonesian west Timor), or elsewhere in Indonesia. But most of them (the militiamen) have returned and nothing happened to them. Not one single case of revenge since 1999. And we must remember that there are almost 300,000 people who left East Timor to West Timor, many were forced to go, now there are less than 20,000 people left in west Timor and half of them are children who were born after 1999. So, when we are talking about former militiamen, there are not that many left in west Timor.

How has the Timor Leste government reacted to the submission of the report to the UN about the atrocities that occurred during Indonesia's rule?

The handing over of the Timor Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) to the

Secretary-General of the UN was an obligation imposed by our law to our President. But no action is expected from the Secretary-General of the UN to follow up on the CAVR report. The commissioners who produced the report made some recommendations, some of which are acceptable to the East Timorese government, but others are not, like the recommendation for compensation, demanded from Indonesia, Australia and the United States. Well, our government rejected that part because we do not think it is realistic or fair. But the report is very important, not so much in its conclusions that almost 200,000 people died. The important thing is not the data, because the number could be more or less, but the fact that we learn from the past. We, East Timorese and our Indonesian brothers, need to work together to build a far more peaceful and better society for Indonesia and East Timor. This should be a pedagogical process and exercise for us to look into the past. Yes, we are reminded about the horror of the past as a warning and a lesson, so that the two sides can work together to prevent violence in the future.

Timor, Indonesia agree to look forward

Associated Press - February 17, 2006

Bali — Indonesia's president embraced his East Timorese counterpart Friday, and said a report detailing atrocities committed by Indonesia during its occupation of the tiny nation would not affect ties.

East Timorese President Xanana Gusmao did not address the report, which was submitted to the United Nations last month, but said he was looking forward to "living in peace" with his giant neighbor.

The report says at least 102,000 East Timorese were killed, abducted, starved or died of illnesses under Indonesia's occupation from 1975-1999. It also describes sexual violence, and the use of napalm and torture by Indonesian forces, among other abuses.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said

the report, which was prepared by local and international experts working for East Timor's truth and reconciliation committee, was "an internal matter between the United Nations and East Timor." "In the future, it will become a piece of history in the relationship between the two countries," he said after talks with Gusmao on the resort island of Bali.

The report's findings were in line with other published accounts of the decades-long occupation, but it put a fresh spotlight on Indonesia's history there, triggering anger in Jakarta, which accused East Timor of trying to "open old wounds."

East Timor's leaders have repeatedly said that building good ties with Indonesia was more important than supporting efforts to prosecute military officers implicated in the violence.

But East Timorese and international rights groups are still calling for justice. "Indonesia bears primary responsibility for the illegal invasion and occupation of East Timor," said John M. Miller, from the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network. "Instead of seeking to bury the past, Indonesia should ensure that those responsible for crimes against humanity are brought to justice."

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and ruled the former Portuguese colony until 1999, when a UN-organized plebiscite resulted in an overwhelming vote for independence. A final orgy of violence by retreating Indonesian troops left more than 1,500 dead. No Indonesian official has been punished for crimes committed during the occupation.

In response to international pressure, Indonesia and East Timor established a joint Truth and Friendship Commission in August last year to probe the 1999 bloodshed. The body cannot recommend prosecution for officers implicated in the violence Yudhoyono said the commission's mandate would be extended by a year from its original deadline of August 2006.

SBY, Xanana reach understanding

Jakarta Post - February 18, 2006

Tiarma Siboro and I Wayan Juniartha, Tampak Siring, Bali — President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said Friday that Timor Leste President Xanana Gusmao's decision to submit a report — detailing alleged human rights abuses by the Indonesian Military in the former Indonesian province — to the UN was a domestic matter.

"President Xanana has briefed me on the submission of the document," Yudhoyono said of the report by the UN-sanctioned Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR).

"Of course, I can understand because, in fact, (the report) is a domestic issue and internal process of Timor Leste, and a matter between Timor Leste and the UN." Xanana provided the report to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in January.

Yudhoyono and Xanana conducted a joint press conference at the conclusion of one-day bilateral talks held at Tampak Siring Presidential Palace in a hill resort about 50 kilometers from Denpasar.

The meeting was attended by dozens of high-ranking civil and military officials from both countries, including newly installed Indonesian Military chief Air Marshal Djoko Suyanto and Timor Leste Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta.

The CAVR report provides a chronological detailing of the alleged abuses from 1975, when Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony, through 1999, when the Timorese voted for independence.

The report alleges that the military used starvation and sexual violence as weapons to control the territory. It also accuses soldiers of using napalm and chemical weapons to poison food and drinking water.

Jakarta has rejected the findings, and legislators have said Indonesia should sever ties with Timor Leste, regardless of Xanana's speech at the UN that all parties — including Portuguese, Indonesia and some East Timorese groups — "were responsible for the abusive acts".

Yudhoyono said he carefully reviewed the speech, and it convinced him that Xanana was deeply

committed to continue the process of dealing in a constructive framework based on reconciliation.

"The important thing for me is that we keep holding on to our understanding and commitment that the issues must be resolved in a fair, truthful and reconciliatory way, and without sacrificing the need and hope of the two nations for a better relationship in the future," Yudhoyono stated.

During Friday's meeting, the two countries also received a progress report filed by the Commission of Truth and Friendship (CTF), a team which was established by the two countries to investigate the alleged human rights violation after Indonesia's occupation in 1999.

CTF chairman Benjamin Mangkoedilaga, who is Indonesian, said the team has so far interviewed members of the judicial panel and prosecutors involved in trying alleged human rights violators held by the military authority in Timor Leste before, during and after the UN-sanctioned 1999 ballot.

Benjamin previously said the commission also planned to interview several military figures, including former military chief Gen. (ret) Wiranto, about the alleged rights abuses.

However, he dodged a question on whether the commission would treat the CAVR report as a key source document in its ongoing investigation. "We just received the CAVR report last night and we have to study it carefully before making any judgment," he said.

Ministers from both countries also discussed various border-related issues, including on traditional border crossings and traditional markets.

Timor rules out compensation from Indonesia

Agence France Presse - February 13, 2006

Lisbon — East Timor will not seek compensation

from Indonesia after the publication of a report blaming Jakarta for over 100,000 deaths during its occupation, East Timor's Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri said in an interview Monday.

"Collective justice should prevail over individual justice. We can't now find among the people victim A, B or C," he said in an interview published in daily Portuguese newspaper *Diario de Noticias*. "If the entire people suffered to gain independence, the compensation for this suffering was independence," he added.

Last month East Timor's President Xanana Gusmao submitted an independent report to the United Nations which concluded Indonesia killed up to 180,000 East Timorese through massacres, torture and starvation during its 24-year military occupation.

The report of more than 2,000 pages was the fruit of over three years of work during which more than 7,000 victims testified on human rights violations committed in East Timor between April 1974 and October 1999.

Some human rights campaigners have urged the government of East Timor to draw greater attention to the report's accusations of human rights violations by Indonesia but Alkatiri said the East Timorese people had to avoid dwelling on the past.

"What would be the goal of this? Create new conflicts with Indonesia? What would be the point of that?," he asked.

Indonesia annexed East Timor with the tacit approval of major powers in 1975, shortly after former colonial master Portugal abandoned the territory amid worsening civil war.

But the brutality of the occupation eventually turned world opinion against Jakarta and led to a UN-backed vote for independence in 1999. East Timor gained full independence in May 2002, becoming the world's newest nation, after more than two years of UN stewardship.

Babies of war cruelly spirited away

Sydney Morning Herald - February 12, 2006

Tom Hyland — The struggle for East Timor was played out in the battle for its children, a landmark report has found.

Some were abducted by departing soldiers, smuggled out in crates. Others were taken from orphanages. Some parents were forced or tricked into handing their children over. Other parents voluntarily sent them away, hoping they would be cared for, educated and returned home.

Some never came back and grew up not knowing their families, their language, religion or culture. They are East Timor's lost, stolen generation.

Aidia is the mother of one of them. Thirty years on, she clings to hope. She's middle-aged now, old by East Timor standards. Her child, if she is still alive, would be in her 30s, maybe with children of her own. Aidia last saw her daughter Kustantina in an Indonesian army office some time after 1975. The child was three at the time.

With his tour of duty at an end, an Indonesian soldier told Aidia, a widow living in a forced-resettlement camp, that he had no children of his own. "I would like to take her home (to Indonesia)," the soldier said. "I want to give her an education and after that she can come back." She never did.

Aidia is illiterate. It was at the height of Indonesia's invasion, savage war was raging and she feared soldiers. In the army office, she pressed a thumbprint onto documents she didn't understand. When the paperwork was done, the soldier, his bags already packed, left with Kustantina, and a family was torn apart.

"I only gave away my child because I was afraid. They had guns and I felt like I didn't have a choice," Aidia says. She doesn't say what she has endured in the years since. It is a gap that speaks of an aching, anxious longing.

"I live now with the hope of that man's promise that one day my child will come back to me ... I often go to the edge of the sea, breathe in the

fresh air and remember my child taken from me across those waters."

Aidia's story is told in a landmark report on East Timor's ordeal under Indonesian occupation. The 2500-page report by the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation — entitled *Chega!* (Enough! in Portuguese) — documents in harrowing detail a quarter-century of war, massacre, torture, forced relocations, starvation and systematic rape.

Children were not spared. They were forced to serve on the battlefield and died in massacres, as well as from bombardment and famine. They were tortured in detention. Girls as young as 14 were raped and forced into sexual slavery as "comfort wives" during a time when soldiers could rape at will. And then there were those who were simply taken away.

The commission finds both sides in the conflict failed to protect children "but the most reprehensible violations of all kinds were committed by Indonesia".

A unique dimension to the children's suffering is now revealed for the first time. An unknown number — the commission estimates thousands — were taken to Indonesia. They may have escaped the ordeal of those left behind but they and their parents paid a different price.

Some were taken from combat areas after their parents were killed or they became separated from their families, the report says. The commission heard evidence of hospital staff hiding children to prevent their removal.

It heard of an eight-month-old girl called Veronica, taken by a soldier who said he had no daughters of his own. In payment he gave the mother a bag of rice.

Some mothers resisted. One girl identified only as QN was abducted from Ermera by an army officer and taken to Dili in a box. Her frantic mother traced her to an army office in Dili, where, despite being kicked by soldiers she rescued the child.

But the story has no happy ending. Back in Ermera, the officer raped two of QN's older sisters, one

of whom subsequently gave birth to a girl. He subsequently "took this baby girl with him back to Indonesia. No news of the child's fate has ever been received by the family."

Nobody knows how many were taken, but the commission is confident "several thousand" children were involved. The removals "took place along a spectrum from unregulated transfers ... without consent being sought, to coercion ... to informed consent". An unknown number of the children — many of them adults by now — have yet to be identified.

The commission finds "insufficient evidence" to say if the removals were official policy. There is evidence some officers tried to stop lower-ranking soldiers smuggling out children. But at the same time, it says officials at the highest levels, extending to former president Soeharto and his family, were involved in unregulated removals.

The worst stories come from the harshest early years of the occupation, between 1976 and 1979, when a "climate of chaos, coercion and impunity" created conditions for widespread removals.

Maria Legge Mesquita was taken by soldiers after her father was killed. She told the commission: "When the army was ready to leave, after their tour was over, they took five children, including me, and put us in crates. We were put in crates, one per crate, like chickens." She was lucky. A local family, fearing its children were being taken, freed Mesquita and the other children.

Soldiers also took children from orphanages at a time when East Timor had an estimated 40,000 orphans. They preferred light-skinned children, according to former governor Mario Viegas Carrascalao. "They liked children with mixed blood. They were the ones that they took to Indonesia."

Many of those taken were young boys pressed into army service as "TBOs" — the Indonesian acronym for "operations assistants" who carried ammunition and supplies.

One TBO, Alfredo Alves, told how, at the end of his unit's tour, he was placed in a box so officers wouldn't see him being loaded on the

departing ship.

"After half an hour we were allowed to get out of our boxes and I saw Dili fade into the distance. I felt very sad because I had not seen my mother since I was taken from the schoolyard in Maubisse. This happened in February 1980, when I was 13 years old."

By the 1980s, officials sought to regulate removals to ensure there was parental approval, but the report concludes that, "in the prevailing climate of coercion", there was no guarantee parental permission would be freely given as "there was almost always an element of duress".

It was not only soldiers; government officials and charities took part. While these removals were better organised, with the stated intention of caring for children, many were taken without parental permission. Nor could parents maintain contact with children once they were taken.

Soeharto family foundations played a prominent role. In one notorious incident in 1977, 20 children were taken without their parents' knowledge to Indonesia. Before being sent to an orphanage, they attended a presidential welcome where Soeharto declared: "You are our children, owned by the state, and we will be responsible for your welfare from now on."

By the 1990s, when Jakarta faced a growing revolt by East Timorese youth, the government started programs to transfer children to Indonesia. While officially aimed at increasing education and job opportunities, the program had "underlying political and social motivations" of encouraging a commitment to integration with Indonesia and removing potential trouble-makers from East Timor. It was part of the battle for the hearts and minds of the young.

The entire struggle for East Timor "was partly played out in the battle for its children", the report says. "The widespread practice of removing children displayed a mindset that, by taking control of (East Timor's) territory, Indonesia also gained unfettered control over its children."

Even where transfers had a humanitarian motive with parental consent, little effort was made to

ensure children could maintain contact with their families or return home. Some never saw their families again. Some of the children prospered in Indonesia, adopted by families that loved, cared for and educated them.

But such cases shine feebly in the unremitting gloom of the commission's report. A common thread runs through the children's experience: the loss of cultural identity, their language, their names. Some, taken as babies, were never told they were East Timorese.

For some this loss and alienation is a wound that never heals, even when they try to re-connect with their homeland.

One boy, taken from a Dili orphanage when he was five years old, was one of 10 children sent to a state orphanage in Bandung, Java, in 1979.

"I was living in a foreign environment," he says. "We never spoke about Timor, we couldn't speak (the Timorese language) Tetum, and we didn't send letters to Timor. We were brought up as (Indonesian) children in Java. I didn't know why I was there, just that there had been a war in Timor.

"I was happy to get an education in Bandung but I felt in my heart that I would always be someone wondering who he really was. I actually felt like I had been brainwashed. Eventually I made friends from Timor but I felt backwards and embarrassed around them because I couldn't speak Tetum. I often had to leave the room or more often I was silent. I tried to study my own language and culture.

"Living without my family was also very bitter for me. Very bitter. Even now if I see a picture of a mother holding her child, tears well up in my eyes. It is so sad that I cannot ever feel close to my family."

[The full CAVR report is at <http://www.ictj.org>.]

'We were put in crates'

Sunday Age - February 12, 2006

Tom Hyland and Lindsay Murdoch, Dili — Thousands of East Timorese children were shipped to Indonesia during Jakarta's occupation and the fate of many is unknown, says a report that echoes Australia's experience with the indigenous "stolen generation".

In some cases children were abducted by Indonesian soldiers and smuggled out in boxes, the report by an independent commission of inquiry has found.

"We were put in crates, one per crate, like chickens," one woman told the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, known by the Portuguese acronym CAVR.

The massive report poses a dilemma for Canberra, which received a copy last week and has already disputed its findings about Australia's role in events leading to independence in 1999. It has also sparked tensions between East Timor and its former rulers.

While not publicly released, sections of the report exposing atrocities during the occupation from 1975-99 have leaked. East Timor's Government was embarrassed when the report was posted on the website of the US-based International Centre for Transitional Justice.

The Sunday Age today reveals a previously ignored section of the report, which alleges children were taken in uncontrolled removals. An unknown number remain in Indonesia, some unaware of their true identities and their families ignorant of their fate.

Melbourne Catholic auxiliary bishop Hilton Deakin, a veteran campaigner for East Timorese rights, predicted a popular outcry in East Timor and overseas when the report is circulated. "The little children were the most defenceless of them all," Bishop Deakin told The Sunday Age. "Some who were taken away were treated in comfort and education beyond their wildest dreams. But so many other ones were abused as sexual objects and as economic digits in the household."

Predicting the issue would emerge as a major cause for church and non-government groups, he said: "It won't be swept under the carpet when all this is

revealed."

Cardinal George Pell, Australia's most senior Catholic bishop, was briefed on the commission's work when he met CAVR chairman Aniceto Guterres Lopes on a visit to Dili last month. He also inspected the commission's archives, now stored in a former Indonesian prison. Cardinal Pell's office said he was too busy to be interviewed about his visit.

A spokesman for Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said human rights issues raised in the report were "essentially issues for East Timor to work through". He said references in the report to Australia's diplomatic role leading to independence in 1999 were inaccurate and undermined the report's credibility.

He said sections of the report had been questioned by East Timor's President Xanana Gusmao and Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta, referring to their rejection of calls for Indonesia to pay reparations and for new war crimes trials.

But in an interview with The Sunday Age in Dili, Mr Ramos Horta backed the report's findings on the "stolen" children. "The findings in the report on this question do not surprise me," he said. "The Indonesians often used the term adoption but most of the children were stolen, taken without the approval of the parents."

The removals are revealed in a 2500-page report alleging horrendous human rights abuses during Indonesia's rule, with up to 180,000 civilian deaths.

The report — titled *Chega!* (Enough! in Portuguese) — alleges children were not spared during the occupation. Compiled over three years and drawing on thousands of testimonies, it alleges children were victims of massacre, torture, detention and rape. While broad details of those atrocities are widely known, the report reveals for the first time the previously taboo issue of the removal of children.

It alleges some were abducted by soldiers, while others were taken from orphanages by officials, charities and religious groups. It alleges some parents were forced or tricked into handing over

their children.

Others voluntarily sent them thinking they would be cared for. The report finds "although some maintained contact with their families and were eventually able to return, others never came back ... and their fate or whereabouts are not known to their families".

Even when children were removed for humanitarian reasons with parental consent, it says there was little effort to ensure they could maintain contact or return home. The report says "several thousand" were sent to Indonesia.

It finds "insufficient evidence" to say if the removals were government policy, but alleges officials including former president Soeharto were involved. It claims the removals had an underlying political and strategic motive to ensure young Timorese became Indonesian.

Joao Goncalves, a leading opposition MP in Dili who had a relative taken in the late 1970s, appealed to Jakarta to help reunite parents with their children. "These Timorese children have a right to know their identity. And it's important for the parents and families to find out if their children are still alive and well," he said.

Mr Ramos Horta said since independence in 1999 many parents had asked the Government to help trace their children, many of whom were now adults.

Dino Kusnadi, spokesman for the Indonesian embassy in Canberra, said Indonesia rejected the report, even though Jakarta had yet to officially receive a copy.

Mr Kusnadi told The Sunday Age: "The report is only one-sided, based on reports from East Timor. It's not endorsed by the East Timorese Government, let alone verified by the Indonesian Government."

But he said measures to trace children could be considered by the new Truth and Friendship Commission, set up by the two governments. "This will reveal a more balanced report, more forward-looking. Perhaps that question (of the fate of the children) may also be discussed within this commission of friendship."

The Catholic Church in East Timor is set to demand more be done to reunite families when it formally receives the report this week. Father Martinho Gusmao, director of the church's Peace Commission, told The Sunday Age a committee would study issues raised in the report and then list what the church believes to be the priorities for immediate action.

A Foreign Affairs spokesman said Australia would be guided by the preferences of the East Timor Government.

Gusmao sends CAVR report to embassies, international bodies

Lusa - February 8, 2006

Dili — President Xanana Gusmao sent copies Wednesday of the East Timorese Truth Commission's report on a quarter century of human rights violations and crimes against humanity, mostly committed under Indonesian occupation, to foreign embassies, international institutions and human rights groups.

In a communique, the technical secretariat of the CAVR Truth Commission said the embassies, including the Indonesian and Portuguese missions, were instructed by Gusmao to relay the reports to senior officials in their respective countries.

Extracts of the more than 2,000-page report, which blames Indonesia for direct or indirect responsibility in the death of more than 100,000 Timorese, have been widely leaked since Gusmao first delivered the document to Dili's parliament in November.

The President personally delivered a copy to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in New York last month.

While the report attributes about 10 percent of the human rights abuses and crimes against humanity to pro-independence Timorese forces, especially during the brief 1975 civil war, it underscores that, in contrast to Indonesia,

Timorese nationalist leaders assumed their responsibilities and cooperated with the 18-month inquiry.

Dili protests NGO's publishing CAVR report

Lusa - February 2, 2006

Dili — East Timorese officials strongly criticized a New York-based human rights group Thursday for publishing on the Internet without authorization an official Timorese report on crimes against humanity that has embarrassed Indonesia.

President Xanana Gusmao "is very disappointed with what has happened", a presidential aide told Lusa, referring to the Jan. 30 action by the International Center for Transnational Justice (ICTJ).

The coordinator of the technical secretariat of the Timorese body that drafted the report, Rev. Agostinho de Vasconcelos, denounced the ICTJ move as "unilateral and wrong".

Prepared by Dili's CAVR "truth commission", the report holds Indonesia primarily responsible for the death of some 180,000 East Timorese during Jakarta's 24-year occupation of the former Portuguese territory.

The ICTJ "are not authorized to divulge an official Timorese document without prior consent or approval", de Vasconcelos said in a communique issued in Dili.

He charged the New York City-based organization had "not corresponded to the courtesy" shown it and other NGOs when Gusmao altered his schedule at the United Nations last month to meet with them and ask for their "cooperation and understanding".

Vasconcelos noted that Gusmao, after delivering a copy of the report to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, announced that he would also present copies to "certain heads of government and donor countries" before making the document public

sometime before June.

Coinciding with Gusmao's delivery of the document to Annan, Jakarta announced it was postponing a scheduled meeting between President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Gusmao for reasons of agenda conflict.

International media speculated that the postponement was an indication of Indonesian displeasure over the Timorese report.

UN East Timor report slams Australia

Radio Australia - February 3, 2006

A report to the United Nations has accused Australia of violating its international duties by lobbying Jakarta to delay East Timor's independence ballot in 1999. The report by East Timor's Truth and Reconciliation Commission says the Foreign Minister Alexander Downer actively tried to delay the act of self determination by a number of years, arguing instead that East Timor should remain an Indonesian province.

Presenter/Interviewer: Anne Barker

Speakers: Kevin Rudd, Labor Party spokesperson for Foreign Affairs

Barker: East Timor's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has spent three years collating evidence about human rights abuses under Indonesia's 25-year occupation.

The massive report runs to 2,500 pages and documents thousands of witness accounts of killings, rape, torture and detention from 1974 right up to the independence ballot in 1999.

The report was handed to the United Nations two weeks ago, but the East Timorese Government is yet to release it publicly. Much of the blame and accountability is sheeted home to the Indonesian Government and militia groups, but Australia too comes in for some criticism.

In Chapter Eight, the Commission finds that

Australia contributed significantly to denying the people of East Timor their right to self-determination both before and during the Indonesian occupation.

In the early years, it says Australia was well placed to influence the course of events in East Timor, but rather than playing the role of honest broker, it tilted sharply in favour of Indonesia.

It says "Had Australia given greater weight to the right of the East Timorese to self-determination and to the inviolability of its sovereign territory in its dealings with Indonesia, it may have been able to avert the Indonesian use of force.

"The Commission finds that during the Indonesian occupation, successive Australian governments not only failed to respect the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination, but actively contributed to the violation of that right."

Barker: The report acknowledges the leading role Australia played in the international force that ultimately ended the violence and bloodshed of 1999, and notes that Australia has consequently tended to portray itself as a liberator of East Timor.

But it contrasts this with the actions of Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, who it says in fact tried to stop East Timor from attaining independence.

It says:

"Even when President Habibie was moving towards his decision to offer the East Timorese a choice between remaining part of Indonesia and independence, the Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer made it clear that his Government believed that it should be several years before the east Timorese exercised their right to make that choice." "The actions of the Government of Australia in supporting Indonesia's attempted forcible integration of East Timor was in violation of its duties under the general principles of international law to support and refrain from undermining the legitimate right of East Timorese people to self determination."

Barker: Mr Downer is travelling overseas and unavailable for comment, but his office today said Australia's position on East Timor was clearly articulated at the time, that the Government supported the act of self-determination, but the timing of the independence vote was something to be negotiated between Dili and Jakarta.

The Opposition's Foreign Spokesman Kevin Rudd says he'll be raising the matter in Federal Parliament.

Kevin Rudd: Alexander Downer over the last five years has always tried to depict himself as the hero of East Timor's independence. It would be remarkable if the same hero of East Timor's independence was found to have argued actively against East Timor's independence in his private diplomatic dealings with the Indonesian Government at the time. That's why when Parliament resumes I will be placing a number of questions to Mr Downer precisely about his communications with Jakarta at that time.

Rape a weapon of war in Timor occupation

The Australian - January 30, 2006

Sian Powell — In September 1999, a young East Timorese woman was brought to a militia post in Gleno. In the days immediately after the independence ballot, she was at the mercy of men who had lost the fight to keep East Timor within Indonesia.

A former militia gangster, Francisco Martins, told the independent Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation that he had seen the young woman in Gleno after she had been abused so violently she could hardly walk.

The militia commander had brought her in, and that evening Martins saw four militia gangsters from his Darah Merah Integrasi gang (Red Blood for Integration) take her away to rape her.

The next morning he saw her again, covered in blood. "She cried and asked our help to take her to the church," he said. "It was only then I knew

they had raped her because she couldn't walk, she was stumbling." After the rapes, the woman was returned to the militia post, tied up and finally killed.

The cycle of rape and sexual violence, entrenched in East Timor since the Indonesian invasion, accelerated in 1999, according to the commission, which found rape had been used as a weapon of war.

The commission's 2500-page report on Indonesia's 24-year occupation of East Timor carefully documents the tragic history of the executions, the massacres, the torture and the deliberate starvation of the East Timorese. Still to be publicly released, it has already soured relations between Indonesia and its one-time territory. A visit by East Timorese President Xanana Gusmao to Jakarta to present the report to Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was cancelled last week.

The report, obtained by The Australian, makes it clear that in many ways the women of East Timor were the real victims of the occupation. Rape, it found, was used by the Indonesian military to splinter the resistance, and the sexual violence sharply accelerated in the months before and after the independence ballot in August 1999.

"Rape, sexual slavery and sexual violence were tools used as part of the campaign designed to inflict a deep experience of terror, powerlessness and hopelessness upon pro-independence supporters," the commission found, noting that 93 per cent of sexual violations during the occupation were committed by the Indonesian armed forces and their militia proxies.

Women who supported the resistance were particularly at risk. One wife of a Falantil resistance fighter told the commission she was kept captive in Manufahi in 1981. "We were continually raped for seven months, although I was already old and my daughter-in-law was pregnant," she said.

Based on interviews with nearly 8000 witnesses from East Timor's 13 districts and 65 sub-districts, the report concludes the rapes constituted a war crime, and those responsible were guilty of crimes against humanity.

Although it only heard testimony concerning 853 sexual violations, the true number was in the thousands, the report says.

Unlike the East Timorese men, whose war wounds were honoured by their compatriots, raped and violated East Timorese women were often shunned by their husbands, families and communities, as well as by the Catholic Church.

In a society which values virginity and chastity and abhors any form of adultery, rape victims have tried to keep their shame silent. Yet many, including those who were impregnated by Indonesian soldiers, police officers or militia gang members, have had their lives blighted.

The commission documents the cases of women who were forced to become "military wives", women who were raped in front of their children, and the rapes of pregnant women, the sexual torture of women — including the use of cigarettes to burn their nipples and genitals.

"The purpose was also to humiliate and dehumanise the East Timorese people," the commission found. "It was an attempt to destroy their will to resist, to reinforce the reality that they were utterly powerless and subject to the cruel and inhuman whims of those who controlled the situation with guns."

One young woman told the commission she saw her relatives murdered in the Suai church massacre in late 1999. She was then forced into a nearby school building, repeatedly raped by militia members, and forcibly transported over the border to West Timor.

One militia man found her in the West Timor camp. "He said he had been looking for me for two days," she said. "He hit me with his handmade weapon right in the mouth, kicked me in the chest and hit my back in front of several people. That night he moved me to his house and raped me again.

"I was with this man for three months and sixteen days. During the day he would go out and keep me locked inside a room and when he returned he would open the door and do it again."

One young woman was abducted when she was two months' pregnant and detained in a notorious

torture centre, the Flamboyant Hotel in Baucau, for six months. "She was stripped naked, electrocuted and raped in a standing position," the commission found. "The torture and rape she endured were so brutal that in the end she agreed to become the 'wife' of a member of Battalion 744 in order to secure her release."

Documenting the sexual slavery, the commission found the "ownership in these cases was either individual or collective," and women were often passed on when troops were rotated out of East Timor. The military kept lists of women who could be used for sex, and handed the lists to their successors.

One woman, forced into years of sexual slavery, had five children from five different military fathers. "The father of my first child, who died, was from the Komando Unit," she told the commission. "The father of the second child was from Unit 412. The third was from Unit 413. I forgot the name and unit of the fourth child's father." "These 'military wives' told the commission they felt soiled and shamed. The report notes that one woman had been referred to as a "war prize", another said she "felt like an animal". Many said they felt like whores, and there are cases of mental instability, as well as cases of women who never recovered to marry and live a normal life.

"The victims' testimonies clearly show there was a widely accepted practice for members of the security forces to rape and sexually torture women while on official duty, in military installations and other official buildings," the commission found. "These practices were covered by almost total impunity."

One woman from Mauchiga told the commission she was raped by four soldiers in 1982, when she was heavily pregnant.

"When they finished I was crying. But what did they say? 'Why are you crying? Our penis is the same as your husband's. We did it so your baby will come out quickly'. After saying that they left me. I managed to stand up by holding on to the trees around me and walked back to our place." She gave birth the next morning.

Federal government sidesteps Timor accusations

Australian Associated Press - February 2, 2006

The federal government has sidestepped accusations it wanted East Timor to remain a province of Indonesia and delay its bid for independence.

The final report of East Timor's truth and reconciliation commission says Foreign Minister Alexander Downer wanted to delay the 1999 poll by several years.

The commission, known by its Portuguese acronym CAVR, has been collecting evidence from thousands of witnesses for the past three years about Indonesia's annexing of the former Portuguese colony in 1975.

Its 2,500-page report, which shows that up to 183,000 East Timorese died as a result of the 24-year occupation, was handed to the United Nations two weeks ago.

The commission found that Australia "contributed significantly to denying the people of Timor-Leste their right to self-determination before and during the Indonesian occupation".

It also says it was in Australia's interests for East Timor to remain part of Indonesia. Mr Downer wanted to delay the vote, CAVR says.

"The commission finds that, even when (former president BJ) Habibie was moving towards his decision to offer the East Timorese a choice between remaining part of Indonesia and independence, the Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer made it clear that his government believed that it should be several years before the East Timorese exercised their right to make that choice and that it would be preferable from an Australian point of view if Timor-Leste remained legally part of Indonesia."

But the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has now said Australia made it clear at the time it supported self-determination for East

Timor.

"Australia's policy position at the time was clearly articulated that reconciliation in East Timor be would best served by the holding of an act of self-determination and the issue was essentially a matter for the parties involved to resolve," a DFAT spokesman said. "Australia consistently urged that the East Timorese be directly involved in the consideration of their future and made it clear that Australia would accept an outcome negotiated between East Timor and Jakarta." The East Timor government had not yet officially released the CAVR report, the spokesman said.

Australia accepted the result of the result of the referendum held in 1999, in which the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly to break free from Indonesia.

But the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation said Australia violated its obligations under international law by backing the bigger neighbour's push to take over East Timor in 1975.

Australia was influenced by a desire to get the most it could out of maritime boundary negotiations affecting oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea, it found.

"The commission finds that during the Indonesian occupation successive Australian governments not only failed to respect the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination, but actively contributed to the violation of that right."

Labor says it will be raising the matter in parliament when it resumes next week.

Downer told Indonesia to delay Timor independence

Australian Associated Press - February 1, 2006

Canberra — Australia wanted East Timor to remain an Indonesian province and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer lobbied Jakarta to delay a vote

for independence, a report to the UN has found.

East Timor's truth and reconciliation commission has been collecting evidence from thousands of witnesses for the past three years about Indonesia's annexing of the former Portuguese colony in 1975.

Its final report, which shows that up to 183,000 East Timorese died as a result of the occupation, was handed to the United Nations two weeks ago.

The 2,500-page report was published this week on the website of the United States-based International Centre for Transitional Justice.

In it, the commission says that Australia "contributed significantly to denying the people of Timor-Leste their right to self-determination before and during the Indonesian occupation".

In order to maintain a good relationship with Indonesia, Australia violated its obligations under international law and backed the bigger neighbour's push to take over East Timor in 1975, the commission said.

Australia also was influenced by a desire to get the most it could out of maritime boundary negotiations affecting oil and gas reserves.

"The commission finds that Australian policy towards Indonesia and Timor-Leste (in the lead-up to the invasion) was influenced... by an assessment that it would achieve a more favourable outcome to the negotiations on the maritime boundary in the Timor (Sea) if it was dealing with Indonesia, rather than with Portugal or an independent Timor-Leste on the issue."

In addition, Australia gave Indonesia economic and military assistance throughout the 24-year occupation and advocated on its behalf in the international community, the commission said.

But it also made special mention of the more recent role of Mr Downer prior to the vote for independence in 1999. Mr Downer lobbied Indonesia to delay the poll because it was in Australia's interests for it to remain part of the archipelago, the commission said.

"The commission finds that, even when (former

president BJ) Habibie was moving towards his decision to offer the East Timorese a choice between remaining part of Indonesia and independence, the Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer made it clear that his government believed that it should be several years before the East Timorese exercised their right to make that choice and that it would be preferable from an Australian point of view if Timor-Leste remained legally part of Indonesia.

"The actions of the government of Australia in supporting Indonesia's attempted forcible integration of Timor-Leste was in violation of its duties, under the general principles of international law, to support and refrain from undermining the legitimate right of the East Timorese people to self-determination and to take positive action to facilitate the realisation of this right," it said.

Mr Downer was travelling in London and could not be contacted for comment. The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation found that up to 183,000 East Timorese were killed, disappeared, starved or died of illnesses linked to Indonesia's actions.

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WEST TIMOR/REFUGEES

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Sarah Lery Mboeik: Fighting against state hegemony

Jakarta Post - February 22, 2006

Tiarma Siboro, Jakarta — The woman, dressed somewhat provocatively, was conversing with some East Timorese militiamen.

She was there not for a pleasure, but to speak on behalf of dozens of East Timorese children and women hopelessly cramped into massive refugee camps near the border town of Atambua, West Nusa Tenggara.

The woman, Sarah Lery Mboeik, had never thought how thankful people would be until she was given the Yap Thiam Hien award in 1999 for her dedication to the cause of human rights in this country. The award is granted in conjunction with

commemoration of World Human Rights Day, which falls on Dec. 10.

"After the 1999 ballot for independence in East Timor, many East Timorese men changed their mind, from initially joining the Indonesian Military, to supporting the independence of their own land," said the dark-skinned woman, known as Lery to her friends.

"Joining the guerrillas, East Timorese men hid in mountainous areas shortly after the UN announced victory for the proindependence group. Their wives and children, however, were forced to take refuge when massive destruction was visited upon the towns," she said.

In the refugee camps, the women and children were held "hostage" as they were placed in camps controlled by pro-Jakarta groups and were not allowed to go anywhere unless their husbands or fathers showed up from their hideouts.

Male activists would find it difficult to infiltrate the camps to save the women and children, and Lery found herself volunteering to help. "I don't smoke, I don't wear short pants. But if that was the only way out, I was prepared to do it," she recalled.

She began to "traffic" children and women from the camps, while her activist colleagues waited not too far away to take the refugees to places of safety.

It was never easy, though. Some of the children cried bitterly as she tried to take them out, while Lery tried her best to make them believe that she would not harm them.

"Only after the militiamen realized that I was an activist did they try to hunt me down. I faced all kinds of terror since that time," she said, smiling.

Tough origins

Born on the small island of Rote in East Nusa Tenggara province, on Feb. 20, 1965, Lery had a tough family upbringing. Her parents were teachers at local schools who had to support seven children, including her. She struggled against the

economic hardship by becoming a hired hand, even though she was still a high school student.

Lery, a mother of three, continued her studies at Nusa Cendana University school of agriculture from 1983 through 1988, and became a part-time worker at a local commodities warehouse for a paltry wage. At other times, she helped friends with their research, to supplement her income.

Only after leaders of a local church, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT), asked her to join the Alpha Omega foundation in 1988 did she begin to see that many others suffered even more than her. Worse still, they could do little to defend themselves because they were powerless against an abusive administration.

This was during the authoritarian regime of former president Soeharto. The New Order ruler granted his cronies the right to exploit millions of hectares of forest across Indonesia, including those supporting indigenous and tribal groups.

As a student with an agriculture background, Lery was concerned at the increase in what she called "land defilement", which occurred in her hometown as well as in southern Central Timor, Amarasi and Amfoang — all in West Nusa Tenggara.

In the 1990s, the government established an Industrial Plantation Forest (HTI), which caused degradation and deforestation. For Lery, HTI became a hot issue.

One particular perfidious case occurred in the early 1990s when a local authority granted rights to a 300-hectare plot of land, belonging to villagers in southern Central Timor, to timber tycoon Muhammad "Bob" Hasan, who ran plantation company PT Fendi Hutani Lestari.

Backed by the military, Bob's men instructed the villagers to relinquish their land. Those who stood against the order were detained by the local military, physically abused and intimidated.

"I staged a rally asking the military to free local leaders," she said. Instead of listening to her demands, the military put her in a cell, only releasing her after days of interrogation.

Some military officers even branded her with the tried and true label “communist sympathizer”, a traumatic way the New Order regime used to stigmatize its opponents. That incident occurred when she was six months pregnant.

Lery later joined the Alpha-Omega foundation and was with them for about four years.

Networking overseas

Together with friends, she established the Institute of Information and Advocacy for the People (PIAR) in 1997. PIAR is a non-governmental organization that provides legal advocacy for local people struggling with land ownership problems.

The NGO also provides assistance to the locals in defending their traditions and cultures, and in the sustainable exploitation of natural resources. Under the PIAR banner, Lery also mediated a peaceful settlement for villagers involved in tribal conflict.

Lery has also been regularly networking with other human rights activists abroad. She has participated in international forums and been involved with comparative studies on social and environment issues in several countries, including the Philippines, Australia, Thailand and Brazil.

In cooperation with the environmental organization Yayasan Kehati, Lery once published a local paper that ran stories on the environment. She had hoped that people could get free information and share knowledge by reading it.

"I want them to have the courage to improve themselves for I may not always be there to assist them," Lery said.

Her long, extraparlimentary journey has made her realize that local people need sincere political representatives to fight for their rights against state hegemony.

Lery made her political debut when she joined the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) in 1999, but shortly afterward realized that her political stance could not be reconciled with the party's vested interests. "I quit the party due to

a difference of ideas," she said.

During the 2004 legislative elections, she contested a seat to represent Rote, Kupang city and Kupang regency, West Manggarai and Belu — where all of her real support base existed.

Lery won more than 100,000 votes. But she failed to win a seat on the local council after another politician from a major party got more votes than her.

"I lost the race because I may not have had much money to buy the necessary number of votes. That is the political reality here: Money really does buy power, but I believe that such a situation will cease to exist someday," she said.

Family will not give up hunt for daughter

Sydney Morning Herald - February 12, 2006

Lindsay Murdoch, Dili — Siti Bariah buys bananas and sells them in Dili's crowded markets, barely making enough money to feed eight of her children and her ailing husband.

But seven times now she has borrowed money for the bus fare across East Timor's rugged mountains to Indonesian West Timor, where she has angrily confronted a man she accuses of holding her 21-year-old daughter, Modesta Sofian, against her will.

"I will not give up," Mrs Siti says. "I know that Modesta would return to her family in East Timor if she could."

For more than five years, non-government organisations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have tried to return Modesta to her parents.

She is one of an unknown number — possibly thousands, according to East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation — who were taken from their parents during Indonesia's 25-year occupation of East Timor. Some have not been returned.

Mahmud Alkatiri, a senior Indonesian Government official, took Modesta, then 15, and her then 13-year-old sister, Daumali, into his home in the West Timor capital, Kupang, after the two girls fled the violence that erupted in East Timor after the 1999 vote for independence.

Mr Alkatiri, a former government official in East Timor, had owned a house opposite the shack where the girls grew up in the Dili suburb of Comoro. He told them that Indonesian-backed militia, rampaging in protest at the vote, would rape and kill them if they did not come to live with him.

But Mr Alkatiri reneged on a promise he made in 2000 to allow Modesta to return home and has since variously claimed she has run away, has already been sent back to East Timor or does not want to return because she is living with a wealthy family in Jakarta.

Daumali, now 19, shakes with anger as she tells how Modesta wanted desperately to return to Dili in March 2000, the last time she saw her. "We were crying. My parents had come to Kupang to collect us from Mahmud," she said.

Mr Alkatiri brought the girls to a ship in Kupang harbour. He allowed Daumali to be reunited with Mrs Siti and her husband, Fernando Morais, who were told the security situation in Kupang was too dangerous for them to leave the ship.

But after ordering Modesta to return to his car, he convinced her parents that he would bring her back to Dili with him in a few months, after she had finished her school term. The family has not seen or heard from her since.

Daumali said that when she and Modesta were living in Mr Alkatiri's house they cooked, cleaned and washed for him. He did not pay them and often became angry when they did not work hard enough.

Daumali said that Mr Alkatiri, who is one of the officers running the department in West Timor that is responsible for refugees, told her and Modesta in early 2000 that it was too dangerous for them to return to East Timor.

"He told us that all the girls in East Timor are forced to sleep with United Nations soldiers," she

said. "We had no way of finding out if it was true. I miss my sister very much. I know she misses me."

Mrs Siti has repeatedly confronted Mr Alkatiri at his home. "If you have killed Modesta, please tell us so that we know," she said she told him. "If you have sent her to be a prostitute, please tell us."

East Timor President Xanana Gusmao has raised Modesta's case, as well as others, with Indonesian authorities. It is one of 49 active cases being pursued by Dili's Social Securities Department. Twelve cases relate to children whose whereabouts are unknown.

The department wants to review 1156 cases in which guardianship has been transferred from East Timorese parents.

Indonesian officials have told East Timorese officials that Modesta's case is difficult to solve because she is now an adult and can decide for herself where she wants to live.

But East Timor claims Indonesia is obliged to act under a Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries because Modesta was only 15 when she was taken by Mr Alkatiri. "Progress in these cases is painfully slow," an official in Dili said.

Police in Kupang have demanded that Modesta's family produce witnesses to prove who Modesta is and that the matter then be settled by an Indonesian court.

Mrs Siti hopes to scrape together enough money so that Daumali can travel to Kupang to testify. "We don't have much but she belongs here with her family," Mrs Siti said.

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HUMAN RIGHTS/LAW

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Crimes will go to trial, Timor prosecutor says

Jakarta Post - February 22, 2006

Tiarma Siboro, Timor-Leste — Prosecutions of

crimes against humanity in Timor Leste will not be affected by the diplomatic approach taken by the country and Indonesia, Timor Leste's general prosecutor says.

Longinos Monteiro's remarks followed a closed-door meeting with the Commission for Truth and Friendship. The team was established by Indonesia and Timor Leste to investigate alleged human rights abuses that took place around the 1999 UN-backed referendum for independence in Indonesia's former province.

"Monteiro told us that the commission and the prosecutors in Timor Leste are playing different roles in dealing with alleged rights abuses. We believe that he (Monteiro) is right because the commission has been mandated not to interfere into the ongoing legal process here," Timorese commission member Cirilo J. Cristovao told The Jakarta Post soon after the meeting Monday.

The commission is on its first visit to the new nation after it was created Aug. 11, 2005.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Timor Leste President Xanana Gusmao have said they will work toward reconciliation rather than prosecute those believed to be the masterminds of the gross human rights violations.

Any prosecutions could involve bringing high-ranking Indonesian Military officers to an international tribunal, as activists have suggested.

Monteiro leads the prosecution team of the UN-sanctioned Serious Crimes Unit, which deals with alleged crimes against humanity.

Cristovao said the general prosecutor had so far handed more than 86 cases involving pro-Jakarta militiamen to Timor Leste's special panel for serious crimes. Eighty-three of the 86 cases have been legally processed.

The prosecutors, however, did not submit cases against several Indonesian Military figures because "they reside outside of our jurisdiction".

Cristovao said the commission would review all the legal documents issued by Timor Leste's serious

crime unit. "Similarly, we have already reviewed all the legal documents issued by Indonesia's prosecutors and ad hoc human rights tribunals," he said.

He said the commission's mandate only enabled it to give recommendations to both administrations, "and let them deal with the cases with regards to their own national legal systems".

In 2002, Monteiro indicted and issued arrest warrants for several Indonesian generals, including former Indonesian armed forces chief Gen. (ret) Wiranto and former martial law commander Maj. Gen. (ret) Kiki Syahnakrie.

Syahnakrie was assigned to stop the widespread violence, looting and destruction of buildings by pro-Indonesian militias shortly after the independence supporters won the referendum. However, there is evidence TNI troops took part in the violence.

'Criminalise defamation and see democracy die'

Interpress News - February 13, 2006

Sonny Inbaraj, Dili — Jose Ximenes, news editor of the popular 'Timor Post' daily, shook his head in disgust. "East Timor's independence and peace were achieved at great cost. We cannot remain silent while some of our leaders endanger our press freedom and undermine our hard-won democratic accomplishments," he told IPS emphatically.

What irks Ximenes and the whole media community in the world's newest nation is a three-year jail sentence that journalists will face for defamation in the recently amended penal code, as a result of an executive decree signed by Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri.

On Dec. 6, Alkatiri approved a decree revising the penal code, which had been passed by national parliament. The revisions allow for up to three years of imprisonment and unlimited fines for publishing statements deemed defamatory of public

officials.

"This decree-law threatens the fearless nature of a free press," said news editor Ximenes. "It has the frightening effect of silencing not only individual journalists charged but the media community as a whole," he added.

Ximenes is worried that his reporters will be restrained in their efforts to criticise those in power. "My reporters, in particular the ones new to the profession, could be practicing self-censorship motivated by fear."

International press freedom groups point out that criminal defamation laws are unnecessary in a democracy and that prison penalties for such charges undercut the fundamental democratic principle of free expression.

"Criminal defamation is an affront to free speech in East Timor," said the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in a Feb. 10 statement. "The steps to building a democracy are not paved with draconian laws which punish journalists for doing their work," added IFJ's president Christopher Warren.

In a letter to East Timor's President Xanana Gusmao, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in New York, said the bill threatens journalists whose reports on public officials or government institutions might be considered defamatory, even if the facts are fairly and accurately represented and are reported in good faith.

"Your nation's stated commitment to a free press and to democracy is undermined by measures that provide special protection to public officials," added Ann Cooper, CPJ's executive director, in the Jan. 13 letter to Xanana.

"We believe criminal defamation laws are unnecessary in a democracy and that prison penalties for such charges undercut the fundamental democratic principle of free expression." "Cooper appealed to Xanana"not to sign this legislation, and to challenge the political process that allowed such a bill to get to this stage without a full public debate."

East Timor's road to independence — achieved on

May 20, 2002 — was long and traumatic. The people of the first new nation of the century suffered some of the worst atrocities of modern times. A quarter of the population is thought to have died during Indonesia's 25-year occupation that ended in 1999.

Indonesia finally agreed in August 1999 to let the East Timorese choose between independence and local autonomy. Militia loyal to Indonesia, apparently assisted by the military, tried in vain to use terror to discourage a vote for independence.

When the referendum showed overwhelming support for independence, the loyalists went on the rampage, murdering hundreds and reducing towns to ruins. Even the media was not spared; the territory's only newspaper office was burnt to the ground and all printing machines in the capital, Dili, were destroyed.

An international peacekeeping force eventually halted the mayhem and paved the way for a United Nations mission that helped this nation of a million people Timor to get back on its feet.

The rebuilding of East Timor has been one of the UN's success stories. Working with donor agencies, the UN also helped revive independent media outlets in the militia-destroyed territory.

Today, reconstructed media in East Timor grapples with the challenges of rebuilding a nation and have an increasingly important role in developing democracy.

As the campaign to stop criminal defamation in East Timor gathers momentum both in the country and overseas, the ball now lies in President Xanana's court. He has yet to use his constitutional right to veto this decree-law and is awaiting a legal opinion from the appellate court.

"The president has not yet promulgated the penal code as he is awaiting the appellate court's recommendations, and is also considering public opinion on the (defamation) articles," Lusitania Cornelia Lopes, the president's chief spokeswoman told IPS.

But signals from the court have not been encouraging. Court president, Claudio Ximenes, told reporters on Feb. 3 that in his opinion as a lawyer, the defamation articles in the penal code "are not dangerous to democracy" in East Timor. "The situation in East Timor is different from other countries and this article will ensure social stability and democracy in the nation," he also said.

He added that several European countries, such as Spain, Germany and Italy, also have similar laws criminalising defamation. "And these countries are advanced democracies," he pointed out. "So we do not have grounds to say these defamation articles will endanger democracy."

But president of the Timor Lorosae Journalists Association, Virgilio da Silva Guterres, disagrees. Guterres said the law favours public officials and government leaders and protects them from criticism. In his opinion, it offers little protection for reporting facts that may be construed as defamation.

"The chilling effect of this law will be to prevent people, particularly journalists, to pursue the truth because of the three- year imprisonment as stipulated in this decree law," Guterres said.

Local legal experts also point out that this decree law goes against the country's constitution and certain international laws signed by East Timor.

"This decree law violates the East Timor constitution," said Tiago Sarmento, director of the Judicial System Monitoring Programme, a Dili-based legal watchdog.

"It violates article 6, which speaks about the goals of the state, article 40 about freedom of expression and information and also article 41 about freedom of the press and other communications media," Sarmento pointed out. "It also goes against the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which has also been ratified by the East Timor government."

Concern over defamation law

Green Left Weekly - February 8, 2006

Jon Lamb — Journalists and human-rights organisations within East Timor and internationally are increasingly concerned about the consequences of a new penal code on defamation, which includes the penalty of up to three years' imprisonment for defaming a public figure. Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri signed an executive decree approving the proposed law in December. It is now waiting to be signed into law by President Xanana Gusmao.

Journalists and legal experts within East Timor are dismayed that the defamation law has got this far without any parliamentary debate or public consultation. According to the South East Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), "The new laws will dissuade journalists from speaking up on good governance and transparency in the conduct of the state affairs" and "It will also stifle the freedom of expression the East Timorese need to participate in and advance their hard-won democracy".

Under Article 176 of the law, the term of imprisonment for defamation has been doubled from one to two years. In instances where the defamation is both through the media and is deemed to have been committed against individuals performing "public, religious or political duties", the term of imprisonment is increased to three years. There is no limit on the level of fines that can be imposed.

In the context of East Timor's relatively new and poorly resourced judiciary and presidential and with national assembly elections due in 2007, SEAPA warned that "Criminal defamation provisions could be misapplied or broadly interpreted, to the detriment of freedom of expression".

The International Press Institute has written to Gusmao stating its concerns over the law, noting that "in seeking to replace the Indonesian Penal Code, the East Timorese government is merely

replacing one repressive law with another".

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NEWS & ISSUES

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Political post for East Timor accused

The Australian - February 23, 2006

Sian Powell, Jakarta — Indicted for crimes against humanity by Indonesia and East Timor, feared militia leader Eurico Guterres has now been elected regional chairman of one of Indonesia's larger political parties.

Guterres, previously associated with Indonesia's two main parties — Golkar and the Democratic Party of Struggle — will head the National Mandate Party's (PAN) East Nusa Tenggara chapter, which takes in West Timor.

A nationalist hero to some prominent Indonesians, the 34-year-old, who has so far evaded jail, said his conviction for war crimes was "no problem". "There's no connection with me becoming the leader of the party," he told The Australian yesterday, adding that he had always supported PAN.

Guterres led the Aitarak militia based in Dili, East Timor, in 1999 and publicly incited his followers to kill independence supporters.

His orders were followed with relish, and immediately after his speech at a pro-autonomy rally, he led his gang to attack the house of pro-independence leader Manuel Carrascalao. Twelve people were killed, including Carrascalao's 17-year-old son.

Convicted by the ad hoc tribunal Indonesia established after intense international pressure, Guterres was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

On appeal, this was reduced to five years. A second appeal to Indonesia's Supreme Court has been pending for 20 months, while Guterres has been free in Indonesia. The native East Timorese was also indicted for crimes against humanity by the UN-backed Serious Crimes Unit in East Timor.

As chief of one of the most savage militias in East Timor, Guterres was directly involved in the carnage before and after the independence ballot. More than 1500 East Timorese died in the violence, towns were razed and as many as 250,000 people were forcibly transported to Indonesia.

The militia leaders fled across the border. None of them have been punished for the crimes of 1999, and many, like Guterres, have forged new lives.

In 2001, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said Indonesia should move "quickly and decisively against Guterres". "As I have made clear previously, Guterres is one of the most prominent and notorious of the militia leaders," he said. "We are deeply disappointed that he has not been brought to justice for his involvement in the human rights abuses that occurred in East Timor."

Nearly six years after the carnage, Guterres has not served a prison term, and he has the support of leading Indonesian politicians, especially those in PAN.

One of Indonesia's larger political parties, with 10 per cent of the seats in the House of Representatives, PAN was for a long time led by the highly respected politician Amien Rais, once the speaker of the national parliament and a former presidential contender. Guterres has said that Mr Rais personally invited him to join PAN.

PAN executive Muhammad Najib said Guterres's conviction was irrelevant. "That case is outside our authority, it's the business of the Government," he said. "If later he is found guilty (by the Supreme Court) we will study the case, and there are concrete rules for that."

Dili's stray pigs must go: East Timor's FM

Agence France Presse - February 20, 2006

Dili — Stray pigs roaming free in East Timor's capital are a disgrace and must be dealt with before they affect foreign investment, Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta said Monday.

"I have never found another place in this world, especially beaches, crowded by pigs that roam freely and foul public spaces like the beaches" in Dili, Horta told a press conference on a new hotel investment here.

If nothing was done to rid the coastal capital of the beasts, "it could possibly discourage interest of entrepreneurs to invest in East Timor," Horta said as he called on the city's mayor to take action.

"Dili is a capital. Dili is a barometer of the economy of Timor Leste because about 80 percent of economic activity takes place here," the minister said.

East Timor became the world's youngest nation in 2002 and is one of Asia's poorest countries.

Pro-Integration supporters ask Fretilin to disclose crimes

Tempo Interactive - February 17, 2006

Timor Leste — Indonesia residents asked that Fretilin's crimes against humanity in the 70's be divulged. "It is what is fair, after Timor Leste reported human rights violation by the Indonesian Army (TNI) from the 1970's," said Mateus Maya, Chief of the Timor Union Aswain in Denpasar, Bali, yesterday, 16 February.

The former Dili mayor (1986-1999) explained, that Fretilin (the Timor separation group, one of its leaders is now president of Timor Leste, Xanana Gusmao) killed about 100 thousand of Timor Leste's people in 1970's. But, in January, Timor Leste President Xanana Gusmao submitted the CAVR (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation) report to the UN without asking for opinions from pro-integration people. The report contains TNI's human rights violations in the 1970's.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will meet Xanana today in the Tapak Siring State Palace in Bali. Xanana plans to submit and explain about the

Coders bare invasion death count

Wired News - February 9, 2006

Ann Harrison — The citizens of East Timor who perished during Indonesia's brutal 24-year occupation of their tiny island nation might have died unaccounted for — as many civilians do in military conflicts around the world. But a group of determined programmers and statisticians refused to let that happen.

On Thursday, the Human Rights Data Analysis Group released a report documenting over 102,000 civilian deaths in the former Portuguese colony, which occurred from a year prior to the Indonesian army's invasion in 1975, to the country's 1999 independence referendum that formally ended the occupation.

Group director Patrick Ball says the data included an estimated 18,600 people who were murdered or disappeared, and approximately 84,200 citizens who died due to hunger and illness in excess of what would be expected during peacetime.

"If people can't be remembered by name because they are lost to social memory, the least we can do is remember how many people died as a result of the conflict," said Ball. "By having an accurate statistical picture of the suffering, we can draw conclusions about what the causes of the violence might have been and identify likely perpetrators with a claim based on thousands of witnesses."

Ball, 40, has spent the last 15 years building systems and conducting qualitative analysis for large-scale human rights data projects around the world. Constantly on the move, he's worked for truth commissions, non-government organizations, tribunals and United Nations missions in El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Peru and Columbia. In March 2002, he appeared as an expert witness in the trial of Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic in the Hague — coolly confronting the

former leader with statistical evidence of his alleged war crimes against ethnic Albanians.

Ball also helped to design Martus and Analyzer, two open-source software tools that provide secure storage and rigorous statistical analysis of human rights violations data.

To generate the East Timor report, HRDAG researchers spent three years in the country — now called Timor-Leste — collecting and analyzing mountains of raw data. The group marshaled 8,000 testimonies and developed innovative sources of information, including the first human rights retrospective mortality survey to determine how many people died and why.

They surveyed 319,000 graves and used hundreds of Python, Java and bash shell scripts to build a huge database of mortality data that contained an 80,000-file directory tree.

While prior information about East Timor focused on anecdotal accounts, the HRGAD researchers used comparative analysis of the datasets to uncover patterns of deaths and build objective evidence of abuses. The team also developed an array of descriptive statistical analysis profiling the scale, pattern and structure of torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and sexual violations.

In order to estimate what was missing from the data, the HRDAG developed software to link multiple reports of the same death in a technique called record linkage. They then used multiple systems estimation to calculate the deaths no one remembered.

"The Indonesian military has persistently argued that excess mortality in Timor due to its occupation of Timor was zero," said Romesh Silva, a HRDAG field statistician who led the design and implementation of the project's data collection. "This claim can now be tested empirically and transparently with the tools of science instead of merely being debated with the tools of political rhetoric."

The information generated by the HRDAG was originally requested by the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) in East

Timor, created by the United Nations in 2002 and now disbanded. The Truth Commission's East Timor office was housed in the sweltering cells of a former political prison. When the tropical heat threatened to cook his hard drives, Silva developed a technique of balancing his computers on the caps of water bottles so he could direct air from fans underneath the machines.

The Truth Commission completed a report titled "Chega!" (Portuguese for "Enough!") in October of last year and handed it over to Xanana Gusmao, president of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste who has not yet released it to the public. A draft version of the report posted by the International Center for Transitional Justice charges that the Indonesian armed forces carried out a systematic plan of murder and destruction during East Timor's independence vote in 1999, which was not the work of rogue military elements as Indonesia claimed.

The Commission recommended that the UN renew its special crimes unit to investigate and try human rights violations. It also said Indonesia should provide reparations to East Timor and called on the UN Security Council to set up an international tribunal to investigate human rights violations "should other methods be deemed to have failed to deliver a sufficient measure of justice."

Indonesian government officials declined to comment on either the HRDAG data or the Truth Commission report. But Indonesian Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono told the Associated Press last month that "this is a war of numbers and data about things that never happened."

Mathew Easton, a senior associate at Human Rights First, a New York-based human rights group, says President Gusmao has delayed the report's release partly because the Timorese government is afraid it will disrupt its relationship with Indonesia, its largest economic partner. "The Timorese leadership has been so vocal about the need to let sleeping dogs lie that it makes it hard for the Timorese community and activists to speak out and advocate for the truth," said Easton.

Supported by the Palo Alto, California-based Benentech Initiative, HRDAG has provided technical assistance to official truth commissions in seven

countries.

In an issue as controversial as deaths in East Timor, Ball says it's essential that HRDAG release their own complete research findings so the debate can take place on factual, scientific grounds.

'No cover-up over journalist's death'

Bristol Evening Post - February 2, 2006

A Foreign Office minister yesterday denied that the Government misled the relatives of a Bristol cameraman killed in East Timor. Douglas Alexander also rejected calls to meet senior politicians in Indonesia to discuss the death of Brian Peters and four other journalists in 1975.

His remarks provoked a scathing response from Bath MP Don Foster, who is fighting a campaign to bring Mr Peters' killers to justice.

The 26-year-old was killed by Indonesian troops while filming a clandestine attack on East Timorese soldiers.

Documents released in November revealed Sir John Ford, Britain's ambassador in Jakarta at the time, asked the Australian embassy to refrain from pressing the Indonesians for details on the deaths.

Speaking yesterday during a parliamentary debate, Mr Foster said the then Labour government's reluctance to discover more about the deaths was due to "Britain's sorry role in Indonesia's war on East Timor".

The Liberal Democrat MP said the present Government "has a responsibility to come clean... and to help the relatives find answers and obtain justice".

Mr Alexander replied: "I do not accept that the relatives of the deceased have been misled and clearly not deliberately. Indonesia continues to maintain that the journalists were killed in crossfire." He said it was "unlikely" high-level discussions with Indonesia would reveal anything new. But he

did admit that it "would have been better" if the Foreign Office had made its own inquiries in the weeks following the deaths — instead of relying on the Australian authorities.

The New South Wales coroner in Australia is due to open the inquest into Mr Peters' death in July. It is expected to take three months.

Mr Alexander said the Foreign Office would be "happy to consider" any appeal for information from the coroner. He also promised to release documents about the case to Mr Foster.

But the MP was not impressed, saying: "I thought it was very disappointing. He did not tell us anything we didn't already know. We have an absolute right for the Government to find out what happened."

Timor demands Indonesia inquiry into rape case

Kyodo News - February 3, 2006

East Timor's Interior Ministry on Friday summoned Indonesia's ambassador in Dili to express concern over the alleged rape of an East Timorese woman last month by Indonesian soldiers in the border area.

Meanwhile, about 70 people representing civic organizations demonstrated outside the Indonesian Embassy in the East Timor capital, demanding the Indonesian government and military take responsibility for the incident.

Speaking to Kyodo News via telephone, Interior Minister Rogerio Lobato said he demanded an immediate inquiry into the rape case.

"After the incident we received a medical report from Kupang (in Indonesian West Timor) but also a medical report issued by our side that both indicated she was raped," he said after also meeting with the 27-year-old victim to clarify the incident.

The victim was among several people from Oecussi, an East Timorese enclave located some 70

kilometers inside Indonesian West Timor, detained by Indonesian soldiers on Jan. 21 for illegally crossing into Indonesia to engage in illegal trading.

One day later, according to the allegations, the captives were separated for questioning and the woman was raped by five Indonesian soldiers. They were deported to East Timor the following day.

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MILITARY/DEFENSE

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More East Timorese soldiers desert: officer

Agence France Presse - February 23, 2006

Nearly 600 East Timorese soldiers have deserted their barracks this month in protest against alleged discrimination and over-zealous surveillance, an officer in the group says.

The officer, who declines to be named, says a batch of 177 soldiers last weekend joined an earlier 404 who initially left their barracks in Metinaro and Baucau on February 8.

The fledgling East Timorese Army has about 1,500 regular soldiers and 1,500 reservists.

The first batch took their grievances to President Xanana Gusmao, a former guerrilla leader. They returned to their barracks but then deserted again shortly afterwards.

Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri has threatened punishment for the deserters. He has been quoted as saying many of soldiers are former resistance fighters unused to the discipline of a regular military force.

East Timorese guerrilla forces fought against Indonesia during their almost 24 years of occupation of the former Portuguese colony. The country became the world's youngest nation in May 2002.

The officer says the action is not politically motivated. "There was no political pressure from anyone," he said. "It was purely because of the

discrimination and the treatment we received from several of our commanders while we were in Metinaro." He did not specify on what grounds they had been discriminated against.

The officer says the men will not return to their respective bases until their grievances are addressed. "There (at the base) we are being treated like dangerous prisoners," he said. "We are under constant observation from the armed security section." He adds that even when they are eating or showering they are under watch.

Military commander Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak was last week quoted by the Suara Timor Lorosae newspaper as saying that the 404 deserters should consider themselves as discharged for disobeying orders to return to work. Military officials are not immediately available for comment.

East Timor army strike sparks security fears

Radio Australia - February 27, 2006

Reporter: Karen Percy

Eleanor Hall: The Federal Labor Party says it fears there's a security risk right on our doorstep, with reports that hundreds of soldiers from the East Timorese army have left their posts.

In recent weeks the soldiers have been protesting against working conditions and promotion rules within the newly formed army.

But the Defence Minister Brendan Nelson says there's no risk to Australians in East Timor, and no threat to Australia either, as Karen Percy reports.

Karen Percy: Over the past several weeks, tensions have been rising with the 1,500 strong East Timor Army — so much so that 400 soldiers have left the main base of Metinaro, west of Dili.

The Federal Defence Minister Brendan Nelson.

Brendan Nelson: It's a kind of a strike, as we

understand it, that relates to grievances about conditions of service and the nature of promotion selections, and a little bit of tension, as we understand it, between those who come from the west and then of course the east of the country. The security situation, I understand, is peaceful and stable, and the East Timorese Government has set up a commission of inquiry.

Karen Percy: The Federal Opposition says with such a large percentage of the army off the job, there's a risk that law and order will break down.

Labor's Defence Spokesman, Robert McClelland.

Robert McClelland: Increasingly the issue of failing states, and we've all got to work to make sure that doesn't happen in Timor Leste, is a very, very significant security issue, both from the point of view of any narcotics trades that can develop in countries where there's poor security, or at worst case scenario, potential terrorist bases.

Karen Percy: Labor says this is particularly embarrassing for Australia, because many of the soldiers who were former freedom fighters were trained by the Australian Defence Force. Robert McClelland says the ADF needs to do more to ensure that the proper processes are in place for the smooth running of the military.

Robert McClelland: That's clearly an imperative, just in terms of the management structures, the payment structures, and indeed the general systems, the appeal review structures within the military.

I mean, we've seen military justice here being a controversial issue, but we're not a developing country. Obviously it's far more profound in its impact if the system's not right in the developing country.

Karen Percy: But the Government says it will only intervene if it's asked.

Defence Minister Brendan Nelson.

Brendan Nelson: At the moment I'm advised that things are peaceful. The discontent amongst some elements of the East Timorese soldiery has been

expressed in a peaceful and lawful manner, and the East Timorese Government has established its commission of inquiry to investigate the grievances that the soldiers may have, and as far as we're concerned, we will only provide any assistance if we are asked to do so.

Karen Percy: Is it embarrassing though, for the ADF program that some of their trainees, as such, have gone off in this way?

Brendan Nelson: Well, I certainly wouldn't describe the East Timorese Army as, if you like, trainees of the Australian Defence Force. I think the East Timorese Government itself would be quite rightly offended by that.

We need to understand that many of those who have joined the East Timorese Army fought over a long period of time to secure the independence of their country. There are cultural differences, between one side of East Timor from that of the other, and not surprisingly, some of those issues permeate to the development of its new army.

And we would expect, with sensible management of these issues, that in the medium to long term they'll be successfully managed.

Karen Percy: A spokesman for the Department of Defence says the nine ADF personnel based at Metinaro were temporarily moved from the site, but have since returned to the base.

Eleanor Hall: Karen Percy reporting.

Mass mutiny hits East Timor army

Sydney Morning Herald - February 27, 2006

Mark Dodd — More than 400 mutinous East Timorese soldiers — a quarter of the country's army — will be dismissed for deserting after protesting over poor conditions and selective promotions.

The mass sacking is a great blow to the strength of East Timor's fledgling defence force and poses a potential security risk.

At large is a volatile, undisciplined group with military training who were previously seasoned guerilla fighters against the Indonesian occupiers.

Their dismissal is also an embarrassment for Canberra because most of the rebel troops received training from the Australian Defence Force as part of the Howard Government's \$26million defence co-operation program with East Timor.

Defence Minister Brendan Nelson last night declined to comment, with a spokesman saying the minister needed more information.

But a Defence Department spokesman told The Australian: "The situation has disrupted Australia's training and infrastructure development activities at Metinaro base (west of the capital Dili). "We have moved ADF advisers normally based at the Metinaro facility to Dili, until the situation is further resolved."

East Timor Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri has threatened further punishment for the mutineers, including civil and military justice. Dr Alkatiri said many were former resistance fighters "not used to the discipline of a regular military force".

Most of the 400 are former Falintil guerilla veterans of the bloody 24-year struggle for independence against Indonesia.

Ambiguity remained yesterday over the timing of the dismissals. According to one senior Western military source, the rebel troops had been given until tomorrow to end their "strike", while other reports suggested the sackings had already occurred.

East Timor's army commander, Brigadier-General Taur Matan Ruak, was quoted in one of Dili's mainstream newspapers, Suara Timor Lefte, as having "thanked" the rebels for their service and considered them dismissed for refusing to meet a deadline to return to base.

The standoff began on February 8 when the soldiers deserted their barracks and arrived in Dili to present a petition to their commander-in-chief, President Xanana Gusmao, asking for their

complaints to be investigated.

Mr Gusmao accepted the petition and ordered the troops to return to base. The order was refused despite the rebels winning a government inquiry into their grievances.

East Timor human rights group Yayasan-HAK said the army lacked a "transparent" code of military conduct, and disciplinary problems within the ranks of the 1500-strong force were increasingly widespread.

"We found there was no regulation or disciplinary code and no regulations concerning promotion," Yayasan-HAK spokesman Jose Oliveira said. The ADF has played a key role in training the F-FDTL.

Mutinous troops will be punished, says Alkatiri

Lusa - February 22, 2006

Dili — A group of about 350 troops in East Timor who remain AWOL in a dispute with military and civil authorities will be disciplined for their actions, which do not constitute a threat to national stability, Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri said Wednesday.

Many of the rebel soldiers in the East Timor Defense Force (FDTL) are ex-members of the Fretilin resistance who "are not used to the discipline of a regular military force", noted Alkatiri.

"We have to acknowledge some neglect on the part of the government and the FDTL high command in their training and the creation of conditions to make them feel useful in peacetime".

Alaktiri added that the Dili authorities would have to review and possibly alter the structure and objectives of the new nation's fledgling Armed Forces.

The mutinous troops had mounted their protest against alleged discrimination and other grievances over working conditions Feb. 8 when they assembled next to the presidential palace in

Dili.

About 25% of a total 1,800 FDTL troops were involved in the initial revolt and the force's commander, Gen. Taur Matan Ruak, told Lusa this week that 350 troops were still "self-excluded" from active service.

Timor's military still lacks a full disciplinary code, permanent barracks and bases and a national defense policy remains to be defined in the world's newest nation.

Prime Minister Alaktiri said last week that it was crucial to find a peacetime role for Timor's Armed Forces, other than training exercises, and said he would seek assistance from Portugal to make the force "more professional".

Timor defense force crisis still to be resolved

Lusa - February 14, 2006

Dili — A crisis among East Timor's Armed Forces that erupted last week after hundreds of disgruntled troops left their barracks is still a long way from being resolved, military sources said Tuesday.

Just over half a group of 400-odd unarmed troops who went AWOL Feb. 8 to protest alleged discrimination and ill-treatment by officers have heeded calls from military and civil authorities to end their action and return to barracks.

These members of the East Timor Defense Force (FDTL), numbering about 220, are presently quartered at an Army instruction center at Metinaro, about 40 kms from the capital, the military sources told Lusa.

An inquiry commission of senior officers and lawmakers had been due to begin taking evidence from the mutinous troops at the Metinaro base last week, however, military sources told Lusa that these hearings have yet to get underway.

A visit to the Metinaro military base is of the agenda of Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio on an

official Timor visit beginning Feb. 21, his last overseas trip before standing down. After twice meeting with the 404 protestors last week, President Xanana Gusmco said he believed he had defused the crisis by promising no reprisals if the troops returned to barracks and by promising an official inquiry into their grievances.

The protest, which involved about one-quarter of the new nations defense force, came in the wake of a written petition sent to the president several weeks ago.

As supreme commander of the defense force, Gusmco had been expected to deal with the simmering unrest and related military issues on March 9 at a scheduled meeting on the Superior Council of Defense and Security.

Timor's fledgling Armed Forces still lack a disciplinary code and strategic defense concept, as well as permanent bases and equipment.

Commission opens hearings on soldiers' grievances

Lusa - February 10, 2006

Dili — An inquiry commission began hearings Friday on the complaints of hundreds of East Timorese soldiers who went AWOL to protest alleged discrimination and ill-treatment by commanders.

A military source told Lusa the hearings were taking place at the army instruction center at Metinaro, located some 40 kilometers outside, Dili, where they held their unauthorized, day-long protests Wednesday at the presidential palace.

President Xanana Gusmao, who twice met with the 400 unarmed demonstrators, defused the crises by promising no reprisals if the troops returned to barracks and pledging an inquiry into their grievances by a commission of army officers and lawmakers.

The demonstrators alleged discrimination in promotions and ill- treatment by commanders.

The protest, which involved about one-quarter of

East Timor's fledgling Self-Defense Force, came in the wake of a written petition sent to the president several weeks ago.

As supreme commander of the defense force, Gusmao had been expected to deal with the simmering unrest and related military issues on March 9 at a scheduled meeting on the Superior Council of Defense and Security.

The newly independent country's fledgling military still lacks a disciplinary code and strategic defense concept, as well as definitive installations and equipment.

Protesting soldiers leave after Gusmao defuses crisis

Lusa - February 9, 2006

Dili — Most of the 400 East Timorese soldiers protesting against alleged discrimination bowed to President Xanana Gusmao's ultimatum to return to barracks and dispersed early Thursday from around the presidential palace.

A column of army and police trucks ferried some 200 military demonstrators to the army instruction center at Metinaro, 40 kms outside the capital, in mid-morning.

Officers told Lusa most other protesters had dispersed of their own accord overnight Wednesday, complying with an ultimatum given by Gusmao in a meeting with them.

Defense Force sources estimated "only 10 to 15" of the total 404 soldiers remained AWOL, but said a final tally would only be possible once the unarmed protesters reported back to their respective barracks.

As the truck convoy departed Dili, it drove past the president's Cinzas Palace without stopping in a sign of respect and thanks for Gusmao's role in resolving the affair.

After a second meeting with the AWOL soldiers Wednesday night, Gusmao promised an inquiry into

their grievances and no reprisals if they returned to barracks by Thursday morning.

The soldiers, who spent most of Wednesday in and around the presidential complex, were protesting alleged discrimination in promotions and ill-treatment in the Defense Force.

Much of the anger centered on the commander of Baucau's 1 Battalion, Colonel Falur, whose replacement the protesters demanded.

A five-member inquiry commission, comprised of officers and lawmakers, has been set up to investigate the soldiers' accusations.

Troops demand sacking of CO in presidential palace protest

Lusa - February 8, 2006

Dili — Hundreds of East Timorese troops who gathered outside Dili's presidential palace Wednesday to demand the dismissal of a senior commander have left the complex and will meet President Xanana Gusmao later today to discuss their grievances, officials said.

Some 404 unarmed members of the East Timor Defense Force (FDTL) had assembled next to the presidential palace Wednesday morning to demand the replacement of Colonel Falur, commander of 1 Battalion FDTL, based in Baucau, a presidential source told Lusa.

The troops were invited to a patio inside the palace for talks with President Gusmao, who promised that a special committee would be set up to investigate their complaints and solve them if they returned to barracks.

However, these discussions with the Timorese leader did not satisfy the dissident troops who remained inside the presidential palace until Wednesday afternoon before leaving after a promise of a second meeting with Gusmao later in the day.

In comments to Lusa, Gusmao said his initial encounter with the soldiers "had gone badly",

declining to give more details of the meeting.

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DAILY MEDIA REVIEWS

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East Timor daily media review

UNOTIL - February 1-28, 2006

Alkatiri declaration not something new

Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri's comment last week that the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party are like frogs is not new, according to PSD MP Lucia Lobato. She said that PSD has become "immune" to such statements, though she believes that a leader should not say such things. She said that Alkatiri should try to lose that attitude, but her party will not become preoccupied with the remark and will focus on their preparations for the 2007 General Elections. PD MP Jose Nominando or "Buras" also expressed similar sentiments, remarking that he regrets that such statements do not contribute to educating the people. He said that as "frogs", the opposition will continue to crawl forward to compete with the "buffalo" in the upcoming elections. (STL) UNDP donates US\$1.25 million to support president's office

Head of UNDP Sukehiro Hasegawa signed a project document budgeted at \$1.3 million to support the President's office. After the signing, Hasegawa stated that as the leader of a new nation, President Xanana has an important role in encouraging a viable democracy here. For this reason, the assistance from UNDP will play an important role in the democratisation process here. He said that the funds will be used to, among other things, improve on the policy analysis skills and the capacity of the President's advisors, and enhance communication capabilities and managerial performance in the Office of the President. (STL)

Australian police donates speed readers to PNTL

The Australian Federal Police led by Coordinator Mick Duthe on Monday officially donated six speed readers to the Transit Section of the PNTL.

The handover ceremony for the new equipment began with speeches from the Police Transit Commander Sub-Inspector Antonio Soares, Coordinator of the Timor-Leste Police Development Program Mick Duthte, and Vice-Minister of Interior Alcino Barris. The equipment was handed over to the interim PNTL General Commander Inspector Ismael da Costa Babo. Speaking after the ceremony, Barris said that the new speed readers would benefit the transit police in detecting vehicles travelling over maximum speed. (STL)

Lack of subsidy would not affect parties

The leaders of the opposition parties, PSD, PD and ASDT are of the opinion that if there are no subsidies for the 2007 elections it will not affect them. On the contrary, they feel that they will be stronger and have the trust of the population to vote for them. According to Timor Post, leaders of the three parties stated on Monday that political parties that emerged during the UNTAET period without a subsidy are now represented in the National Parliament. Joao Gongalves of PSD cited as an example the general campaign elections in 2001 when PSD managed to get six seats in the Parliament without any subsidy from UNTAET. ASDT President Francisco do Amaral agrees that the lack of subsidy will not affect his party. PD representative in the Parliament, Rui Menezes, said that his party came in second with seven seats in 2001 elections and that political party legislation made no mention of subsidies. He is, however, of the opinion that parties with representatives in the National Parliament should be entitled to an annual subsidy as well as one granted for general election campaigns.

In a separate article, the head of Fretilin in Parliament, Francisco Branco, reportedly said that the use of state-owned equipment such as cars to carry out political party activities at grass roots level is not a mortal sin. In response to public concerns regarding this issue, Branco said that the political party in power must use state assets to better their activities.

He added that these activities draw on plans that work for the nation and the people. Fretilin's President, Francisco Guterres said that some people are using the state-owned equipment for

political activities because they have been invited by the party.

The media also reported that the chefe suco/head of head of village in Fatubessi does not want the flag of the political party KOTA hoisted in that area because he considers it to be illegal. The head of the village reportedly threatened to smash the car, take the flag pole and chop it into pieces because only Fretilin members are entitled to go there. Those who are not Fretilin should get a machete and clear the grass, he said. Regarding this issue, the majority of the MPs suggested a team look into this case but Parliament's President disagreed saying it was up to each political party to educate their militants. (TP)

F-FDTL case

According to media reports, some of the F-FDTL members involved in the protest against discrimination within the institution have left the headquarters without taking part in the investigation process. On Monday, Lieutenant Colonel Salsinha reportedly said that the investigation process is not transparent because those officials that condemned the petition are also part of the investigation team. Salsinha said the number of the protesters had increased from 404 to 581. He added that they would only take part in the process if three F-FDTL officials, one lieutenant-colonel and two majors, are removed from the investigation team. He claims that the investigation must follow the demands of the petition, pointing out that the team is not focusing on the actual problem that led the soldiers to abandon their headquarters and that it does not involve military police. In the meantime, members of the Superior Council for Defence and Security met with President Gusmco to try and find a solution to the problem. (TP, STL)

February 25-27, 2006

Recommendation for dialogue between CVA and 1999 Victims

Dili Diocese Bishop Alberto Ricardo da Silva has

recommended that the joint Timor-Leste-Indonesia Truth and Friendship Commission open an intensive dialogue with the 1999 victims, in order to uncover the truth and achieve justice in accordance with the hopes of both the people of Timor-Leste and the international community.

During a visit to Timor-Leste on which commenced on 20 February, the Commission has met with President Xanana Gusmao, Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, head of the National Parliament Francisco Guterres, Prosecutor General Longuinhos Monteiro, Dili Diocese Bishop Alberto Ricardo, and SRSB Hasegawa, among other government and community figures, NGOs, the diplomatic corps and academia. The Commission also made a visit to Liquica District to meet with representatives of the victims and witnesses of crimes against humanity. According to its Terms of Reference, the Commission will not lead to indictments or the creation of a new court, however one of the Commissioners Agus Widjojo stated that although differences of opinion are natural, via the Commission the two sides will better understand each other and forgive. (STL)

CVA requests parliamentary support for amnesty

Members of the Truth and Friendship Commission have requested the support of the National Parliament in recommending amnesty for the perpetrators of the 1999 violence, if the Commission recommends such in its final report.

Speaking to journalists after a meeting with the Commissioners, President of the Parliament Francisco Guterres (Lu-Olo) said that he cannot at this stage commit to such a request, but that it is important that the Commissioners first complete their task. He said that during the meeting he affirmed to the Commissioners that the Parliament supports the work of the Commission. (TP)

PD and PSD are like frogs: Alkatiri

Speaking at the opening of the congress at the district level in Gleno on Saturday, Fretilin's Secretary General Mari Alkatiri reportedly compared both PD and PSD to frogs and said that they are trying to destroy Fretilin in order to win the elections in 2007.

Alkatiri told members that it is not worth being scared of both parties. "The opposition knows that to win Fretilin they must divide it, to win, they must get Fretilin to fight against Fretilin, that's because they don't have another way out," Alkatiri said. Alkatiri said the purpose of the congress is to make changes and that's the way to become a member of CCF (Comite Central da Fretilin/Fretilin Central Committee), and if it does not serve that purpose, then one must quit. He said that there are indications of some trying to bring him and the Government down, citing as an example a petition signed during a meeting within the party to bring down the Government and the Secretary-General. " I'm still here and waiting for people to remove me. But, despite the various demonstrations, the Government is still strong." In another report, PD's Vice-Coordinator, Ernesto Fernandes, alias "Dudu" reportedly said the statement of Fretilin's Secretary-General, Mari Alkatiri, is like that of a dictator. Dudu pointed out that as a democratic country, the leaders should measure what they say rather than criticize people or parties and that this is a new era.

In a separate articles, Mari Alkatiri was reporting as saying that the current political situation in Timor-Leste is one in which the opposition parties are not respecting the majority party (Fretilin). Alkatiri made such statements in relation to President's Sampaio speech in the Parliament during his official visit last week where he said that the majority party must respect the oppositions. Timor Post reported Alkatiri as saying that it is not true that Fretilin is not respecting the opposition and that stating the contrary is as good as lying. (STL, TP, DN)

Security council debates new mission

SRSG Sukehiro Hasegawa reportedly said the Security Council of the United Nations is discussing the possibility of establishing a new mission in Timor-Leste in order to provide assistance to the 2007 elections. According to Timor Post, SRSG Hasegawa said what will be implemented in Timor-Leste when UNOTIL concludes the work in Timor-Leste is currently under discussion by the Security Council. He added that many nations support the new mission as requested by Dr. Mari Alkatiri to establish a political

stability mission, pointing out that countries such as Brazil and Portugal fully support a new mission. On the issue of F-FDTL, SRSG said he trusts the President and Brigadier General Taur Matan to resolve the problem in good faith so that the soldiers who have presented the petition to President Xanana Gusmao will feel that they are part of the transparency and accountability process. (TP)

February 24, 2006

Reactions to F-FDTL problem

PSD MP Riak Leman has said that the Commission currently investigating the F-FDTL case is not following the instructions that they were assigned.

Speaking to TP at the National Parliament yesterday, Leman said that the Commission failed to meet with the F-FDTL Commanders before the investigation began, to request them to maintain a peaceful situation, and that this is why some of the protesting soldiers feel threatened.

Meanwhile, President Xanana has asked the population not to blow the issue out of proportion because the more than 400 soldiers involved continue to maintain excellent discipline. He said that when the case first occurred, he handed it to the Ministry of Defense and the F-FDTL institution to deal with, as he believes that it will be best resolved by the concerned institutions.

Chief of Staff of the F-FDTL Colonel Lere Anan Timor has countered claims that the soldiers involved in the protest action are experiencing intimidation at the Metinaro Academy while undergoing the investigation, stating also that he is disappointed with the attitude of the majority of soldiers who refuse to cooperate with the investigation. A member of the investigation team Paul Azis has confirmed that the team has suspended its investigation for now, as the concerned soldiers are not available. He said that it is practically not possible for the team to carry out their investigation tasks while the soldiers are not in the barracks.

Ex-Falintil Commander for Region IV Ernesto Fernando alias "Dudu" has commented that the Timorese are one people, and should not be divided into "East" and "West", and that the struggle for independence was a struggle fought together, not by any particular region alone. President of the National Parliament Lu-Olo has also stated that he regrets the current situation regarding this case, because as yet there is not sign of a clear solution to the problem. (STL, TP)

CVA meets with human rights NGOs

The Commissioners of the Truth and Friendship Commission (CVA) yesterday met with a number of Human Rights NGOs. Director of Yayasan HAK Jose Luis Guterres told TP that the Commissioners were interested to discuss the NGOs' position on not agreeing with the Commission. He said that they explained to the Commissioners that what the NGOs want is not a further attempt to uncover the truth, which is already evident, but the follow-up action to that truth. Commenting on the "friendship" aspect, Guterres stated that there has been friendship between the Indonesian and Timorese people for a long time now, realized through a range of means including during the period of struggle for independence when many Indonesians worked with the Timorese clandestine. He affirmed that this friendship is continuing even now, and that the issue therefore is not one of "Indonesians as perpetrators and Timorese as victims". He expressed his opinion that the real issue is that the perpetrators of crimes have violated the public interest of both Indonesia and Timor-Leste, and stated that it is pointless meeting with the victims if the aim is to collect more data, as this has been done many times before.

Referring to the fact that the Terms of Reference of the Commission do not include providing justice for the victims, Guterres affirmed his view that the CVA has been set up to deceive the people.

Also participating in the meeting with the CVA Commissioners, Director of the Justice and Peace Commission for the Baucau Diocese Father Martinho da Silva Gusmao told TP that the final report of the CVA should not be trivialised as the CAVR report was. (TP)

HIV/AIDS on increase in Timor

Speaking at the second National Congress on HIV/AIDS, Vice-Minister of Health Luis Lobato said informed that presently in Timor-Leste 33 people have been identified as positive with HIV/AIDS and 200 others are suspected to have been infected with the virus. Lobato said as steps have been taken to prevent HIV/AIDS and to decrease the negative attitude towards people infected with the virus. According to Timor Post, participants from education and health sector, international and national NGO's, the Armed and Police Forces, religious organisation all participated in the Congress. (TP)

Bishops concerned with military crisis

Dom Albert da Silva, Bishop of Dili and Dom Basilio do Nascimento, Bishop of Baucau told the media that they are concerned with the military crises. The Bishop of Dili defended that "it is necessary to try to avoid" the continued military crisis and that "there must be dialogue, mutual understanding and a solution for the sake of everybody. It is urgent". In a separate article, Fr. Leao da Costa reportedly said that the Tetun language continues to be the church's official language and in terms of developing it, it is up to the Government. He added that reason the Tetun language is still up and down is due to the lack of human resources and orthographic materials. But the Priest is of the opinion that in a five years time the Tetun language will be better developed and children will be able to speak it properly. (TP, STL, Lusa)

President Samapio's Visit

Portugal's President, Jorge Sampaio completed on Thursday evening a three-day official visit to Timor-Leste where he was wished farewell by his Timorese counterpart Xanana Gusmao, Prime Minister Alkatiri and other members of the Government, the media reported. According to the media, Sampaio invited business people from Macau, among them Stanley Ho, to be part of his delegation and encourage other internationals to invest in Timor-Leste to help create employment. During his visit, the Portuguese President also requested the United Nations to continue its support of Timor-Leste following the completion of

UNOTIL's mission in May 2006. While visiting, Sampaio learned of the many difficulties the Timorese are facing and appealed for their patience. The Prime Minister Alkatiri said "I feel that the visit was important before the President ends his mandate. This is a good example of how democracy works.

You complete your mandate and leave". Alkatiri added that choosing Timor-Leste as his last visit is an important sign for his successor. This is the President's third visit to Timor-Leste. He will step down as President of Portugal on March 9 after 10 years in power. The newly elected President, Cavaco Silva who won the elections in January this year will take over the position.
(DN, TP, STL)

February 23, 2006

Members of F-FDTL dismissed

F-FDTL Commander Taur Matan Ruak yesterday signified his dismissal of the 404 F-FDTL personnel who do not want to return to their barracks via the words "Thank you". When he received the soldiers at his office on 8 February, President Xanana requested that they return to their barracks to solve the problem. However, this request, to date, has not been honoured.

"For this reason, all I have to say to them is thank you", said Ruak when speaking to the press at Metinaro on Tuesday.

He said that the next step would be to present them with an acknowledgement of the service that they have provided in the F-FDTL, to the community and to the nation, however brief. According to policy, the soldiers must remain at the Military Training Centre at Metinaro in order to participate in an investigation by the F-FDTL Investigating Team formed by President Xanana. Coordinator of the protest action, Gastao Salsinha, said that originally the soldiers had thought that once they had undergone investigation procedures, they would return as normal within the F-FDTL institution. However, he said that this had

not been the case, with many protest participants continuing to feel threatened at the Metinaro Academy. "We feel like prisoners at Metinaro, and we also don't feel that Metinaro is the appropriate place to be conducting an investigation", stated Salsinha. He affirmed that for these reasons the soldiers have decided to remain in Dili. (STL)

Law has no basis: Lasama

Democratic Party President Fernando Lasama de Araujo has said that the defamation law that will be used as the basis for his prosecution no longer has a legal basis, as it is an UNTAET law. For this reason, he said that there is no need to take him to court. He explained that the law violates principles of human rights and democracy, and that he will continue to defend his position against the law. (STL)

Parties established in 1975 must be dissolved

PSD President Mario Carrascalao has said that in order to allow democracy to flourish, the "1975" political parties must be dissolved.

Participating in a meeting between political party leaders and the Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio yesterday, Carrascalao explained that the 1975 parties were established to fight for an independent state, while the post-independence parties were established to bring development to the people. For this reason he said, it is time for the old parties to dissolve themselves, giving the specific example of the Fretilin party. In his opinion, Fretilin thinks that because it brought independence to Timor, it has more legitimacy. On the contrary, he believes that this party should dissolve to create a new atmosphere among democratic society in this country. (STL)

President Sampaio's visit

In relation to the President of Portugal's visit, the media reported the following:

Timor Post reported Mario Carrascalao as saying during a meeting between opposition parties in Timor-Leste with President Sampaio that in the case of Timor-Leste, although the rights of opposition parties are enshrined in the

Constitution, they have never been given this right in practice. In a separate article in *Diario Nacional*, President Sampaio reportedly said during the meeting that democracy does not only occur during elections but it is a pedagogy exercise.

President Sampaio also said during a lecture on Wednesday that one of the challenges for Timor-Leste is Democracy, development, security and peace. Sampaio pointed that in order to better democracy, there must be efforts to defend the fundamental rights of everyone, the rights of the State should be defended and there should be no corruption, injustice or violence.

The Rector of the National University, Benjamin Corte-Real, reportedly said the special visit of Portugal's President to the university will help with the education development of the country. On Wednesday President Sampaio gave a lecture on political science.

President Sampaio has also bestowed President Gusmao and Prime Minister Alkatiri with the Grand Collar and the Grand Cross of the Order of D. Infante Henrique on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively. (STL,DN,TP)

National Congress on HIV/AIDS

The Ministry of Health is holding a two-day national congress on HIV/AIDS starting today in Dili. Prime Minister Alkatiri was scheduled to officially open the congress. According to the media, the First Lady of Portugal, SRSG Dr. Hasegawa, Minister of Education, Armindo Maia, Brigadier General, Taur Matan Ruak and other invitees are scheduled to participate in the event. This is the second congress. The first was held last December. (DN, TP)

February 22, 2006

Timor has not forgotten Sampaio's contribution

President of the National Parliament Francisco Guterres (Lu-Olo) has said that the people of Timor-Leste will not forget the efforts that the

Portuguese President and his people have made in helping Timor-Leste to achieve its dream of self-determination, part of which was being a good friend in difficult times, such as during the Indonesian occupation. He said that President Sampaio is a strong fighter for human rights and for the Timor-Leste cause, who contributed to the concretisation of Timor-Leste's wish for freedom and independence and who "shared the struggle of the Timorese people in difficult times and now shares in their happiness in this time of independence". (STL)

Political parties are like projects: Sampaio

The Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio has said that sometimes political parties are like projects of power which take advantage of the people's desire for political pluralism. Speaking at the National Parliament on Tuesday, the President said that majority parties have a natural tendency to bring together power in the name of democracy. However, he qualified that democracy is only legitimised by political pluralism and respect for the opposition and small parties. He added that the state legitimises democracy and political pluralism through free elections. He also praised the political maturity of Timorese, saying that this political maturity is well-known by anyone who assisted Timor-Leste during the period of struggle. (STL)

UN mandate successful but should not end suddenly

Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio has said that as the UN has achieved a great success in Timor-Leste, it is important that the assistance provided not end suddenly and that the UN should continue to monitor the situation in Timor-Leste. Speaking to journalists on Tuesday after accompanying the Timor-Leste President Xanana Gusmao in his meeting with Sampaio, Chief of Staff of the President's Office Agio Pereira related Sampaio's view that this period of stabilization should be managed properly. Sampaio also advised the Timor-Leste Government to establish some concrete projects in terms of national investment, as he senses that there are difficulties in this country. (STL)

PG processes corruption cases

Prosecutor General Longuinhos Monteiro has declared that his cabinet has received four alleged corruption cases from four districts of Timor-Leste and that they are currently being processed.

Speaking to journalists on Tuesday, Monteiro confirmed that an international Prosecutor is handling the cases and therefore he does not have any information about them except that the districts included are Liquica, Aileu, Manatuto and Dili. He would not comment, however, regarding the Ministries involved. (STL)

Article used against "Lasama" legal: Monteiro Prosecutor General, Longuinhos Monteiro reportedly said article 310 and 316 on defamation used against the President of Partido Democratico (PD) is legal. Monteiro said the case involving Fernando Lasama Araujo has been registered by his office and is being processing according to the investigation. He said that the case is being handling by Prosecutor Joao Carreira and therefore, he does not want to comment further except to say that the defamation law use in the Lasama case is legal.

Timor Post reported on the courtesy meeting between Longuinhos Monteiro and members of Comissao Verdade I Amizade (CVA) from both sides on Monday.

According to the report, Monteiro said during the meeting that the Commissioners noted their intention to access documents of the Serious Crime Unit especially those cases that have already been processed by the court.

Longuinhos Monteiro who is currently the head of Timor-Leste investigation team on the border shootings, said the joint investigation team have reached an agreement in Bali that Timor-Leste must carry out a ballistic test in Indonesia because they believe more than one person was directly involved in the killing of the three former militias members, reported Diario Nacional on Tuesday. "I tried to explain to them that based on the reconstruction we found that only one person was directly involved but because they disagree with the findings, we have agreed to do a ballistic test on March 3 which will include myself and Police Vice-Operational Commander

Ismael da Costa Babo who will take the three weapons used in the shootings, HK 33 to the Indonesian forensic laboratory. Hopefully, we will be able to bring the weapons back on the same date," Monteiro told the media. He added that the team is in its third and final phase of the investigation and have put together a report on the investigation to date which was presented to the Presidents of Indonesia and Timor-Leste when they met recently in Bali. (TP, DN)

They will have to choose: Taur

In response to the ultimatum given by F-FDTL Chief of State, Lere Annan Timor to 404 members of the first battalion of the Armed Forces, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak said the "definitions are in their hands and they should be the ones to choose what is best for them". According to reports, not all the 404 who have staged the petition to the President of the Republic, also the Supreme Commander of the country's Armed Forces, have returned to their compound. (DN)

February 18-21, 2006

TFC reviewing HR Commission & Ad Hoc Tribunal docs

The Commissioners of the Truth and Friendship Commission have begun reviewing documents from the Indonesian Human Rights Commission's Investigating Commission, and the Jakarta Ad Hoc Tribunal. Speaking to journalists last Thursday, President of the Timor-Leste component of the Commission Dionisio Babo said that the Commission recently received some documents from the CAVR, and is still in the process of obtaining documents from the Serious Crimes Unit. He explained that the work of the Commission has been delayed somewhat due to the late release of some of these documents and has also been influenced by the strong reaction from Indonesia regarding the handover of the CAVR final report to the United Nations. Due to these factors, the planned meeting with the Indonesian TFC for 20 January has been postponed to a later date. (TP)

Fretilin allegedly lower PD flag

Fretilin MP Norberto Espirito Santo has defended the alleged actions of Fretilin militants in lowering the Democratic Party (PD) flag in Laisorulai village, Quelikai, Baucau two weeks ago, saying that they did so because PD militants were exhibiting undisciplined behaviour. He said that the PD militants had tried to raise the flag at the home of a Fretilin militant and, therefore, Fretilin militants sent them away. He emphasized that Fretilin understands democracy and supports the right of everyone to carry out political activities in the community.

Meanwhile, PD MP Rui Menezes said that this information is incorrect and that it is irresponsible of people to spread such rumours. He said that no one lowered the PD flag in the said village and that PD is not prepared to become preoccupied with rumours and political manipulations, as this only impedes progress. (STL) Government to establish veterans' suburb

Head of the Fretilin Bench in the National Parliament Francisco Branco has said that the veterans suburb being established by the government is an excellent idea, but it is important that the houses are looked after properly. He said that the government together with the veterans and former combatants should sign an accord to the effect that at no stage may the houses be allowed to become animal pens.

Speaking to journalists on Thursday, Branco said that some veterans do not agree with the government's plan to establish a "veteran's suburb" but, in his opinion, it would make it easy for the veterans to access medical or other assistance if they are grouped together.

He explained, however, that the suburb has not yet begun to be established, although the government has been planning it for some time already. (STL)

CAVR Report Not a Problem to Indonesia: Gusmco

Speaking to the media upon his return from Bali following a meeting with his Indonesian counterpart, President Gusmco said the CAVR report presented to President Yudhoyono is not a problem. Gusmco said Timor-Leste is not seeking Indonesia to recognize the report. He said, instead they focused more on the Comissco Verdade e

Amizade/Truth and Friendship Commission, because it is Timor-Leste's problem and it needs to be in the public eye. The President pointed out that the CVA also speaks about truth as does the CAVR, but since the CVA has been established by Indonesia and Timor-Leste it really needs to be the centre of attention.

Because of this, members of CVA from Indonesia were scheduled to begin their activities, on Sunday in Dili, Xanana Gusmco told the media. Gusmco also said that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has promised to support the Commission and will meet with individuals while in Jakarta, adding that the two nations want the work of the CVA to be credible, responsible and transparent enough to satisfy the national and international community.

Apart from the Commission's work, Gusmco said the two countries are scheduled to meet in two or three months to look into issues of common interest.

In a separate article, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Josi Ramos-Horta said he believes that the two nations have shown maturity in their ties and when trust between leaders is standing on solid ground, any problems that arise will not shake the relationship. Therefore, Ramos-Horta said, Indonesia and Timor-Leste will resolve the problems, referring to the border incident on January, the Oecussi sexual abuse case and the CAVR report. He pointed out that during the visit to Bali, President Gusmco raised the latest incidents with his Indonesian counterpart who has assured him that he would personally keep an eye on the investigation of the alleged Oecussi sexual abuse incident. (TP)

Police ordered detention of land owner

Police allegedly detained members of a community illegally for refusing to hand over their land to a police commander in Liquiga District.

According to Diario Nacional, the police commander shot in the air and threatened members of the community for disagreeing with the police. The issue was raised in Parliament in a letter addressed to the Parliament President of the Republic and PNTL commander, Francisco "Lu'Olu"

Guterres, who said he considered this bad behaviour on the part of the police.

"Attention must be given to members of the police so that they learn to behave properly and to protect the interest of the people." In another letter to the Parliament, members of the police force have been accused of taking sides and allegedly involved in a fight between martial arts groups. In a separate article, the Ministry of Interior has ordered the suspension of two police officers in Oecussi District.

One, for transporting an Indonesian Police officer (BRIMOB to and from the border into Oecussi and allowing an overnight stay. The other police officer was suspended for divorcing his wife and remarrying somebody else. (DN)

PST held first dialogue in Aileu

Partido Social Timorense (PST) held its first dialogue in Aileu District with the participation of representatives from other political parties such as ASDT, PSD, PD KOTA, PPT and Fretilin. The dialogue focused on the position that PST disagrees with the National Parliament's ratification of the agreement between the governments of Timor-Leste and Australia regarding the exploration of the Greater Sunrise, PST Secretary General, Avelino Coelho reportedly said during his speech. Coelho said his party position is based on the fundamental facts that National Parliament has not yet defined the legislation on the maritime borders as per RDTL Constitution Article 95, adding that the revenue from the Timor Sea exploration is still to be used for the development of the people of Timor-Leste. He was also quoted as saying that PST rejects the defamation law because it kills freedom of expression.

This same law, he said, was previously used by Portugal and Indonesia to incarcerate nationalists, noting that many young Timorese were put in jail during the Indonesian occupation for allegedly breaking this law while fighting for independence. (DN)

February 17, 2006

Australian surgeon attacked

An Australian doctor who has been working at the National Hospital, Dr. Kerry Steven, was attacked by a bus driver and his assistant on the way from Baucau to Dili last Sunday afternoon.

According to a source from the Baucau District Police, apparently Dr. Steven, driving in a separate vehicle accompanied by two Government Ministers, did not give way for the bus to overtake, although the bus tried repeatedly to do so. When Dr. Steven pulled over without indicating in the Carabela area, the bus also stopped with the driver and his assistant alighting and abusing Dr. Steven, and then pouring dirty water over him. Although Dr. Steven apologized, his assailants threatened him with a knife but were hindered by the two Ministers who were travelling with Dr. Steven. Dr.

Steven reported the incident to the Vemassee Sub-District Police, resulting in the arrest of the assailants on Tuesday who then spent 72 hours in a police cell for investigation purposes. (STL)

Timor awaiting investigation result

The Foreign Ministry is awaiting the investigation results from the Indonesian Military police on the sexual abuse allegedly committed by Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) on a Timorese woman in Passabe, Oecussi Sub-District. Foreign Affairs Minister, Jose Ramos-Horta said Timor-Leste considers the sexual abuse by TNI very serious which is why the issue has been raised with the Indonesian Ambassador to Timor-Leste. "The sexual abuse in Oecussi, is considered by the Government as serious and it has been raised with the Ambassador and they have told us that the Indonesian Military is carrying out the investigation. I am waiting for the results and then I will comment whether or not I'm happy with the investigation. If I'm not happy with the results, we will look at another mechanism to find justice because I will not accept that a poor, sick woman has been violated

by the military," Ramos-Horta said. He hopes that the TNI Commander will seek justice for those responsible. (TP)

Investigation to focus on generals to soldiers

Speaking to the media on Thursday, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak said the investigation team will focus on everybody from generals to soldiers. Ruak said the team has already questioned six people but it will take time to complete the work. He added that the problem occurred because members of the Armed Forces never presented their complaints through the proper channels, noting that the institution has a group specifically meant to deal with problems, from personal to work-related matters. (TP)

February 16, 2006

Dialogue required to resolve F-FDTL problem

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Josi Ramos-Horta, said the recent problem within F-FDTL is a natural process when an institution such as this is being established. Ramos-Horta appealed to members of the armed forces who staged their protest to be patient and to engage in dialogue with Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak and President Gusmco to find a solution that will be beneficial to the future of this nation. " We can have problems and get upset but we should not walk out of headquarters.

The population looks up to and admires our armed forces institution. It must provide a good example. Therefore, I appeal to you to be patient, exercise discipline and wait for a solution from the Government," Minister Ramos-Horta stressed. He pointed out that in the eyes of the international community and within the UN there is no such name distinction as East and West Timor, either firaku (east) or kaladi (west) but rather one name which is Timor-Leste and it belongs to all Timorese.

In a separate article, UNDERTIM spokesperson, Cristiano da Costa, said the strike by 404 members of the Armed Forces gives a bad image to the

Government and that the new nation does not guarantee security and stability. Da Costa added that it would also have an impact on investors coming Timor-Leste. (STL, TP)

New ambassador to Australia sworn-in

President Xanana Gusmco yesterday swore in the new Timor-Leste Ambassador to Australia. The President congratulated Hernani Filomena Coelho da Silva on his new appointment, stating also that the position is a complex one.

Speaking to journalists after being sworn-in, da Silva said that he will be working in his post in Australia before the end of the month, and that his work as Ambassador will concentrate on the political and economic interests between the two countries. Da Silva will replace Jorge Teme. (DN)

Gusmco & SBY to review TFC work and CAVR report

President Xanana Gusmco will visit Denpasar, Indonesia, next Thursday to meet with the Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), upon an invitation from SBY. According to a source from the President's Office, the objective of the visit will be to review together the work of the Truth and Friendship Commission and also to discuss the CAVR report which President Xanana presented to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan last January.

The President's two-day visit to Indonesia has been approved by the National Parliament with fifty-five votes in favour, one against, and five abstentions. (DN)

Seminar on Parliament and media

UNDP and Timor-Leste Media Development Centre (TLMDC) organized a two-day seminar on the relationship between the Parliament and the media. The aim of the workshop was to address the problem of the media's distortion of information from Parliament. According to TLMDC's director, Francis Suni, the media tends to report differently from what is said by MPs.

Suni pointed out that although it is a very important issue, he is disappointed that the seminar was poorly attended by members of the

media and the Parliament "To speak about the involvement of problems which are passive through the media and members of the Parliament is not a problem. For me, who has been working with the media since 1999 up until now, I see that arrogance among us Timorese is very strong and we don't want to participate in activities such as this because we see it as a waste of time and we don't like other people to teach us," he said. In the meantime, the President of Commission F of the Parliament, Adalziza Ximenes, said she found the workshop interesting and that at some point the media and the Parliament end up working together. (TP)

RTTL News Headlines Suicidal deaths in Becora

Three dead bodies were reportedly found in the area of Becora by Police on Wednesday. The three, a pregnant woman, a 6-year old boy and 2-year old girl, reportedly hung themselves and were discovered by the police after the woman's husband notified the police. F-FDTL Investigation begins

Some of the F-FDTL officers involved in the strike last week have reportedly testified before an investigation commission, RTTL reported.

Reacting to the issue, Foreign Minister Ramos Horta appealed to all Timorese to show political maturity by not identifying people by regions.

UNDERTIM complains about Ninja

Members of UNDERTIM are concerned about some militants disguised as "Ninja", masked and dressed in black, whose activities are intimidating the population in Liquica District. The militants reportedly formed a parallel structure to UNDERTIM's District structure, with its own military wing.

For this, the party Coordinator in Liquica District, Vicente da Conceicao reportedly called on the police to take measures to halt their activities and appealed to UNDERTIM's President, L-7, to address the issue.

USAID launches its 6 million Project

At Hotel Timor on Wednesday, USAID launched its project to assist in the development of Private

Sector, "Agriculture and Entrepreneurship in Timor-Leste." The launching ceremony was attended by some Ministers and the US Ambassador.

Lawyer development training

Meanwhile, on the same day at the same Hotel, the International Bar Association and Advocats Sans Frontieres (ASF) held a one-week training on the development of private lawyers in Timor-Leste. The Head of ASF in Timor-Leste, Shelky R Wieck, told RTTL that the training was aimed at affording local private lawyers the opportunity to learn from the experts about private lawyers development in other countries.

Cuban doctor crosses from Timor into Indonesia

A Cuban doctor who was working in East Timor, Ramon Ballesteros Escobar (39), crossed the Indonesian-East Timor border and entered the territory of the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara Wednesday morning because he reportedly could not bear living conditions in the newly independent neighbouring country.

Wirasakti regiment command chief Col Noch Bola said Escobar who had been assigned by the Cuban Government to work in Suai, capital of Covalima district in East Timor, left his station and travelled to Indonesia on the ground that he could no longer live in the former Indonesian province.

Escobar was found by Border Security Task Force Command Chief Lt. Col. Ediwan Prabowo and his men when they were patrolling the border in the Indonesian district of Belu. During questioning by Lt. Col. Ediwan, Escobar claimed he was seeking asylum in Indonesia.

"The Cuban doctor is seeking asylum so that he can be deported to his country. He said he could no longer live in East Timor under a contract system which was made by the Cuban Government to carry out a humanitarian mission," Noch Bola said.

Citing Escobar, Noch Bola said there was a shortage of supporting facilities in Suai so that the Cuban doctor could not work and live properly.

Noch Bola said Escobar would be taken to Atambua, capital of Belu district, for further

interrogation. (Antara)

February 15, 2006

Prosecutor request information from PD leader

President of Partido Democratico (PD), Fernando "Lasama" de Arazjo was called to the Prosecutor General's office on Tuesday for an enquiry on alleged defamation accusations against Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. Four lawyers, his family and about 60 party members accompanied Arazjo, according to the media. Following the investigation process which lasted almost two hours, the President of PD reportedly said "the legal case regarding this matter has been handed over to my four lawyers, Vital dos Santos, Benevides Correia Barros, Napoleco da Silva Soares and Pedro Aparmcio de Oliveira. But I would like to emphasize that I came here to obey the law, because we want the laws to be implemented correctly in this nation. The laws are above us and I must follow them". He added that the current defamation law use against him is considered illegal and no longer valid in Timor-Leste. Lasama said, "First, I appeal to PD and then the population of Timor-Leste, we must be united to defend what is considered a right. This defamation law I think is illegal in Timor-Leste and no longer valid that's why PD is against it".

Fernando "Lasama" Arazjo has been accused of defamation due to bribery allegations he made against Prime Minister Alkatiri. (TP, STL, DN)

US has not made decision on Horta candidacy

Ambassador Joseph Grover Rees said the USA has not made a decision yet on Ramos-Horta candidacy for the UN Secretary-General. "In regards to Dr.

Jose Ramos-Horta, we respect him and think he is a good person and smart. All the countries recognize his qualities. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but we cannot speak about the candidates, though, as you all can see, there has been great interest from various nations regarding him," USA Ambassador to Timor-Leste reportedly told the

media on Tuesday following his meeting with the TL's Foreign Minister Ramos-Horta. Rees said the US Government has not yet made a decision on the candidates from Asia and other nations for the job of the UN Secretary-General. He added that his Government is looking into the best person to lead the UN and the candidates cannot be limited to one or two regions, adding that from his point of view Dr. Ramos-Horta is a perfect person as TL's Foreign Minister and if there are other opportunities he is the one to make the choice. (TP, STL)

Amaral: 2007 elections require UN involvement

ASDT President Francisco Xavier do Amaral has said that it is important that there is UN involvement in the 2007 General Elections.

Speaking to STL at the National Parliament last Friday, Amaral expressed his opinion that the elections should not be held in separate locations, but all in the one location, otherwise there is room for tampering with election results between the districts and Dili. Also commenting on the elections, PSD MP Riak Leman said that while general elections held every five years are important, the Parliament has not yet approved a law for the upcoming elections. He also emphasized that in his opinion the people that sit on the National Electoral Commission for the 2007 elections must be truly neutral and independent, otherwise talk of democracy is futile. Head of the Fretilin Bench in the Parliament Francisco Branco confirmed that preparations for the electoral law are underway. (STL)

Kolimau and KORK create disturbances

Deputy Police Commander for Manufahi District Antonio Fernandes has said that the groups Kolimau and KORK are creating disturbances in his district, with internal fighting. He confirmed however that the police and the local authorities have been active in encouraging mediation in an attempt to resolve the problem. The two groups have signed a written accord, the essence of which is that there will be no future similar problems, and that if there are, then there will be a need for a different decision. (STL)

Council members follow investigation

Paulo Asis and Gregorio Saldanha, both MPs and members of the Defence Superior Council visited Metinaro, F-FDTL Headquarters on Tuesday to observe the investigation on the alleged discrimination within the institution. President of the National Parliament, Francisco Guterres, reportedly said that as members of Parliament and members of the Defence Superior Council, both men must intervene and propose a motion of state rights.

The two are part of the investigation team and have already begun to look into the problems within F-FDTL. Guterres says he's hopeful there will be a solution to the problem, citing as an example the request from President Gusmco as Superior Commander of the Defence Forces for those protesting to return to their barracks. (DN).

February 14, 2006

F-FDTL strike action a desertion

President of the National Parliament Francisco Guterres (Lu-Olo) has stated that the strike action by the F-FDTL members in front of the President's Office last week was not a revolt but a desertion because they abandoned their jobs and their mission. He expressed his support for the President's position as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces in ordering the soldiers to return to their barracks, so that the problem could be resolved internally. He said that Timorese worked together in defeating both the Portuguese and Indonesian colonizers without any divisions based upon regional affiliations, using the cry "Viva Timor Lorosae" as an example of the joint nature of the struggle. He expressed his concerns that last week's action and petition will not only damage the F-FDTL members who were involved in the action but has also displayed a negative image of the institution to the younger generation who will at some stage be called upon to serve the country in the armed forces and the police force. He said that he has asked the Commission that will work on the case to conduct a thorough, independent and professional investigation.

Meanwhile, KOTA MP Clementino dos Reis Amaral has stated that the kind of discrimination complained about by the F-FDTL demonstrators is not present only in the F-FDTL but in other institutions as well. He gave an example of the recruitment of civil servants, whereby CV's are not accepted from those who are not Fretilin party members. He said that the same occurs for companies or organizations competing for tenders. (STL)

MPs question Gusmao-SBY meeting

Some members of the National Parliament, from both the ruling party as well as the opposition, have questioned the upcoming meeting between Presidents Xanana Gusmao and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) in Bali this coming Friday.

Unlike previously, when MP's have always given full support to the President to conduct overseas meeting including in Indonesia, this time some MP's have expressed their objections to the visit, considering the current political climate between the two countries. In a discussion on the resolution that will regulate the upcoming visit, MP's Leandro Isaac (Independent), Vicente Faria and Cipriana Pereira (Fretilin) expressed their concerns in providing support for the President's visit, with the reasoning that it is unclear whether the Indonesian President is really prepared to receive President Xanana. The concerns of the three MP's are related to SBY's refusal to meet with President Xanana last 27 January, after the President handed the CAVR report to the UN Secretary General. (STL)

Church condemns Oecussi rape

The Bishop of Baucau Diocese Basilio do Nascimento has strongly criticized the Indonesian soldiers who are accused of raping a Timorese woman from Oecussi District in the border region last 11 January. Referring to the Fifth Commandment that states that one must not kill or commit evil, the Bishop said that the Catholic Church clearly cannot ever accept such behaviour.

According to Bishop Nascimento, the perpetrator must be brought to justice in a conventional manner, according to the law. (STL)

579 delegates to attend Fretilin Congress

President of Fretilin Francisco Guterres (Lu-Olo) has confirmed that the Fretilin National Congress which, according to plan, will be held between 17 and 19 May, will see the participation of 579 delegates from the national and district levels, including from the Fretilin Central Committee.

Speaking to journalists on Saturday after closing the Fretilin District Conference in Manufahi District, Lu-Olo responded to claims that 18 countries wish to bring down Fretilin, saying that this is propaganda, and untrue, because all countries very much appreciate the Fretilin Government. He added that donor countries are still providing assistance to the Government, which demonstrates the strong support for the Fretilin Government. (TP)

The penal code violates spirit of constitution

The President of the Association of Lawyers for Timor-Leste (AATL), Mr. Benevides Coreia Barros, stated that the proposed penal code law which will be implemented soon, violates the spirit of Timor-Leste's Constitution as has already been highlighted in article 40 and 41 expressing freedom of press. Barros told media on Monday that this law is too harsh for journalists and cites an example that if a journalist captures or obtains information concerning individuals in positions of power, such information can be misinterpreted thus leading to charges of defamation being filed against the journalist in question. He added that if this law is approved it will be difficult for the media to do their jobs freely.

He further said, based on AATL's point of view, some clauses on defamation endorsed by RDTL's Parliament have not been obeyed. These include, among others, the declaration on human rights, rights of civil politics, forbidding torture, discrimination against women and children. He also revealed that if the law on defamation is implemented, it would contradict what has already been ratified by the National Parliament. (TP)

If Horta becomes UNSG, he will be replaced as FM

Portugal recently expressed support for Josi Ramos Horta as a candidate for the UN Secretary-General position, as has been reported in several international news wires. The people of Timor-

Leste are surprised and happy with this news, and some MPs commented that this candidacy of is a great honour Timor-Leste. In addition, the media quoted some MPs on Monday like Francisco Branco (Fretilin); Rui Menezes (PD); and Clementino dos Reis Amaral (KOTA) who share the same idea that should Horta succeed in his candidacy as UN Secretary-General, then his current portfolio as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation will definitely be filled with a replacement, despite the fact that searching for the “right” candidate will indeed be a challenge for the Timorese government. (TP)

School fees eliminated; Teachers Stopped

A teacher from Government school “SMP Negeri 3”, Isac Araujo, was quoting by Suara Timor-Lorosae as saying that with regard to the State’s intention to wipe-out school fees in Government schools, four temporary school teachers working at "SMP Negeri 3" in Becora-Dili have to leave their jobs because they will not be paid for their services. This is because salaries for temporary teachers are usually disbursed from revenue earned from payment of school fees.

Araujo appealed to the State to recruit new teachers soon so that in the coming days or months teachers recruited by the Government will teach fill teaching posts that are currently vacant. (STL)

February 11-13, 2006

F-FDTL strike considered a revolt

The F-FDTL demonstration held in front of the Presidential Office last Wednesday is considered a revolt against the institution of the F-FDTL and the state, according to F-FDTL Commander Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak. He said that one of the consequences of the action of the soldiers is that the people will consider them rebels or mutineers, and another consequence is that their action caused the President to cry.

Speaking to journalists last Friday, Ruak

explained that in his opinion they had no right to cause the President to cry, because the President is the father of this nation. He stated that from the East to the West, and the North to the South of this country, there is no family that did not suffer from the war. He added that even though the demonstration by the more than 400 soldiers has presented a significant problem for the country, it is possible for the problem to be resolved, as seen by the 174 soldiers who have already returned to their barracks as of last Thursday. He added that an investigation into the concerns would begin soon.

Meanwhile, Fretilin Vice-Secretary General Jose Reis has asked Fretilin militants and followers not to pay attention to the issue of "East" and "West", as all Timorese are one people. According to Reis, it was white people who originally divided the country by using these terms, but Fretilin has always defended the unity of the whole country, and rejects divisions and regionalism.

Additionally, PSD MP and former Falintil Secretary for Region III Riak Leman has expressed his opinion that the "West" is West Timor or Indonesia, while the "East" is Timor-Leste. He stated that there should be no divisions based upon geographical location within Timor-Leste. (STL, TP)

Annual message from Gusmao to diplomatic corps

In his annual message to the Timor-Leste diplomatic corps, President Xanana Gusmao discussed his recent visit to New York where he handed over the CAVR report to the UN Secretary General. He told the diplomats that upon speaking to members of the Security Council, he stated his Government's agreement that the UN mission currently in Timor-Leste should end this coming May. He thanked the UN for its assistance embodied in the four UN missions present in Timor-Leste since 1999. However he also stated his wish to request further assistance in certain areas, including advisors for the finance and justice sectors, police training, and the need for military liaison personnel along the border.

For this reason, he requested the Council to establish a Political Cabinet or Secretariat that

could also provide the necessary logistical and technical support for electoral assistance needed to prepare for the 2007 General Elections. (STL)

Defamation article violates Constitution

Speaking from his knowledge as a former lawyer, MP Manuel Tilman has declared that the Defamation Article in the Penal Code, if applied, will violate the Constitution, in particular the articles in the Constitution on Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom. He said that a journalist could receive three years in prison for saying the wrong thing, even in his/her capacity as a journalist. He stated that the Code has not yet been approved by the President, due to the issues surrounding this particular article, as well as one other. (STL)

Lere: Don't think about war again

F-FDTL Chief of Staff Colonel Lere Anan Timur has appealed to members of the F-FDTL not to consider a war between Timorese, as it will only be Timorese who will continue to suffer. Speaking in his negotiations with the 402 F-FDTL soldiers who protested outside the President's Office last Wednesday, Lere Anan warned the soldiers that if there is any internal instability, it will be an invitation for another invasion. (TP)

Xavier: Ready to resign if nominated

Vice Chairman in the National Parliament, Francisco Xavier Amara, stated that he is ready to resign from his current post in Parliament if nominated to the Consultative for The Petroleum Fund. "If I am nominated then I will chose one of the members of the Associate Social Democratic of Timorese Party (ASDT) to replace me in taking over my current position in the National Parliament, and I will be nominating a woman as a chairman of the faction," he told journalists on Friday.

He clarified that under the Constitution, the former President has the right of taking the place as a Constitute Council. He said if the Government puts that trust in him, he is ready to accept the post but added that he is not seeking this position because everything is dependent upon the Constitution. (STL)

Timor, Indonesia agree on Malibaka Incident

The joint investigation team of Timor-Leste and Indonesia lead by Prosecutor General Longuinhos Monteiro in Timor-Leste and Gorris Mere, Major General of Indonesian Police (POLRI) on Friday, have signed a report regarding the Malibaka shooting incident that took place on 06 January.

The two sides agreed on 4 points: that the Indonesians shot had crossed the border illegally into Timor-Leste; that the PNTL BPU shot and killed the Indonesians; that the shooting incident occurred in the territory of Timor-Leste and finally, that the case will go to Court based on the laws that exist in Timor-Leste.

Monteiro told journalists that the agreement was signed by Timor-Leste and Indonesia is not the finalized report. He said on 15 February, the Investigation Team from Timor-Leste will go to Bali (Indonesia) to meet its counterpart to finalize the report prior to the President Xanana Gusmao's visit there on 17 February to meet with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. He added that the Malibaka case will not be a topic of discussion during the meeting of the two States heads. (STL, TP)

Abilio Araujo: Ready to become prime minister

President National Timorese Party (PNT), Abilio Araujo told media during the meeting between PNT militants on Thursday in Maliana district that he is ready to become Prime Minister of Timor-Leste in the upcoming election to be held on 2007 if people of this nation indicate that with their votes.

Araujo said the upcoming election National Timorese Party (PNT) will indicate its candidate for Prime Minister and, he said he is ready for the post. (STL)

Figure Xanana Gusmao still needed

Suara Timor-Lorosa'e report that four Parties, Fretilin, ASDT, PSD and PD, share the same idea that a figure like Xanana Gusmao is still needed by the Timorese people. The report said people still need a charismatic figure who has handled many national matters and is welcomed by people

inside as well as outside the country. (STL)

February 10, 2006

Lasama hands defamation suit to lawyers

Democratic Party (PD) President, Fernando Lasama de Araujo, in a press conference held yesterday, officially gave authority to four lawyers whom he has nominated to defend him in the defamation suit filed by Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, related to claims made by Lasama that Alkatiri had received bribes. In the official ceremony, Lasama signed the Prosecution document that he received earlier this month and stated that he will attend a hearing on the accusations against him this coming 14 February. Lasama claims that he did not defame the person of Mari Alkatiri, but criticized his methods of governing, and stated that it is the right of the opposition to do so. He emphasized that his lawyers would be dealing with the legal aspects of the case, while PD will continue to deal with political matters. (TP, STL, DN)

East/West case should be investigated

Members of Parliament have stated that in order to know for certain the dynamics surrounding the East/West F-FDTL case, there must be an investigation by an independent team, as this is a very serious problem. Speaking to journalists on Thursday, Head of the Fretilin bench in the National Parliament said that he could not comment on the case without an investigation, which would reveal both sides of the story. PSD MP Joao Goncalves also expressed his opinion that the incident is a serious one because it has occurred in a military institution which abides by strict rules of discipline.

Responding to claims by some that the case is a political plot instigated by some leaders, PD MP Rui Menezes disagreed, saying that the problem has existed for some time now, but that the political leaders and the F-FDTL institution itself has not been interested in solving the problem.

In the meantime, the F-FDTL members who were

involved in Wednesday's protest were transported yesterday to the military academy in Metinaro, accompanied by the military police. The assignment of the soldiers to reside temporarily at the academy is considered an alternative that will assist in resolving the current problem. (DN, TP, STL)

Horta: Timor and Indonesia to share TFC burden

Timor-Leste and Indonesia will share the burden of their joint policy to establish the Truth and Friendship Commission as the UN Security Council has given the Commission the opportunity to demonstrate its credibility and integrity. "It is a great responsibility for the Commission to have to prove itself to the world and in particular to the victims", said Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Jose Ramos Horta on Tuesday. He said he acknowledges that many people, including Members of Parliament, civil society and Church representatives do not accept the Commission.

However, he said, the Government still intends to further explain the purpose of the Commission to these groups. (STL)

PNTL asked Indonesian police to monitor boarder Commander General of PNTL Superintendent, Paulo Fatima Martins, yesterday told media that he has requested POLRI (Indonesian Police) to assist Timor-Leste in controlling the Frontier between the two countries. Martins made this request through Mr. Gorris Mere, leader of the Indonesia Police team, and added that the objective of the visit with the Indonesian Police team is to discuss the situation or cases that have occurred at the Border. He also stated that the country is currently preparing for political party campaigns and, therefore, security along the frontier needs to be controlled. On the other hand, Mr. Mere has said that his meeting with Martins was one of sharing of information and discussion of other factual problems that have arisen. PNTL and Indonesian Police can strengthen collaboration as both entities provide services in security and implementation of the law.

In other news, Suara Timor Lorose reports that Mr. Mere, accompanied by Indonesian Ambassador, Ahmed Bey Sofwan, met President Xanana Gusmao on Thursday. (TP, STL)

February 9, 2006

402 F-FDTL launch protest

On Wednesday, 402 F-FDTL members including those from the Naval, First and Second Battalions and Headquarters who consider themselves as a distinct ethnic group from the West of Timor-Leste, protested at the Presidential Palace in Caicoli. The group directed their protest at the President as the Supreme Commander of the F-FDTL in regard to declarations by some Commanders that it was those from the East of Timor-Leste who were primarily involved in the war. They also launched an angry protest against what they claim to be discrimination within the F-FDTL related to promotions granted exclusively to those from the East.

President Xanana responded by saying that as the Supreme Commander, he has an interest in resolving the conflict but that he is unhappy that the soldiers left their barracks to protest.

When meeting with the protesters, the President requested that return to their barracks and allow the internal F-FDTL Commission to investigate the allegations. The soldiers refused to return however, saying that some of the Commanders had threatened that if they participated in the protest, they would be considered enemies. They suggested that they all remain for the time being at the HQ in Tasi Tolu, so that the investigators could speak to them there as a group. They anticipated that they would experience problems with their colleagues if they were to return to their respective offices.

The situation became heated when President Xanana, unable to convince the soldiers to return, left them to return to his office. The President stated that he would have preferred if the soldiers had just presented a petition, and not left their barracks, as this action will not help to resolve the problem. (TP, STL)

Indonesia acknowledges illegal crossing in Malibaka

Although there is yet there to be a final conclusion on the joint Timor-Leste/Indonesia investigation on the Malibaka incident, Indonesia acknowledges that the three deceased Indonesian citizens illegally crossed the border. In an official meeting at the Prosecution office in Dili yesterday, the Indonesian side acknowledged this and other facts, including that the incident occurred entirely on Timor-Leste's side of the border. According to Prosecutor General Longuinhos Monteiro, the team that arrived from Indonesia is composed of technical experts and criminal investigators. (TP)

Horta: Timor will stop establishing Embassies

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Jose Ramos Horta has said that Timor-Leste will not be opening any new embassies, irrespective of importance. Speaking to journalists outside the National Parliament on Wednesday, Horta clarified that while his Ministry has no plans to close any embassies — though they have yet to find Ambassadors for several existing ones including Mozambique, Malaysia and Thailand — it is no use opening new embassies if it is going to be so difficult to identify suitable Ambassadors. (STL, TP)

Horta not yet decided on UN SG candidacy

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Jose Ramos Horta has stated that he has not yet decided whether to nominate himself as UN Secretary General, even though many people have requested that he do so. He said that in various print and online media he has been noted as a strong candidate for the post, but he has not yet nominated himself. He said that he would clarify his position in the coming months. (STL, TP)

Xanana receives credentials from four countries

Suara Timor-Loros'e and Timor Post report that President Gusmao yesterday received credential letters of four Ambassadors from the following countries: Holland, Israel, Ukraine and Greece.

The Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Corporation, Ms. Adalgiza Magno, who accompanied President Gusmao during the meetings, informed the media that two of these Ambassadors will be based

in Indonesia (Holland) and Singapore (Israel). She further stated that at the moment Timor-Leste enjoys good relationships with over 100 countries.

Magno clarified to the media that discussions at the meeting focused on developing diplomatic relations between the countries. The Ambassador of Holland, Mr. Nikoalos Van Dam urged Timor-Leste to build good relations with Indonesia.

The following were received by President Xanana: Ambassador Oleksandr Shevchenko — Ukraine; Ambassador Alexio G. Cristhopulos — Greece and Ambassador Illan Bem Dov — Israel. (SSTL, TP)
Horta asks opposition to support Greater Sunrise deal

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Jose Ramos Horta has asked MPs in the National Parliament, especially from the opposition party, to support the Greater Sunrise agreement which was signed between Timor-Leste and Australia on 12 January 2006 in Sydney, Australia.

Horta said he just want to make an appeal to the opposition party as Timorese people, as their brother and as their friend. (TP)

February 8, 2006

Collection of veteran data to close in March

The collection of the veteran data at the village level will close this coming March so that the veterans whose names have been included will receive recognition from the Government in August. Speaking after a three-day veterans seminar held from 6-8 February, President Xanana Gusmao told journalists that the objective of the seminar was to bring together the veterans to discuss the resistance, political and military structures, so that they be will enshrined as a part of Timorese history. (STL)

CCF bringing population to surrender not true

According to President Xanana Gusmao, accusations of members of the Fretilin Central Committee said

to have brought the population to surrender is not true. Speaking at the veteran's seminar at the Presidential Palace yesterday, the President said that these kinds of issues should not be used to accuse but rather as conceptual analysis in order to arrive at a decision on the kind of criteria to be used. He said that the issue of surrender is a difficult one to define because in some cases traitors can be defined as heroes, and heroes as traitors. (TP)

No money from Petroleum Fund has been spent

Responding to the concerns of some opposition parties and members of the community that the Government is not properly utilizing the Petroleum Fund money that is stored with the Banking and Payments authority, Vice-Minister for Planning and Finance Aicha Bassarewan has stated that the Government has not yet spent any of the money. To use the money would require not the Government's but the people's approval, via their representatives in the National Parliament.

Speaking to journalists on Tuesday, Bassarewan said that the Government must present its proposal for fiscal spending to the National Parliament for approval, and therefore it is not possible for the Government to spend the money inappropriately. (TP)

Lasama ready for tribunal

Timor Post reports that President of the Democratic Party (PD), Fernando Lasama, has confirmed that he will be investigated by the Dili District Tribunal on 14 February 2006, in relation to the case against Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri accusing him of accepting bribes.

Lasama stated he is ready to be investigated but also added that Prosecutor-General, Longuinhos Monteiro, who is the defence lawyer for the Government is reluctant to speak about the case. Monteiro told media on Monday (06/02) that he believes that the Deputy Prosecutor, Joco Carreira, will speak on this issue because he will be attending to this matter. Monteiro added that he would like to lead this case, but he unfortunately has other important matters to address outside of Timor-Leste.

Lasama appealed to those attending the scheduled hearing that he will clarify to the tribunal what has already been outlined during his recent press conference. (TP)

Construction House for Veterans

President of the Council of the Ministers, Antonio Bianco, said that Timor-Leste Government is currently holding on-going discussions with representatives of the Government of China regarding the planned construction of houses for identified veterans. Plans are in the second phase which concerns sending technical experts to regions and districts in the country to determine whether the houses will be centrally or regionally located.

Bianco said he hopes that the technical assessment can be completed shortly. Another meeting will be held in the presence of the Prime Minister to decide upon the location. After being endorsed by the Prime Minister, a final report will be submitted to the Government of China for review. According to data gathered by a spokesperson from the Chinese Government, approximately 100 veterans including those who have no homes and are retired will be considered as recipients. (TP)

February 7, 2006

Sexual violence in Oecusse a reminder of past

Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Nelson dos Santos has commented that the recent alleged rape of an Oecussi woman by the Indonesian military in the border region in January is reminiscent of the violence perpetrated by the security forces in Timor-Leste in Indonesian times. "However we are confident that the TNI will process the perpetrators via the appropriate legal channels", Santos told journalists on Monday.

According to Santos, the case is still being investigated by the Department of Foreign Affairs, based upon the medical reports which, he added, show that a rape occurred. He also stated that the

Timor-Leste Government spoke to the Indonesian authorities about the case last Friday and advised them that the Timor-Leste side would not cease raising the matter until the perpetrators have been taken to court. Minister of Foreign affairs and Cooperation, Jose Ramos Horta, spoke directly to the Indonesian Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Ahmed Bey Sofwan, to discuss both this and other matters. Santos said that it is important that the Timor-Leste Government apply the appropriate pressure to Indonesia to resolve the matter according to their law.

Prosecutor General Longuinhos Monteiro also told reporters that the report on the case has been received by his office, however he did not make any comments, saying only that he is still studying the case.

The National Parliament also on Friday received a petition from the Women's Network regarding the case, where it was then handed on to Commission A. Vice President of Commission A, Vicente Faria, said that the Commission would hold a meeting with Civil Society to find out more information, they would then write a report and present it to the Parliament, who will, subsequently, give it to the Government for discussions with the Indonesian government. (STL, TP)

Police do not use guns to threaten population

PNTL Commander General Superintendent Paulo Martins has said that State equipment such as guns or pistols should not be being used by police officers to threaten or scare people, but to provide a guarantee of security when needed.

Speaking at an official event to dismiss five police officers at the PNTL Headquarters on Monday, Martins asked police officers to use the equipment properly and to safeguard it so that it does not get lost. He said that the loss of such weapons gives others the opportunity to do something wrong. (STL)

Defamation law has implications for journalists

A UNOTIL press statement released on Monday stated that the last UNOTIL Policy Review meeting discussed the concerns that the media have regarding the defamation clause contained in the

new Timor-Leste Penal Code, and the necessity to maintain and possibly increase international support for the national media as an important component of a democratic society. Led by the Deputy SRSB Anis Bajwa, the meeting saw presentations from various media representatives in Timor-Leste, including RTTL Director Virgilio Guterres, Timor-Leste Internews Country Director Sonny Inbaraj, Timor Post Director Aderito Hugo da Costa, and STL Vice-Director Domingos Saldanha. Points conveyed included the need for more material and financial resources, including computers, vehicles, communication tools and basic office equipment. Thus it was concluded that continued donor support is critical to effective strengthening of the media. (STL)

Don't forget civilian component of the resistance

After an opening ceremony for ex-combatants in the Palace of Ashes yesterday, President Xanana Gusmao told the media not to forget the civilian component of the resistance which was an important part of the support base for the resistance and that they represented all areas of the Timor-Leste. He stressed that there is a need for a structure to be put in place in order to clarify the situation for future generations and for the sake of history.

We're trying to release a factual document regarding combatants who were active during the resistance between 1975-1979 that have handed back their firearms. The civilian and clandestine components of the resistance will not be included in the list of veterans and therefore are not considered in the yet to be approved law by National Parliament. (STL, TP)

Rumors on F-FDTL divisions have no foundation

Commandant F-FDTL, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak told journalists yesterday that rumours about divisions between F-FDTL "Loro Sa'e or Loro-Monu", the East and the West, have no foundation. Ruak said in reality Timor-Leste is multi-ethnic and has many diverse dialects. As an example, he named dialects such as Naueti, Makalero, Makasae, Mambae, etc.

He added that he believes these rumours are merely a curtain to cover up individual and collective

interests in F-FDTL's institutions but he defended F-FDTL by saying that collective interests should involve the needs of the people, not the individual.

Ruak acknowledged that conflicting interests have existed in F-FDTL's institutions but they are trying to resolve the problem "The door is open, if people want to come to negotiate, but if they don't come, we will not go out and search for them because this institution is based on self-dedication to defend the nation's interests."
(STL, TP)

February 4-6, 2006

Horta on TNI sexual violation case

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Jose Ramos Horta has stated that the case of sexual violation that the TNI allegedly committed against a Timorese woman in January in the border area must move forward in order to obtain justice. Speaking to journalists last Thursday, Horta declared that the Timor-Leste Government would be sending the investigation report to the Indonesian Government so that they may understand that the matter is indeed very serious. (TP, STL, DN)

Xanana should continue as RDTL President: Horta

Rumours have begun to arise that Minister of Foreign Affairs and Negotiation Jose Ramos Horta will be a Presidential candidate if President Xanana decides not to run in the upcoming 2007 elections. When asked to confirm however, Horta denied the rumour and said that he has not yet thought about this matter. He said that in his opinion, President Xanana should continue in the position for another five years, as the people still have confidence in him and he is still fit, healthy, and young. (TP)

PNTL members to be dismissed due to undisciplined

Five PNTL officers will lose their positions due to undisciplined behaviour. PNTL General Commander Paulo Martins told journalists last Thursday that

the reasons for dismissal include prolonged absences from work without a valid reason, misuse of weapons, granting illegal entry to an Indonesian police officer and sexual violations. (TP)

There are none to replace Lu-Olo and Alkatiri

Speaking after the opening of Fretilin's (Political Party) district congress in Manatuto district, Jose Maria Reis, the Deputy Secretary-General of Fretilin told media that in the upcoming five years there are no alternative candidates to replace Lu Olo and Mari Alkatiri in their current positions as the President and the Secretary-General of Fretilin Political Party, Timor Post and Diario Nacional reported. He stated that to replace the two current figures in the future, qualified candidates should be sought within the party to move the party forward. Reis added that since Fretilin is a historical political party, Fretilin is the future of Timor-Leste and the other political parties stand no chance of winning in the 2007 election. (STL, DN)

Timor media needs international communities' support

Speaking during a Consultative Group Meeting held at UNOTIL last week, Director of Timor Post, Aderito Hugo da Costa, Deputy Director of Suara Timor-Lorosa'e, Domingos Saldanha, and Virgilio Guterres from Public Broadcasting Services argued that Timor-Leste's media is in need of international support and/or assistance. The three main speakers, supported by a separate presentation by the Director of Internews, Sonny Inbaraj, made the appeal to the international communities' representatives who participated in the meeting. Mr da Costa, Mr Saldanha and Mr Guterres, together with Mr Inbaraj, highlighted the concerns faced by the local media including the lack of infrastructure, human resources, and technical equipment such as computers, photocopiers and printing machines. The Deputy Special Representative of Secretary-General, Anis Bajwa, supported the appeal of the Timor-Leste media actors by asking development partners to provide more attention to ways of assisting Timor-Leste's media in meeting these challenges. (TP)

February 3, 2006

Defamation provision not a danger to democracy

President of the Court of Appeal, Dr. Claudio Ximenes, has expressed his opinion as a jurist that the article on defamation in the Penal Code does not pose a danger to democracy. Speaking to journalists on Thursday after meeting with President Gusmao regarding the Code, Ximenes said that many other countries where democracy is alive and well including Spain, Italy and Germany, have defamation provisions in their law.

He said that there are over three hundred articles in the code, and the article on defamation is just one of these, so it should not be a major concern. He stated that in his opinion the article does not restrict press freedom, curtail citizen's rights, or violate the Constitution. (TP)

Difficulties in filling Ambassador posts

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Jose Ramos Horta has stated that it is difficult to identify people with the capacity to fill several vacant Ambassador posts despite trying for a year to find the appropriate people to fill the positions. The Minister expressed his frustration in filling the Ambassadorial positions for Malaysia, Bangkok, Mozambique, and the Consulate-General in Bali. He said that if it were up to him, he would not take into consideration all the protests against those that have been identified. Since it is up to the President and the Prime Minister to identify suitable candidates, he cannot do anything. (TP)

Don't bend too much towards Indonesia

The recent fatal shooting of three ex-militia at the border has the potential to impact negatively on the Timor-Leste economy. For this reason, the Government is attempting to identify a mechanism that will present a satisfactory solution for the citizens of both countries, in particular the border populations. However, according to Aristides Afonso, Economics lecturer from the

Timor-Leste National University, it is not beneficial to depend too much on Indonesia.

Speaking to TP on Thursday, Afonso explained that if a conflict arises and there is not enough political maturity from either side to resolve the problem appropriately, imports from Indonesia might be cut off. If that were the case, it would be necessary to look for an alternative source of imports, and for this reason it is important not to depend too much on Indonesia. He said that other countries that could be used as possible sources for imports include Australia, the Philippines, and Singapore. (TP)

Martins: "Don't create divisions within UIR

PNTL Inspector General, Paulo Martins appealed to the members of Rapid Intervention Unit not to create divisions based on "Nationalism" within the UIR unit since it is the only unit that exists, JND reported on 03 February. (JND)

Corruption allegations in environment and development ministry

Director of LABEH, Christopher Henry Samson, has reportedly made allegations of corruption within the Ministry of Environment and Development. Mr Samson reportedly stated the accusations to journalists on his way to hand over a report on the corruption to the Office of Inspector-General, Mariano Lopez da Cruz at the Government Palace. The information is a result of observations of activities that occurred within the Ministry. Although Civil Society has no authority to investigate, it has the right to observe and report any suspicions to the Office of Inspector-General for further investigation.

Minister of Environment, Abel Ximenes, responded by stating that it is up to everyone to put forward their evaluation but his Ministry, including his staff, have done 70 to 100 percent of the work. He added that if it is proven that corruption exists, then the person who committed the act should be held accountable or responsible for his/her actions. (JND, STL)

February 2, 2006

Pe Maubere did not call Fretilin Communist

Member of the National Parliament of Fretilin political party, Maria Josi da Costa, clarified that Pe Domingos Maubere did not say in his oration at last week's mass in Same Parish, that Fretilin is Communist and would wipe everyone out if it wins the election, Timor Post reported. MP da Costa said that those published statements in the media are incorrect. Timor Post also printed a brief report on the response of MP Francisco Miranda Branco, who claimed that the incorrect reports of that oration by Pe Domingos Maubere is just a ploy to discredit Fretilin. (TP, STL)

Centralized tender system facilitates corruption

Commission D in the National Parliament, headed by MP Flavio da Silva, has recommended that the Government grant special autonomy to individual ministries or departments to manage their own tender processes on the basis that a centralized tender system can give rise to corruption. The recommendation is based on opinions collected from the local Oecussi population when the Commission visited the region. The population reportedly told the Commission that the tender system currently implemented by the Government is inefficient and bureaucratic. According to a member of the Commission, Paulo Alves Sarmento, a centralized tender system does not only increase the possibility for corruption, but also slows down the implementation of urgent activities. He related an example of funding required for a project to be implemented during the dry season in which the funding was not made available until much later when the wet season had already begun. (STL)

PSD formulates development program

The Social Democratic Party has prepared a Development Program for 2007, should the party be elected to head the Government in the 2007 elections. The program is awaiting approval by the party's National Congress to then be used in the

2007 election campaign. PSD MP Fernando Gusmao told journalists that the program reflects PSD's social democratic ideology. He commented that PSD is neither a left nor a right party, but that it takes positive aspects from both sides to form its development programs. (STL)

Barros on legal system problems

Timor-Leste's legal system became a matter of public focus in 2005. Not only the political leadership, but legal practitioners and the general public questioned the weakness of the system. Many cases were not heard, and communication was a problem in those that were heard. President of the Timor-Leste Lawyers Association Benevides Corriera Barros, told STL that there is some confusion about the type of law system that should be followed here in Timor-Leste as to whether it should be a European Continental, Civil Law, or Common Law system. The result is that a hybrid is being followed in responding to legal issues, without a solution being provided by the National Parliament. He said that the Government is not committed to providing extra attention to the legal system, including ensuring that criminal cases are not suspended for two to three months at a time, and that civil cases are not pending, as they are now in some cases, for up to three years. Barros said that bringing in international legal practitioners does not improve the situation, but actually further complicates the system through the language problem, and the fact that these legal practitioners come from different legal backgrounds. Therefore, he said, Timorese legal practitioners are more useful both in terms of language and the fact that often defendants request that their cases be handled by Timorese nationals as opposed to foreigners. (STL)

Attack on PNTL HQ in Liquica

Over 50 individuals reportedly attacked the PNTL District Headquarter in Liquica on Monday night.

The attack allegedly took place after the police arrested a community member in Liquica Sub-District following a fighting involving the youth on 28 January. They demanded that Police detain both parties involved in the fighting not just one. (RTTL)

Gus Dur support CAVR's report

From Indonesia, RTTL reported that the former Indonesian President Abdurahman Wahid "Gus Dur" reportedly expressed his support for the handing over of CAVR's report to the UN by President Gusmao. Gus Dur also said that the death toll between 1974-1999 in Timor-Leste could be higher than the figure presented in the report. (RTTL)

February 1, 2006

Alkatiri and Lu Olo on power and new generation

Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri has declared that at some stage he will give up his position as Prime Minister, but he will do so in order to hand over the position to the new generation, and not as a result of being forced or pressured to do so. Speaking to STL, the Head of Government spoke about the Penal Code, which is currently awaiting promulgation by the President. The PM also pointed out, that due to an increase in national income in 2005, development programs can now be implemented with ease.

Also speaking to STL, Fretilin President Francisco Guterres alias Lu-Olo said that he would like to rejuvenate Fretilin and hand over power to the new Fretilin generation. He explained that in his opinion, youth are very important for Fretilin, because at some stage they will take over for the current leadership. He said that the leadership is currently considering candidates to be groomed for leadership positions within the party. (STL)

Alkatiri responds to UN concerns on defamation Law

The new defamation law has become a concern of the UN. The Commission of Experts which recently visited Dili as the Prime Minister's initiative on accountability and transparency, has asked the Prime Minister to revisit the defamation law. Responding to these concerns, Alkatiri said that he is disappointed with continued comments from certain parties, including civil society, that can say what they want without any accountability. He explained that the law is intended to make people

accountable for what they say. He added that the law has been approved by the National Parliament and is currently awaiting promulgation by the President. There will be no further review of the law, the Prime Minister stated. (STL)

Alkatiri: Stop criticizing CVA

Prime Minister Alkatiri said the criticism from civil society regarding CVA/TFC is not fair. Alkatiri pointed out that they should look at the MoU that the Government has established with Indonesia from the time Timor-Leste restored its independence on 20 May, 2002.

He cited as an example the Government's decision to establish good ties with Indonesia in the areas of economic, commerce and a joint ministerial to look into various issues including education, assets, health, agriculture and so forth. No one has pointed out that this is a bad politic, the Prime Minister said. He remarked that he can not understand the criticism when the two Governments have established a Commission to look into the truth, adding that the Truth and Friendship Commission was established in the interest of the nation. (TP)

International assistance needed for fragile judiciary

The Timor-Leste judicial system is still weak, and without the necessary human resources, it is necessary to provide training to the judges, prosecutors and public defenders, according to Vice-President of the National Parliament Jacob Fernandes. He said that for this reason, Timor-Leste still needs the assistance of the international community through UNOTIL. Speaking to journalists on behalf of the President of the National Parliament after receiving the report of the Commission of Experts at UNOTIL HQ on Friday, Fernandes said that Timor-Leste is providing continued assistance to the judges, prosecutors and public defenders, with both judicial and language training. (STL)

Political parties abandon population after elections

President of Timor-Leste, Xanana Gusmao said that he has made received many complaints from the

population regarding game-playing by political parties who organize and rally people during the campaign period to get their support and then abandon those populations, never to be seen again, not even to express their appreciation to the voters, Timor Post reported. He then stated that a sound political process needs to be developed in this country to address this situation. President Gusmao said the above while participating in a seminar on democracy held in Lecidere, on Tuesday, January 31 2006. (TP)

Alkatiri does want to respond to West Timor commander

PM Mari Alkatiri declared that he does not want to respond to the statement made by West Timor military commander Coroner Noach Bola, who commented that PM Alkatiri and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Horta are behind the allegations of the recent sexual violence on the border, Timor Post reported. According to reports, the border incident involved Indonesian military personnel and a Timorese woman.

"I will not respond to a statement by a provincial military commander. I am a Prime Minister and not the Governor of Tim-Tim," PM Alkatiri stated, referring to an Indonesian slang term for East Timor. (TP)

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OPINION & ANALYSIS

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Shouldn't this convicted thug be in jail?

Paras Indonesia - February 18, 2006

Roy Tupai — Former East Timorese pro-Indonesia militia leader Eurico Guterres, currently appealing his five-year jail sentence for crimes against humanity, has been elected chairman of National Mandate Party's (PAN) chapter in East Nusa Tenggara province.

He claims he will help PAN win greater support in the 2009 general election. Does he intend to do this by issuing death threats to the electorate, as he did in the months prior to East Timor's referendum on independence? PAN should wise up and

ditch this dangerous thug, who has already served time with rival parties Golkar and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle.

It appears PAN's leaders are grateful to have Guterres on board. He won a landslide victory in the party's provincial leadership election on February 11, picking up 50 of the 67 votes cast at the conclusion of a two-day congress at the Kristal Hotel in Kupang, the main city of West Timor. (West Timor is part of East Nusa Tenggara, which is known locally by the acronym NTT).

Guterres (34), who is close to influential senior Indonesian generals, is the former leader of the feared Aitarak (Thorn) militia group, which unleashed carnage in East Timor in the period surrounding the territory's 1999 vote to secede from Indonesia.

Under strong pressure from the international community to bring Guterres to justice, Indonesian authorities arrested him a couple of times in 2000 on various charges. In April 2001, he was convicted of inciting violence in West Timor and sentenced to six months imprisonment, but ended up serving only 23 days under house detention thanks largely to his powerful military friends. Human rights activists continued to demand he be tried for war crimes, but the military lauded him as a heroic patriot.

In November 2002, Indonesia's special human rights court convicted Guterres of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to 10 years in jail.

Jakarta High Court in July 2004 reduced his sentence to five years. He still remains free pending the Supreme Court's decision on his current appeal. Some reports have said he is supposed to be under city arrest in Jakarta, yet he seems free to travel where he pleases.

Human rights groups in August 2003 accused Guterres of going to remote Papua province to establish the 'Merah Putih' (Red & White) pro-Indonesia militia group to oppose the separatist Free Papua Organization. Media reports last year alleged that Guterres had visited tsunami-hit Aceh province to assemble a unit of his Army-backed militia to combat the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM). The thug strongly denied the

reports, saying he was confined to Jakarta while continuing his appeal against his jail sentence.

Former parties

Guterres had initially been a member of Golkar, the former political vehicle of Suharto. In June 1999, Golkar had selected Guterres to stand for election in the national parliament.

He left Golkar in March 2000 for then vice president Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), which he felt had done the most of any party to help keep East Timor within Indonesia. Megawati in August 2000 appointed him chief of PDI-P's paramilitary youth group, Banteng Pemuda.

Panning for popularity or controversy?

So why has PAN now wooed Guterres? Is the party so desperate for votes that it thinks he will bolster its popularity in predominantly Christian eastern Indonesia?

PAN was founded as a pluralistic and secular party by reformist Muslim leader Amien Rais after the 1998 downfall of former dictator Suharto. Although well known for its consistent anti-corruption stance, the party has failed to become a dominant force in the political arena due to a lack of strong military and populist support.

Appealing mostly to educated urban voters, the party came fifth in the June 1999 general election with just 7.1% of the vote. It fared worse in the April 2004 general election, coming seventh with 6.43% of the vote. The party now holds 52 of the 550 seats in the House of Representatives. Analysts say PAN has lost its pluralist roots over recent years and developed almost exclusively into the political vehicle of the nation's second largest Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah.

Rais is known for shifting his stance on East Timor to suit his political purposes. He resigned from politics after his failure in the 2004 presidential election and was replaced as PAN leader by Sutrisno Bachir in April 2005.

PAN does not seem concerned that it might scare away voters by having Guterres as one of its

members. On the contrary, it seems the party feels he will bring greater support and internal unity.

Deputy secretary general of PAN's central executive board, Muhammad Najib, said Guterres was welcome in the party as long as he followed its rules. He said the former militia leader had long been close to Rais and Bachir, but had only recently joined the party.

He said it was up to the public to determine whether Guterres' involvement in the 1999 violence in East Timor should be seen as a problem. "In my opinion, Eurico was a hero for integration. But the assessment is up to the public."

Najib said PAN was not worried of possible criticism for opening its doors to Guterres. "PAN is an open party. We do not ban anyone from joining. Anyone who wants to exercise his/her political rights in our party is welcomed by us, as long as they have not been legally punished by the courts. We obviously cannot restrict the rights of a citizen to be politically active and become a member of a political party."

When opening the PAN-NTT congress on February 10, party chairman Bachir expressed hope it would take place smoothly without internal conflict. "We must promote the feeling of peace in the organization. PAN-NTT has been small. Don't let there be conflict again that could cause dissent among us," he said.

He emphasized that PAN is not a religion-based party, but is open to all elements of society. "Party members are recruited not only from a certain group [Islam] but from all religions and cultures."

Bachir said PAN's goal is not to seize power but to work in the interests of the people. Therefore, the party's leadership and management should be closer to the people, especially rural communities, rather than focusing solely on urban dwellers, he said.

NTT Governor Piet Tallo, in a speech read out at the congress by his assistant Djidon de Haan, said PAN plays an important role in making "positive corrections" to the provincial government. "In the political situation in NTT, PAN plays a very

important role in guarding the implementation of democratization," he said.

All that swagger

Prior to the election in Kupang, Guterres had attended a PAN cadre training program in Bogor, West Java, over January 27-29. At the end of the program, he told reporters that Rais had personally invited him to join the party that best represented Indonesia. "Since the onset of reform, I have often been directly involved and studied much with friends of Amien Rais since 1998," he said.

After his victory, he said the election had taken place "very democratically" — possibly implying it was not influenced by death threats or bribes. The election was witnessed by central executive board secretary general Zulkifli Hasan.

Guterres said his main priority in his first six months as PAN-NTT chairman would be to improve relations among the party's officials throughout the province. "So far the wheels of the organization have not been turning because the management is not sufficiently harmonious. In the future, I will try to fix this by making it my priority to hold regional meetings for all local PAN branches in NTT. At the latest, by the middle of this year, all of the local branches will have completed regional conferences."

Guterres expressed confidence that PAN-NTT would help the party to win a greater number of seats in parliament in the 2009 general election. He bragged that most of the more than 100,000 former East Timorese citizens living across the border in West Timor would support him.

"I think that in the next general election, PAN will gain big success by receiving a significant number of votes, especially from East Nusa Tenggara," he was quoted as saying by the Media Indonesia daily.

"Not because I am conceited, but at least 104,000 ex-Timor Leste citizens, who remain loyal to the Indonesian people, will likely follow my tracks by channeling their political aspirations through PAN," he said.

Guterres and other former militia leaders in November 2005 formed an organization to "protect the rights and privileges they feel the government they fought for is now denying them". The organization is chaired by Guterres, who complained that Acehese rebels were granted amnesty and financial aid after the August 2005 peace deal with GAM, whereas East Timor's former pro-Jakarta fighters have been largely abandoned since 1999.

"They fought to keep Indonesia intact, risking their lives, but the Indonesian government has ignored their sacrifices," he was quoted as saying by The Jakarta Post daily.

He has announced plans to visit East Timor to promote friendly dialogue with Indonesia, but the trip might not happen given that his old country has indicted him for rights abuses.

Guterres was also in the headlines when he condemned the January 6 killing by East Timorese Police of three ex-militiamen in East Timor. "On behalf of thousands of former East Timorese refugees in Indonesia, we strongly condemn this brutal and inhumane act by the East Timor border patrol," he said.

He said the shootings were a violation of human rights and must therefore be resolved under prevailing laws.

Indonesia seems to be under little international pressure to put Guterres in jail. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer back in June 2001 said it was "essential for Indonesia's credibility that it moves quickly and decisively against Guterres". He has since dropped such rhetoric.

Xanana, SBY let shame file slide

Weekend Australian - February 18, 2006

Sian Powell, Tampak Siring, Bali — The presidents of East Timor and Indonesia agreed yesterday to publicly ignore the conclusions of a damning UN-

sanctioned report that found Jakarta committed war crimes during its 24-year occupation of the former Portuguese colony.

East Timor's Xanana Gusmao and Indonesia's Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono would not discuss the findings of the report, which recommended that Indonesia and Australia, among other countries, pay reparations to the fledgling nation.

Mr Gusmao refused to comment on the 2500-page report, and Dr Yudhoyono said the two nations had instead decided to focus on their Truth and Friendship Commission, a body that has frequently been criticised as merely cosmetic.

Indonesia postponed a meeting with East Timor following widespread publicity over the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation report, which found up to 180,000 East Timorese died as a direct result of the Indonesian occupation.

Mr Gusmao, the former guerilla leader, was interviewed for the report, and a letter he wrote to the UN in 1982 is quoted in which he accuses the Indonesian military of atrocities. Dr Yudhoyono is also in the report, listed as the commander of an army battalion stationed in Dili in the 1980s.

The report found the Indonesian military had used rape and starvation as weapons of war, and that leaders in the highest ranks of the military were guilty of condoning atrocities.

Mr Gusmao presented the report to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan last month, but he has publicly opposed its findings, considering cordial relations with Indonesia more important than a potentially impotent quest for justice.

The two leaders' meeting at the state palace in the Balinese city of Tampak Siring yesterday was their first since the UN report's release.

Dr Yudhoyono would not confirm whether or not he had read the report. "I fully understand how the handover of the document was done by President Xanana Gusmao to the United Nations," Dr Yudhoyono said.

"Again, reading the speech of President Xanana

Gusmao before the UN Security Council, I fully understand also that our commitment in continuing the process in having a Truth and Friendship Commission and finding solutions to our past is still our choice."

East Timorese Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta criticised the report's recommendations as "outlandish; with no connection to reality". He criticised as unrealistic the recommendation that Indonesia, the US, Britain and Australia — because it assisted Indonesia's military during the occupation — and other nations pay reparations.

"How in reality could a leader from East Timor, a foreign minister for example, go to Australia and ask for compensation?" he asked. Without Australia's help in 1999, he said, "East Timor would not be free today".

Based on interviews with almost 8000 witnesses from East Timor's 13 districts and 65 sub-districts, as well as on statements from refugees over the border in West Timor, the report also relies on Indonesian military papers, and intelligence from international sources.

It documents a litany of massacres, thousands of summary executions of civilians, and the torture of 8500 East Timorese.

The report notes that Western-supplied aircraft, including US-supplied planes, were used against East Timorese civilians, and concludes that the Indonesian military probably killed five journalists, including two Australians, at the East Timorese town of Balibo in 1975.

The military violence in East Timor culminated in the 1999 reprisals for the independence vote, when the Indonesian military and its militia proxies rampaged through East Timor, killing as many as 1500 East Timorese and destroying most towns.

Indonesia has yet to punish those responsible for the violence in East Timor, and of 18 defendants tried by an ad hoc tribunal in Jakarta, only one has not since been exonerated — and he is free pending an appeal.

Making amends in Timor Leste

Jakarta Post - February 1, 2006

Joseph Nevins, New York — The logic of reparations for war-related crimes has a long history. It has become especially powerful in the aftermath of the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust as a way to address both past and associated present-day injustices.

Such thinking led the United Nations Security Council to impose a US\$52 billion reparations bill on Saddam Hussein's government in 1991 following its illegal invasion and occupation of Kuwait. Like reasoning should now lead the international community to require something similar of Indonesia and its overseas patrons for their collective crimes in East Timor.

This is the effective demand of an official East Timorese commission of inquiry's report handed over to the United Nations last Friday. The approximately 2,500-page document provides chilling detail of many of the worst atrocities committed during Jakarta's reign of terror in the former Portuguese colony. But most explosive is the truth commission's recommendation that Indonesia and its Western backers provide reparations for their roles in the country's plight.

It was thirty years ago this past December that Indonesia's military launched a full-scale invasion of East Timor. The war and subsequent occupation resulted in tens of thousands of deaths, widespread rape and sexual enslavement of women and girls, and systematic destruction of the territory's buildings and infrastructure in the waning days of Jakarta's presence. Today, independent East Timor is one of the world's poorest countries.

The Western powers greatly enabled Indonesia's crimes in East Timor. Indeed, their collective assistance was decisive in allowing the 1975 invasion to go forth and for the occupation to continue until late-1999.

Declassified government documents reveal that Jakarta was sufficiently worried about how the Western countries it depended upon would react to its aggression that Soeharto, Indonesia's dictator, vetoed earlier plans to invade East Timor. Only after consulting Australia and Britain, both of which made clear that they would not oppose the assault, and, most important, receiving the green light from the United States the day prior to the invasion, did Soeharto launch an all-out attack.

Over the almost-24 years of brutality that followed, the three Western governments and many allies — including Japan, France, and Canada — together provided invaluable diplomatic cover and many billions of dollars worth of weapons, military equipment and training, and economic aid to Jakarta.

Despite the atrocities and the resulting hardships in East Timor, neither Indonesia nor its Western accomplices have apologized for their actions, never mind make amends. Iraq, however, has paid almost \$20 billion — mostly to Kuwait's state oil company and government — and, shockingly, continues to pay despite the end of Saddam's government.

Irrespective of the merits of forcing the Iraqi people to pay for the crimes of a dictatorial regime — especially one long backed by Washington and London until the Kuwait invasion — the UN reparations set an important precedent, one not easily ignored.

While wealthy Western countries could easily afford to provide compensation, any reparations regime applied to Jakarta should avoid the many pitfalls of that imposed on Iraq so it does not hurt the Indonesian majority. Instead, it could require that Soeharto, now living in comfortable retirement, turn over to East Timor some of his billions of dollars in ill-gotten fortune. Similarly, rich Indonesian generals and businesses that effectively stole much of East Timor's wealth could be compelled to provide restitution.

No less than President George W. Bush has articulated the need to hold accountable direct perpetrators of gross crimes, as well as those complicit in them. Speaking to Congress nine days

after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, Bush held the Afghan government co-responsible for the terror: aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder," he argued. Fortunately, unlike in the case of al-Qaeda, no one is advocating military attacks against those responsible for the crimes committed in East Timor, only that they acknowledge their sins and pay reparations to a tiny country that they devastated.

Regardless of the demand's pragmatism, it is important to make for ethical reasons. And to the extent the demand is met, it would provide critical long-term resources to help the East Timorese eliminate the pervasive and profound poverty that now afflicts their country. It would also strengthen global accountability mechanisms, and possibly make future would-be perpetrators of atrocities and their partners-in-crime think twice before they act.

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