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NEWS & ISSUES

Activists hail Indonesia's inclusion on rights body

Jakarta Post - May 11, 2006

Kurniawan Hari, Jakarta — Activists in Jakarta welcomed Indonesia's election to the newly established United Nations Human Rights Council on Wednesday and called for the government to further improve rights protection in the country.

Calling the election a success, noted human rights campaigner Todung Mulya Lubis said Indonesia's election showed the international community appreciated the country's commitment to improving human rights. "(However) the government must take concrete action (on human rights) otherwise it will lose credibility," he told The Jakarta Post here Wednesday.

At a Tuesday session, the UN General Assembly elected Indonesia along with 46 other nations to the council, which replaces the old UN Human Rights Commission. Sixty-seven countries competed for the 47 places on the council.

Winning 165 votes from a total of 191 delegates at the session, Indonesia won the second-highest

number of votes in the council's 13-member Asian section, after India with 176 votes.

This achievement, Todung said, should drive the Indonesian government to deal seriously with unresolved human rights abuse cases in Papua, Poso, Aceh and Jakarta. "We must not work half-heartedly," he said.

Fellow rights campaigner Rafendy Jamin said he hoped Indonesia's membership on the UN council would encourage ministers here to a greater understanding of human rights issues. "The election (of Indonesia) to the UN council is not only the business of the foreign ministry. It should encourage all institutions to respect human rights values," he told the Post.

Rafendy suggested the government welcome UN special rapporteurs into the country to examine its human rights protections. "The government seems to have closed its door to UN special rapporteurs," Rafendy said.

Non-governmental group Migrant CARE urged the government to prove its commitment to human rights protection by working to improve the conditions of migrant workers.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Desra Percaya said the election of Indonesia to the council meant the country was shouldering more responsibilities. "We are now responsible not only for domestic human rights protection, but also for the issue in the international sphere," Desra said.

Indonesia's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva, Makarim Wibisono, would deal with the day-to-day affairs of the council, he said.

Government allocates 3 trillion for infrastructure fund

Jakarta Post - May 15, 2006

Urip Hudiono, Jakarta — The government is setting aside at least Rp 3 trillion (some US\$300 million) in funds from this year's state budget to help

kick off financing for infrastructure development around the country, in partnership with private investors.

The funds will be used for the direct financing of several planned infrastructure projects, and as a guarantee for others that will be financed by the private sector, the Finance Ministry's Director General of the Treasury, Mulia P. Nasution, told reporters Friday.

"Consider it an initial pool of working capital for infrastructure development," he said. "It's the government pitching in to the projects' financing, even if it's just a small percentage of the necessary funds. With this, we hope private investors will be assured of our commitment (to the projects) and be attracted to participate more."

Mulia explained that the government will set up a revolving fund for infrastructure development with the Rp 3 trillion, and expects to be able to support the financing of at least three or four major infrastructure projects this year.

The use of revolving funds is a common scheme in financing major infrastructure projects. It works by pooling the minimum required capital for a project's initial construction. As the project is then offered to other investors, and revenues from user charges are derived in the process, the fund is then replenished to pay for other projects.

Part of the Rp 3 trillion will also be allocated as insurance for several projects carried out by private investors, Mulia further explained.

Mulia did not elaborate on the projects, however, or how much will be allocated for the revolving fund and the guarantee fund, respectively. Since the money is to be taken from the state budget, the move will first have to be discussed with the House of Representatives' finance commission during the budget's usual half-year assessment and revision schedule.

According to a government estimate, Indonesia needs at least \$145 billion in the five years ending in 2009 to develop its infrastructure, the lack of which has hampered the country's economic growth. Because embezzling from infrastructure

projects is common, many of the country's vital roads, ports and power plants have deteriorated from poor quality and maintenance, also affecting the economy.

The cash-strapped government may be able to provide only 20 percent of the necessary funds, pinning its hopes on private investments for the remaining financing. It held an Infrastructure Summit last year offering 91 projects worth \$22.5 billion to investors.

Progress has been slow, however, with investors taking up fewer than half of the offered projects amid lingering doubts about Indonesia's investment climate. The recent high inflation and high interest rates have also been unfavorable for investments in the infrastructure sector.

This has prompted the government to issue a package of policies to accelerate infrastructure development and improve the investment climate. These include simpler land-acquisition procedures, as well as fiscal incentives and risk-sharing schemes for infrastructure projects.

Hundreds flee from active Merapi volcano

Associated Press - May 13, 2006

Irwan Firdaus, Jakarta — Indonesian authorities on Saturday ordered the immediate evacuation of thousands of people who for weeks have refused to heed the ominous rumblings of Mount Merapi and the burning lava oozing from its mouth.

Hundreds of people began fleeing the 9,700-foot peak after authorities put the area on highest alert, having observed two days of steady lava flow. Bambang Dwiyanto, the head of the region's volcanology center, said an eruption may be imminent.

"Because there has been constant lava flows that cause hot gases, we have raised the status to the highest level," Dwiyanto said.

The crater had been relatively quiet for years

until it began rumbling and spewing clouds of black ash a few weeks ago. On Saturday, experts recorded 27 volcanic tremors, said Ratdomo Purbo, who heads an observation post on Merapi. He said the mountain belched clouds of hot ash at least 14 times over the course of the day. Lava flows had reached nearly a mile down its slopes, he said.

Officials were using buses and trucks to relocate women, children and elderly to shelters set up in schools and government buildings elsewhere on the densely populated Central Java province.

Many people had already been evacuated from homes closest to the crater, but thousands who live further down the mountain had refused to leave. Officials have said as many as 7,000 people remained to be evacuated.

Even after Saturday's warning, some farmers insisted on staying, reluctant to leave previous livestock and crops. "We will not leave soon," said one cattle farmer who declined to give his name.

Merapi is one of at least 129 active volcanoes in Indonesia, part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire" — a series of fault lines stretching from the Western Hemisphere through Japan and Southeast Asia. Many people who live in the mountain's shadow believe that spirits watch over the peak and will warn them of an eruption.

Although most Indonesians are Muslim, many also follow animist beliefs and worship ancient spirits. Often at full moons, people trek to crater rims and throw in rice, jewelry and live animals to appease the volcanoes.

Merapi last erupted in 1994, sending out a searing cloud of gas that burned 60 people to death. About 1,300 people were killed when it erupted in 1930. The volcano is about 20 miles from the Yogyakarta, a city of 1 million, and about 250 miles southeast of the capital Jakarta.

ACEH

Foreign monitors to stay in Aceh until September

Agence France Presse - May 12, 2006

Banda Aceh — The European Union has agreed to extend the mandate of a peace monitoring mission in Indonesia's Aceh for three months until September, the mission said Friday.

Indonesia had requested an extension for the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), composed of personnel from the EU and five regional states, to enable it to oversee local elections in August.

The AMM which was due to leave Aceh on June 15 will now depart "no later than 15 September," it said in a statement.

"The parties to the Helsinki MoU (memorandum of understanding) are aware that this extension must be the last one," it said, referring to the deal thrashed out between rebel separatists and Jakarta signed in Finland last year. "Consequently, it is now incumbent upon the government and the parliament of Indonesia to ensure that the Law on the Governing of Aceh is enacted as soon as possible," it said.

Parliament is currently debating the law, which will provide the province with wide-ranging autonomy and pave the way for elections in line with the peace deal. The government has already missed a tentative deadline of March 31 for passing the law, but officials have said they hoped it would pass this month.

Under the peace pact, prompted by the devastating 2004 tsunami which killed 168,000 people in Aceh, the rebel Free Aceh Movement (GAM) agreed to drop its demand for independence in return for partial self rule, ending three decades of conflict.

Nearly 200 monitors were initially stationed in Aceh after the pact was signed last August, but about 100 left in March when the mission was scaled back.

In Aceh, Islamic law seen as key to rebuilding society

Associated Press - May 10, 2006

Scott Neuman, Jantho — Head in hands and tears welling in her eyes, Syarifah Binti Jauhari says she knows what she did was against the will of God: She tried to support her family in the tsunami-ravaged province of Aceh by selling liquor.

But 10 months in jail — a sentence imposed under newly enforced Islamic laws — is more than the mother of five can bear. “My family needs me,” she said, noting that her husband is ill and her youngest child only 3. “I miss them so much.”

Aceh faced the brunt of the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami that killed more than 131,000 in the province alone — out of a total of 216,000 dead from the storm across Asia — and many here believe the catastrophe was an act of divine vengeance against a people who had strayed too far from religious piety.

For them, implementing Shariah law was a way of putting things right and appeasing Allah. Others feel adhering to strict Islamic traditions is key to restoring the moral and social fabric that was swept away by the massive waves.

But Jauhari, who has seen her family only twice since she was locked up five months ago, is bitter. She said the rules appear to be enforced arbitrarily and without regard to personal circumstances. And, that women are targeted more frequently than men.

“I was the family breadwinner, I was the only one making money,” the 36-year-old said, noting that her husband was a heavy drinker who quit only recently after he became sick. And while other women also have been arrested for selling liquor — since drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam — Jauhari has so far received the harshest sentence.

“This is not justice,” she said in an interview in the warden’s office, wiping away tears with her white traditional headscarf, or jilbab.

The federal government agreed to allow Sharia law in Aceh four years ago as part of a peace settlement to end three decades of separatist conflict in this religiously conservative corner of Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim nation.

But the province only began enforcing the laws last year after Islamic scholars and villagers started putting pressure on authorities, said H. Ziauddin Ahmad, deputy of the Shariah office in the provincial capital Banda Aceh. In the chaos that followed the tsunami "people were looking to us for guidance," he said.

The Shariah courts — long already engaged in matters of marriage and property — began meting out criminal punishments ranging from public floggings with a rattan cane for unlawful contact between unmarried men and women, to imprisonment for gambling or selling alcohol.

A special police force now roams the streets in patrols aimed at putting down behavior deemed offensive to Islam: Since the tsunami, some 150 cases have been heard. "Women in tight clothes are the Devil!" warned one recent banner displayed in the heart of the capital.

For those facing Shariah charges, justice is swift and certain. There are no lawyers, and no right to face accusers. Investigations typically take no more than a month and the courts have a nearly 100 percent conviction rate. That's because the cases are solid, Shariah authorities contend.

Ahmad describes the need for at least two male witnesses or four women to bring a trial — the Quran recognizes that "a woman's power of observation is not as good as a man's," he explained.

In perhaps the most celebrated Shariah case — known locally simply as "Romeo and Juliet" — authorities nabbed an unmarried couple for displaying their affections in the open. Romeo endured 12 lashes on the back, Juliet got nine. The sentences were carried out before a public audience at a local mosque and administered by a white robed and hooded figure.

But by standards of Quranic Shariah, caning is a relatively mild measure, and authorities say they have no intention of enforcing the more severe punishments, such as stoning and amputations.

Some people argue authorities are being too lenient. "I don't think caning is enough. Seven times, what's that? Nothing," said Yuniar, a 23-

year-old woman who, like many Indonesians, uses only one name.

"But Shariah has helped," she said, sitting with her 2-year-old daughter in a Banda Aceh park. "Before you could see in the market everywhere that women were wearing tank tops and tight jeans, but not now."

Others note that justice is being unevenly distributed. "We feel that Shariah is directed mainly at women and the poor," said Sufriyani Ayub, staff media officer for Flower Aceh, an organization working to economically empower women.

She said her organization supports Shariah "in principle," but in almost the same breath added that those opposed to the changes — especially women — are afraid to speak up. They don't want to be accused of being un-Islamic, others note.

Ayub especially objects to the humiliating aspect of the public punishments, explaining that when Shariah police round up women for not wearing jilbabs, "they put them in a truck and parade them around town for everyone to see."

As for Jauhari, the imprisoned mother of five, the shame of her incarceration is the least of her worries. "The only concern I have is how to raise my children. I don't care what anyone else thinks," she said.

[Associated Press writer Febry Orida contributed to this report from Banda Aceh.]

Bireuen residents demand ratification of Aceh law

Aceh Kita - May 11, 2006

Halim Mubary & Armia AM, Bireuen — Thousands of Bireuen residents from the 17 sub-districts that make up the regency, inundated the grounds of the Bireuen Grand Mosque on Thursday May 11 to hold a peaceful action to oversee the Draft Law on Aceh Government (RUU-PA). A similar action was also held in Lhokseumawe.

The action, which was initiated by the Aceh Referendum Information Center (SIRA), was aiming to garner support from the people of Bireuen to oversee the RUU-PA.

Protesters began entering the city of Bireuen at around 9am causing traffic jams for around 20 minutes on inner-city roads such as the route between Banda Aceh and Medan and Jl. Gayo.

The departed from their respective sub-districts using dozens of trucks, motorbikes and private vehicles. The protest which concentrated at the Bireuen Grand Mosque included speeches from a number of SIRA leaders. They also put up a number of banners and posters demanding that the Acehnese version of the RUU-PA that was submitted to Jakarta by the Aceh Regional House of Representatives be ratified immediately.

In one speech, SIRA leader Faisal Ridha invited all members of Acehnese society to firmly unite in overseeing and struggling for the RUU-PA in accordance with the wishes of the Acehnese people. "Let us together maintain the peace process that is still incomplete in this year by urging the RUU-PA special committee to ratify the law as soon as possible and not by discarding the articles within it, that in the end could damage the Acehnese people themselves", Ridha told the thousands of protesters.

Meanwhile Anwar Ebtadi, the field martial for the action, said that the protest was held as a part of the momentum to safeguard the results of the Helsinki agreement as contained in the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding and its draft that is currently being mulled over by the House of Representatives so that it does not deviate from its target. "Because, if the RUU-PA is weakened significantly, then it will mean the same thing as injuring the feelings of the Acehnese people", he said speaking to Aceh Kita.

The protest, which ended with the afternoon call to prayer, was also attended by representatives of the Aceh Monitoring Mission for Bireuen district. According to Ebtadi, a similar action was also held on the same day in Lhokseumawe — also to oversee the RUU-PA.

Not campaigning for independence

Meanwhile, the chairperson of the SIRA presidium council, Muhammad Nazar, said that the protest, which was initiated by SIRA, was not campaigning for or demanding independence, but only to oversee and demand the immediate ratification of the Acehese version of the RUU-PA.

Nazar said that if the RUU-PA that is eventually ratified does not pay heed to the wishes of Acehese society, there is a good possibility that the law will be rejected. "I am certain that if it is not in accordance with the people's wishes and cuts into the authority of the Aceh government, there is a good possibility it will be rejected by the people and GAM [Free Aceh Movement]", said Nazar when speaking with Aceh Kita on Wednesday.

The former political prisoner who was once incarcerated in the Malang Correctional Institution in East Java, said that SIRA now has a program to oversee the peace process and the deliberations of the RUU-PA and is not campaigning for Acehese independence. "With regard to the peaceful actions held by the public, they are to demand the immediate ratification of the RUU-PA. And these actions are taking place everywhere", said the former lecturer from the Ar-Raniry State Institute of Islamic Studies in Banda Aceh. [dzie]

[Translated by James Balowski.]

Don't let the Acehese down again, government told

Jakarta Post - May 10, 2006

M. Taufiqurrahman, Jakarta — Efforts to achieve a lasting peace in Aceh could be spoiled should the government and the House of Representatives backtrack in the yet-to-be-passed bill on Aceh governance, an observer and a politician warn.

A political researcher from the Institute for Studies on Democracy and Civilian Rights, Agung Widjaya, said the Acehese people wanted their aspirations accommodated in the bill.

"The Acehese are now consumed by optimism that the bill on Aceh governance will accommodate their

demands. Jakarta should not spoil this, because it will only breed a stronger resistance movement in the future," Agung told a discussion Tuesday organized by the Partnership on Governance Reform group.

Agung, who has spent much of his time building a grassroots democratic network in Aceh, said in spite of such optimism there was a deep-seated suspicion among the Acehnese that they were still being manipulated by the central government.

"An allegation that members of the House of Representatives Special Committee on the Aceh governance bill have taken bribes and the fact that a legislator from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) will be appointed to head a working committee in the Pansus, only strengthens this suspicion," he said.

The PDI-P faction has from the outset opposed the deliberations on the bill currently before the House. The committee has already completed discussions on 70 percent of the bill, substance-wise, and is expected to wrap up the deliberations soon.

Acehnese lawmaker Farhan Hamid of the National Mandate Party (PAN) said many Acehnese based their suspicions on several issues where they believed the government had backslid on key policies that granted special rights to the province.

"The administration of president Abdurrahman Wahid produced a law that gave Sabang Island off the western tip of Aceh special status as a free trade zone, but later there was a decision to diminish this status and now Sabang is only being made a free port," Farhan said.

There were numerous other cases where the government was reluctant to grant special rights to Aceh as mandated by the law, he said.

To prevent such a reversal in policy from recurring, Farhan said the committee and the government needed to formulate clearly defined provisions on Aceh's special status.

"There are already laws that will contravene provisions in the Aceh governance bill, such as the laws on ports, fisheries and forestry," Farhan

said.

Aceh students open coordination post to monitor draft law

Aceh Kita - May 9, 2006

Banda Aceh — Students from the Aceh Democratic Network (Jaringan Demokrasi Aceh, JDA) opened a coordination post at the Banda Aceh City Park on Tuesday May 9 to guard the Draft Law on Aceh Government (RUU-PA)

Students at the post have erected banners demanding the immediate ratification of the Acehnese version of the RUU-PA. In addition to this, they have also laid out a white cloth to collect signatures in support of the ratification of the draft law.

Many members of the public have also listed their complaints over the issue on the white cloth. The spokesperson of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) was also seen adding his signature on the petition.

Rusli Sulaiman, one of the Banda Aceh residents who took part in the signing, said he hopes that the House of Representatives (DPR) will soon ratify the draft law and that it will accommodate the wishes of the Acehnese people. "I urge [the DPR] to immediately ratify the RUU-PA", said Sulaiman who is a former member of the Banda Aceh Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) after adding his signature to the petition.

In Sulaiman's view, the increasing delays in the ratification of the draft law are creating uncertainty over the draft. "This is truly ironic. Is there an attempt to slow it up, so that it will continue to fail (to be ratified)", he asked. "We hope that the DPRD has not been lulled to sleep by the Jakarta's gentle enticements", he said.

The post coordinator Rahmat Djailani meanwhile said that the post — that is located in front of the Great Baiturrahman Mosque — was established to garner the wishes and support of the Acehnese public over the RUU-PA. "The white cloth that we

have prepared, can be used by the public to convey their wishes", said Djailani when speaking with Aceh Kita.

When the cloth has been filled with signatures and comments, it will then be handed over to the DPR in Jakarta. "This will also be an attempt on our part to pressure Jakarta, so that the RUU-PA is ratified as quickly as possible in accordance with the wishes of the Acehnese people", added the general secretary of Aceh Student Solidarity for the People (SMUR).

Student say they will keep the post open until the draft law is ratified. [dzie]

[Translated by James Balowski.]

'Creation of new provinces in Aceh unnecessary'

Jakarta Post - May 9, 2006

The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) will have its term extended until August pending completion of deliberation on a bill on Aceh government which will provide the legal basis for the first direct elections ever held in Aceh.

AMM chairman Pieter Feith spoke with The Jakarta Post's Tiarma Siboro and Dwi Atmanta on the current political affairs in the province, nine months after a peace deal was struck to end three decades of conflict there.

Question: How do you see the implementation of the Aceh peace accord, especially the reintegration of former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels into society?

I think it is going very well. The government has been very generous in making it work with financial support for the ex-GAM combatants, prisoners and victims of the conflict. Our assessment is that the whole process is moving forward, and a lot of ex-GAM combatants are taking part in civil society and the local economy, and they have given up the armed struggle.

Now, the economy is still weak in Aceh, you must

understand that. There is still unemployment, and of course, there is a level of destruction after the tsunami. But that is not part of the peace process; that is something that needs to be addressed as part of the reconstruction, and the European Union is providing assistance together with the local and international community to help ex-GAM combatants find new jobs.

How do you think the government and the local administration should deal with job opportunities for ex-GAM members?

The government has to facilitate an economic climate, whereby jobs can be created. I think training is very important. We train people to have new skills. The government is also expected to provide farmland and people will get the opportunity to try and start small businesses.

And I think that it is very important also that the elections are being held and that the new government will then have the responsibility of overcoming all of the issues.

The AMM has invited a Swedish legal advisor to review some pending cases regarding amnesty for GAM members. How is it going?

Yes, they — the (Swedish) judge, Malik (Mahmood), who represents GAM, and Minister (Hamid) Awaluddin, who represents the government — have started working. There are about 65 cases of disputed amnesty, some obvious problems. Hopefully we can solve them by the end of June. We have to look at each case individually. We have to see if amnesty is possible in cases where the inmates are ex-GAM operators.

The condition for amnesty corresponds to the presidential decree issued on August 29 (last year). You know that being a ex-GAM combatant is a criteria for amnesty. Basically, people who were not committed to GAM activities will not be awarded amnesty. Worse yet, if they committed terrorist acts, then the minister will not grant them amnesty. Actually, I think we can reduce the list of disputed cases in the agreement between the government and the GAM, and if that is not possible, I will have to take a decision.

Do you think that debate over the bill on Aceh

government at the House of Representatives may affect the upcoming election and the future of peace in Aceh?

I regret that it (the deliberation) takes so long. I think it would be better if it could be concluded because it should be our aim to exit. I think people are very nervous about our service being extended. But you know that our presence must be extended because the law has not been established. I hope the legislature can conclude the bill quickly, so that we can hold the elections no later than August.

I think the process is going well so far. It again confirms that the future of Aceh lies firmly within the Republic of Indonesia and they (the government and the GAM) are happy with that.

There is an article in the bill that allows for the creation of new provinces in Aceh. What is your comment?

The MOU states that Aceh's borders correspond with the border agreement of June 1956. So, I agree with the government that the creation of new provinces will not be a helpful response. And I think it will more important to develop a democratic environment in the election of governor and the local legislature.

But to create new provinces, what would be the purpose of that?

I had a discussion with people who are behind this and there is a feeling of neglect (of the peace accord) among the Gayo people or some in highland areas, but you can't improve that by other means or by creating a new province. At this moment, I think it would not be helpful. It would be against the MOU. Such a policy will be decided by the elected legislature, though I don't see why it is necessary. A policy on the creation of new provinces has been established in Papua, has it brought a positive development? So, let's think twice.

The demand for new provinces in Aceh surfaces as not all Acehnese support GAM's struggle.

Let's be positive. Let's be reasonable. We have democracy, and it works very well. Everybody

should be very proud.

If there would be a GAM governor or a GAM vice governor, will that make people very nervous?

If the majority of the Acehnese support GAM, they will vote for GAM. I think as long as there is a discussion area, as long as GAM remains within the Republic of Indonesia and as long as there is no doubt that they will continue staying within the Republic of Indonesia, I think we have to be positive.

I know there are people who criticize the MOU, who are not happy with it, but we have to see that the ongoing peace process in Aceh is a unique opportunity, so we have to think in a positive way.

WEST PAPUA

Two dead after residents, police clash in Papua

Associated Press - May 15, 2006

Jakarta — Two people were killed and six injured Monday after police clashed with villagers defending a district chief charged with corruption in Indonesia's Papua province, police said Monday.

Police were questioning 139 people after the violence in Wamena, the capital of the mountainous district of Jayawijaya, said Col. Kartono Wangsadisastira, a police spokesman.

A mob of about 200 indigenous Papuans attacked police and prosecutors after hearing they planned to detain David Hubi, a district chief who has evaded a summons for trial six times.

Wamena is about 3,300 kilometers (2,050 miles) east of the capital, Jakarta.

About 200 indigenous Papuans attacked police and prosecutors after hearing that authorities planned to detain David Hubi, a district chief who has evaded a summons for trial six times.

Police opened fire on the crowd after they were attacked with arrows, daggers and other traditional weapons, Kartono said.

"The clash was inevitable," he said. "All the victims were civilians and hit by bullets." Police were holding 111 men and 28 women at a local police station.

Avoiding the real West Papua

Melbourne Age - May 15, 2006

Scott Burchill — The arrival of 43 West Papuan asylum seekers in northern Australia earlier this year pressed the pause button on the cosy relationship struck recently between political elites in Canberra and Jakarta.

Despite their common opposition to separatism in West Papua, both governments bungled their responses to this latest challenge to bilateral goodwill.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono believed a quiet phone call to Prime Minister John Howard would circumvent Australia's formal processes for assessing refugee claims. How could the Indonesian embassy in Canberra have offered such misleading advice to its Government?

The Australian Government thought it could grant temporary protection visas to 42 West Papuans because they faced "a well-founded fear of persecution", without discussing serious crimes that were still being committed in their province after Indonesia's alleged transition to democracy.

Predictably, civilian "reformers" in Indonesia feigned outrage and fanned the flames of nationalism to reassure "hardliners" in the parliament and military that their commercial privileges in West Papua weren't under threat.

Canberra offered to reprise offshore processing, both to dissuade West Papuans from leaving the province — politically and physically — and to placate Jakarta.

Despite the crisis-like atmosphere generated in some media circles, these actions should be seen as perfunctory responses by two governments with

the same political objective. To the extent that there is a minor diplomatic disruption over the issue, both sides will soon get over it.

More interesting are the strategies devised by those faithful servants of state power in Australia who habitually defend Indonesia against charges that it mistreats its citizens. Their task is two-fold. To divert attention from the source of the problem — continuing human rights violations and political repression in West Papua perpetrated by the Indonesian military (TNI). And to avoid asking the only question that needs to be posed — what do the West Papuans want?

The most popular approach is to blame the messenger. According to Paul Sheehan in The Sydney Morning Herald, the problem is a result of "yet another intervention by Australian ideological activists", including "the Greens and the ideological left" who "continue to wage ideological war on Indonesia". If not for this "insurgency-mongering", the "patient, low-profile effort by the Australian Government to obtain... better governance for the people of Papua" might have succeeded.

If Canberra has been trying to help the West Papuans, its efforts have certainly been low profile. Some might say subterranean. Few, if any West Papuans have noticed them, though they understand that Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Prime Minister John Howard are more committed to West Papua's retention within Indonesia than they are. If Sheehan believes people are risking their lives to leave the territory at the urging of their Australian supporters, rather than fleeing TNI violence and repression, his brain has been captured by the Jakarta lobby.

In similar need of de-programming is Gerard Henderson (also in The Sydney Morning Herald), who manages to comment on the issue without even mentioning Indonesian state terrorism in West Papua — a bit like discussing the Israeli-Palestinian dispute without referring to the occupation of the West Bank. He implies that TNI crimes are fantasies of the Greens and "the extreme left". For conservatives such as Henderson, concerns about human rights abuses constitute "megaphone diplomacy" and "symbolic politics".

Unlike Sheehan and Henderson, Greg Sheridan in The Australian has noticed something unsavoury in the territory, although his admonition that "Indonesia hasn't ruled West Papua very well" won't deny him another friendly chat with Yudhoyono. He also blames the messengers with his claim that "outsiders who encourage an independence movement will only be encouraging people to get themselves killed". How this could happen in a democracy is not explained, nor does he consider present death rates and oppression in West Papua a subject worthy of examination or comment.

In a turgid commentary, Sheridan's stablemate, Paul Kelly, also thinks the issue is "the moralism and resentment of Indonesia entrenched in our appeasement mind-set", rather than the violence of the Indonesian state. At the comic end of the Murdoch empire, Andrew Bolt accuses "fat-bottomed 'Free Papua' critics" of a "Noble Savage fantasy" and "Indonesia bashing", for raising concerns about the treatment of West Papuans. In Bolt's view, Indonesia is about to fragment, so no sympathy should be shown to asylum seekers who "slid ashore on Cape York" and were subsequently granted protection visas by "some anonymous Immigration Department official". If it wasn't for the "meddling" Greens, there would be no issue.

The problem, apparently, isn't the crimes. It's their exposure. Or perhaps it's our ethical shortcomings. According to Indonesia expert Ed Aspinall, "advocates of the Papua cause need to examine their motives to ensure they are not also partly acting on the basis of unexamined fears and prejudices". Support for freedom and opposition to killing and torture in West Papua is apparently incomprehensible and merely evidence of an indifference to the plight of those outside the province.

Even more bizarre is Amanda Vanstone's claim that "separatism is a toxic cause" and evidence of "racist sentiment". Stigmatising people who are fleeing what her own department agreed was persecution is a very confused and shameful act, to put it mildly. To display an ignorance of how the modern political world has been shaped is just embarrassing.

State terrorism in West Papua is immoral, illegal and should be immediately terminated. It is the primary source of separatism in the province.

Diverting attention from the crimes to those who want them stopped may please both governments but it only ensures that the abuses will continue.

[Scott Burchill is senior lecturer in international relations at Deakin University.]

Papuan woman 'forced' to demand daughter's return

ABC Lateline - May 11, 2006

Reporter: Steve Marshall

Tony Jones: Lateline can reveal disturbing claims tonight by a Papuan woman who says she was forced by Indonesian intelligence officers to make a public statement — or be killed.

When a boatload of Papuan asylum seekers arrived in Australian territory in January, among them was a little girl called Anike Wainggai. Not long after, the girl's mother Siti Wainggai appeared on Indonesian TV, claiming her daughter had been taken to Australia against her will and demanded she be returned to the Indonesian province of Papua.

Soon after making this statement, Siti Wainggai disappeared and hasn't been heard of — until now. The ABC's Papua New Guinea correspondent Steve Marshall has Siti Wainggai's exclusive story.

Steve Marshall, reporter: Siti Wainggai believes her life is in danger. The Indonesian military, she claims, wants her to shut her up — permanently.

Siti Wainggai, Papuan asylum seeker (translation): I have been followed by certain people who have been paid to carry out the plan to kill me, and I was forced to do certain things they wanted me to do.

Steve Marshall: When Siti Wainggai's estranged husband Yunus Wainggai and her daughter Anike fled by boat to Australia last January seeking refugee status, Ms Wainggai says she was summoned to the Papuan capital of Jayapura.

Indonesian intelligence officers wanted a quiet word. She says the intelligence officers forced her to sign a prepared statement demanding the return of her daughter and then coerced her into acting out a tearful plea in front of the Provincial Governor.

Mrs Wainggai, what do you think would have happened to you had you refused to make these statements?

Siti Wainggai: They said if I refuse, certainly I will be killed.

Steve Marshall: Siti Wainggai says she was then forced to repeat the performance on Indonesian television. The Indonesian Government seized on Ms Wanggai's initial statement and threatened court action in Australia to have the little girl returned to her mother.

But bizarrely, there was never any question of custody. Ms Wainggai was living with her family at the time, as she had recently separated from her husband, and she had not seen her daughter for several months.

The intelligence officers also offered her a large cash bribe and told her that she would soon be heading to Jakarta to meet Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Miss Wainggai claims the intelligence officers told her she would have to weep before the President so that her child would be sent back to her quickly.

Feigning interest in the bribe, Ms Wainggai told the officers she would take the money the next day, when they intended escorting her to Jakarta. But Ms Wainggai never kept her appointment with the Indonesian intelligence service, and promptly went into hiding. At great risk, she then escaped by boat to neighbouring Papua New Guinea, where she now lives in fear of Indonesia's retribution.

Siti Wainggai: I am afraid, because the police might see me and they will send me back to Indonesia. So I am always staying in the house all the time, because I am afraid.

Steve Marshall: And it's just not just the PNG authorities she's scared of. Ms Wainggai is sure that the Indonesians are also on her trail.

Siti Wainggai: They are sending their own people to look for me.

Steve Marshall: Despite her fears, she is convinced she has done the right thing by fleeing Indonesia.

Siti Wainggai: I am happy that I have come out of Papua and my husband and my daughter are in Australia. I don't want to return to Jayapura and Indonesia.

Steve Marshall: Instead of demanding the return of her daughter, Siti Wainggai now dreams of joining Anike in Australia. Siti Wainggai's plea appears to have come too late. A bill introduced in Parliament today would see all future boat arrivals processed in offshore detention centres and even if they are found to be refugees, they will still be resettled in a third country.

Steve Marshall, Lateline.

Papua woman should be allowed into Australia, activists say

Australian Associated Press - May 12, 2006

Lloyd Jones, Port Moresby — A Papuan woman who says she fled to PNG after Indonesian intelligence officers forced her to plead for her daughter's return from asylum in Australia should be granted a protection visa by Canberra, Papuan independence activists say.

Australian Nick Chesterfield of the pro-independence West Papua National Authority said today Canberra should grant her a protection visa immediately and resettle her in Australia.

"We would like the Australian government to do the right thing and let her be with her family, she needs protection immediately," he said.

Asked what the government was doing about the woman's case, Prime Minister John Howard told reporters in Sydney that "it's important that we allow the normal processes to operate and it's not for us to do (anything) other than follow

Australian law" as had been done with other Papua asylum seekers.

Siti Wainggai said she was summonsed to the city of Jayapura in the Indonesian province of Papua where intelligence officers forced her to sign a prepared statement demanding the return of her daughter, ABC TV reported. Her young daughter Anike and the child's father, Herman Wainggai, were among a boatload of 43 Papuans who arrived at Cape York in January from Papua seeking refugee status.

Canberra's granting of protection visas to 42 of the asylum seekers angered Jakarta which withdrew its ambassador from Australia in March.

Siti Wainggai, who is separated from her husband, appeared on Indonesian television stating her daughter was taken to Australia against her will and that she should be returned to Papua.

But she has now told ABC TV she was forced to sign a prepared statement demanding her daughter's return and to make her statement public. "They said if I refuse then certainly I will be killed," she said.

Wainggai later fled by boat to PNG where she is in hiding and fearful of retribution by Indonesian authorities. "I'm being followed by certain people who have been paid to carry out the plan to kill me," she said.

Wainggai said she was happy her daughter and husband were in Australia and hoped to join them there. A Melbourne refugee lawyer is currently advocating on Wainggai's part to have her granted protection in Australia.

Human rights groups send letter to PM protesting new laws

Agence France Presse - May 12, 2006

Kylie Williams, Canberra — International human rights groups have lodged a formal protest over Australia's tough new immigration laws in a letter

urging the government to adopt humane refugee policies toward Papuans.

A group of 47 rights organisations, including Human Rights Watch and the International Immigrants' Foundation, wrote to Prime Minister John Howard protesting that the new laws contravene an important refugee convention to which Australia is a signatory.

"We, the undersigned organisations, protest in the strongest terms possible your government's announced plan to seek national legislation extending the 'Pacific Solution' to anyone intercepted attempting to enter Australia by boat without a visa," the letter said. "As described by officials of your government, many of the plan's components we believe are in violation of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which Australia is a party."

The groups also call upon the Australian government to uphold refugee conventions and recognise the plight of Papuan asylum seekers.

"We call upon your government to uphold its obligations under the Refugee Convention, to recognise the plight of Papuans suffering brutalisation on your doorstep, and to adopt humane refugee policies in keeping with the widely recognised principles of the Australian people," the letter said.

The controversial new laws, which a number of moderate Liberal MPs have sought to soften, began their passage through parliament yesterday.

Under the changes, all asylum seekers landing illegally on the mainland will be sent to offshore detention centres in Nauru or Papua New Guinea's Manus Island to be processed.

The rights groups said it was obvious that the new laws were aimed at Papuan asylum seekers. "This discriminatory proposal is especially aimed at denying refuge to those fleeing persecution in West Papua and seeking asylum in Australia," the letter said.

In March, Australia granted temporary protection visas to 42 asylum seekers from the separatist Indonesian province of Papua, a move which has

badly soured relations with Indonesia.

The Papuans arrived on Cape York in January and despite landing on the mainland were taken to Christmas Island while their asylum claims were assessed.

Papuan activist 'stabbed to death'

The Australian - May 11, 2006

Cath Hart and Samantha Maiden — A Papuan student activist was allegedly stabbed to death by Indonesian police after he was caught trying to flee to Australia along with 21 other students last month.

As the Howard Government faces a backbench revolt over proposals to force all asylum-seekers who arrive in Australia by boat into offshore detention centres, new claims have been made of brutality in the strife-torn province.

The latest allegations, which were aired on SBS's Dateline last night, follow the diplomatic rift between Jakarta and Canberra over the protection visas given to 42 Papuans in March.

Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone, who will table the new legislation today to force all boatpeople who arrive in Australia into offshore processing centres, is expected to confirm the Government will send the controversial reforms to a Senate inquiry.

Documentary maker Mark Davis took eyewitness accounts for the program from Papuans, who said many more were planning to flee to Australia. Three Papuans were detained last weekend after they were found near Boigu Island in the Torres Strait in a boat waving an independence flag.

"There will be more — these people are either dead or 10 years in prison, so they're going to come here," Davis said. The group of 22 students cast off in a boat on April 20, but their vessel sank after a pursuit by two Indonesian police vessels.

The survivors claim the police stabbed to death Benediktus Dimi while he was in the water. "He was stabbed here and here," a survivor called Melianus said, pointing to his arm and the left side of his chest.

"He was stabbed by the military, just like that," another survivor said. Indonesia police claim Mr Dimi drowned and was not killed.

Papuan students desperate to flee 'murderous' military

Radio Australia - May 10, 2006

Reporter: Steve Marshall

Mark Colvin: Few issues are more sensitive for Australian foreign policy than the Indonesian province of Papua, the western half of the island that also contains Papua New Guinea. Yesterday, three Papuans landed on an island in the Torres Strait after fleeing their homeland. Three months ago, 42 asylum seekers from Papua landed on Australian shores and were granted temporary refugee visas.

Tonight our correspondent Steve Marshall takes us into Papua where he found students desperate to get to Australia to escape from what they describe as an "abusive and murderous" Indonesian military. (sound of Melanius Pigai speaking)

Steve Marshall: Crouched in a small hut near the Papuan capital Jayapura, student Melanius Pigai tells me a disturbing story. He explains how he and 20 other students tried to flee Papua at night onboard boats bound for neighbouring Papua New Guinea.

(sound of Melanius Pigai speaking)

"We went to a boat and boarded it," he says. "Then after we started, the navy started to chase us. They were chasing us, and then the boat sunk and then we swam our separate ways. Some people drowned. There was one person who was killed. He was stabbed by the military. He was stabbed by the

military," he says.

Steve Marshall: Indonesian authorities denied the boat chase and described the death as accidental drowning.

Other students told me similar stories of Indonesian soldiers intent on revenge. They claim the military is hunting down Papuan students who took part in the protest last march over the huge Freeport gold and copper mine.

The mine is one of Indonesia's biggest export earners has been a focal point of discontent among Papuans for decades. Papuans have long accused Freeport of environmental vandalism and complicity in human rights abuses. Five Indonesian security officers were killed in the protest.

According to the Brussels-based think tank, the International Crisis Group, the Indonesian military responded with a violent crackdown.

(sound of Melanius Pigai speaking)

Melanius Pigai says some students were arrested, others were killed, shot, cut up or sliced up. Free West Papua activist Nick Chesterfield says we have every reason to believe Mr Pigai's account.

Nick Chesterfield: There is constantly the threat of arbitrary arrest and detention. It doesn't matter if you have got anything to do with independence activities. Just the mere fact that your Papuan is cause enough for the Indonesian military to arrest you, usually without charge, beat you and butcher you, which quite regularly results in murder.

Steve Marshall: Melanius Pigai and his fellow students were trying to get to Australia. They were hoping to be granted refugee status, as are the 42 Papuans who reached Australian shores in January before being granted temporary bridging visas.

In response to Indonesian anger over the visas, the Australian Government has effectively slammed the door shut on any more asylum seekers. From now on, all new boat arrivals will be processed offshore. Even if they are found to be refugees, Australia will send them to a third country for

resettlement.

Papuan activist Jonah Wenda says despite Australia's change of rules, it will remain a prime destination for asylum seekers, such as the three Papuan men who turned up on an island in the Torres Strait yesterday.

(to Jonah Wenda) Jonah Wenda will the change in rules stop you sending people to Australia?

(sound of Jonah Wenda speaking)

"No, they will never stop us," Jonah Wenda says. "We will continue to come to Australia and I believe grassroots people and even some in the Parliament will support this," he says.

This is Steve Marshall in Papua for PM.

Liberal MPs rebel over asylum

Australian Financial Review - May 10, 2006

John Kerin and Tracy Sutherland — The Prime Minister has faced a party-room backlash over planned migration zone changes designed to discourage Papuan asylum seekers, as three more were intercepted on a small island in the Torres Strait.

In an at times heated debate, up to 16 people spoke about the government's plans to introduce legislation next week that would mean anyone who arrives illegally by boat would be sent to offshore detention centres. Under the changes, asylum seekers landing on the mainland would be sent to centres in Nauru or Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

At least five Liberal MPs spoke against the bill, including one who opposed it outright. The revolt was led by Liberal backbencher Petro Georgiou, who was understood to be concerned the changes meant the party was going back on hard-won concessions made last year that ended the detention of women and children.

"The sort of comment was, 'I cannot support this

bill'," a party spokesman said. He said Mr Howard was willing to discuss the bill, but not to change its basic tenets.

Earlier, Mr Howard told the party room Australia had to handle the rift with Jakarta very carefully or risk the Balkanisation, or break-up, of Indonesia.

Labor's immigration spokesman, Tony Burke, who accused the government of kowtowing to Indonesia when it flagged the changes, said yesterday the government had not thought the plan through.

"This was the wrong position to take... it only takes one government senator to cross the floor and this legislation can be stopped," Mr Burke said.

The three Indonesians were in detention after being found at Boigu Island, Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone said. "The three men, who had travelled on a small, unpowered native boat, were intercepted by immigration officials at Boigu Island on May 6," she said. "Early indications are that they arrived from Papua New Guinea after having previously crossed from the Papua province of Indonesia."

As Boigu was one of the thousands of islands excised from Australia's migration zone last year, the three had been classified as offshore entry people, she said. If they sought protection, they would not be processed in Australia and were not entitled to make an application under the Migration Act. "They are currently on Horn Island and are in good health," she said.

The decision this year to grant temporary protection visas to 42 of the 43 Papuans sparked a row with Jakarta, which recalled its ambassador and accused the government of giving support to the troubled province's pro-independence movement, which the government denied.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono promised the Papuans would be free of persecution if they were returned. But Australia granted them three-year protection visas.

Lawmakers confirm report of pollution at Freeport

Jakarta Post - May 11, 2006

M. Taufiqurrahman and T.B. Arie Rukmantara, Jakarta — The tailing system used by PT Freeport Indonesia in its operation in Timika, Papua, has caused severe damage to the environment, a House of Representatives-sanctioned team says, confirming earlier similar findings.

The team, formed by the House working committee on Freeport to investigate the US-owned firm's operation, said that rather than resorting to a more environmentally friendly system, the mining giant simply disposed of its hazardous waste in nearby streams.

"As a result of this method, tailings are scattered randomly in various locations, forming small islands. When they reach the beach front on the Arafuru coast, they bond strongly with the mangroves there," team member Sony Keraf said Wednesday.

The six-member group, headed by Catur Sapto Edy of the National Mandate Party, returned from Timika on May 7 after conducting a three-day inspection at the Freeport mine.

Sony, a former environment minister under the Megawati Soekarnoputri administration, said million tons of hazardous waste had caused severe destruction to the Arafuru coastline.

"The tailings have reached the surface and the water there has turned black with a silver sheen. Compared to this, what Newmont has done is nothing," Sony said, referring PT Newmont Minahasa Raya, an Australia-based mining company which the police accuse of polluting Buyat Bay in North Sulawesi.

Newmont disposed of hazardous waste from its mine site into Buyat Bay, although the company argues the disposal methods were safe and sanctioned by the government.

The Mining Advocacy Network (Jatam) environmental group estimates Freeport tailings in the area amount to around 800 million tons.

Another environmental group, Greenomics Indonesia said Tuesday that Freeport should restore the ecosystems in a 43,000 hectares of river basin areas in the Minajerwi, Kamura, Otakwa Blumen regions.

These wetlands are connected to the Otomona River, where the company dumps thousands of tons of its tailings every day.

Greenomics estimates repairing the ecological damage to the rivers would cost the company around US\$7.5 billion based on current international standards.

The House team also criticized Freeport's book-keeping, saying for many years it was not transparent. As a consequence, the government and the public never had information about how much Freeport had profited from its mining activities in Papua, Catur said.

"For 30 years now, Freeport Indonesia has been secretive about how much minerals they have exported or how much money they have reaped from the mining activities," Catur said.

The team suggested there should be an independent audit of the Freeport operation because the firm's current auditor, PT Sucofindo Indonesia, was on the company's payroll. "How can there be an independent audit if the surveyor is paid by Freeport," Catur said.

For years, audit reports produced by Sucofindo had been the primary information source for the government about Freeport's operational activities, he said.

The team called for the Supreme Audit Agency to inspect the company, also scrutinizing Freeport's community development program, security system, human rights record and environmental policies.

Freeport has repeatedly said the company complied with all of the country's environmental regulations.

West Papuan flag raised outside Indonesian embassy

Green Left Weekly - May 10, 2006

Alex Bainbridge, Sydney — Sixty supporters of West Papuan self-determination held a flag-raising ceremony outside the Indonesian consulate in Maroubra on April 30.

Joe Collins from the Australia-West Papua Association told the gathering that such symbolic protests in West Papua have landed some people in jail for 15 years and others have been shot. Damien Lawson from the Greens urged those present to organise similar protests in their local neighbourhoods to highlight the broad sympathy among Australians for the West Papuan people's right to self-determination.

Pip Hinman from the Socialist Alliance recalled the solidarity Australians showed for East Timor's right to self-determination, saying that the same would happen for West Papua. She added that many Indonesians strongly opposed the Indonesian government's militaristic policies in West Papua.

PORNOGRAPHY & MORALITY

Drop pornography bill, House told

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Wearing colorful traditional costumes, around 500 activists demonstrated outside the House of Representatives on Thursday, demanding lawmakers abandon their deliberation of the pornography bill.

The protesters said the bill endangered freedom of expression and put Indonesia's diverse cultural traditions at risk. During the demonstration, they released hundreds of balloons painted with anti-bill slogans into the air.

The protesters said they planned larger more-flamboyant actions in the future. "This is just a warm-up rally — we expect far more people to

protest the bill at future events," rally coordinator Henry Pardede said.

Anti-pornography law activists distribute comic at parliament

Detik.com - May 10, 2006

Indra Subagja, Jakarta — There are many ways to oppose the Draft Anti-Pornography and Porno-action Law (RUU APP). Aside from demonstrations, opposition to the law can also flow from comics. There is a picture of a person bathing, there is also one of a person kissing. Hmmm...

The black-and-white comic was handed out by representatives of the Unity in Diversity Alliance (Aliansi Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, ABTI) when they met with Regional Representatives Council (DPD) members at the House of Representatives (DPR) on Wednesday May 10.

In addition to an explanation of the reasons for opposing the law, the 13 page comic titled "As pornographic as pornography is, the RUU Porno is more pornographic", also contains various kinds of pictures critical of the law.

For example there is a person bathing in a river with the writing "Be vigilant of bathing in the river because it violates the RUU Pornography". There is also a picture of a woman playing sport wearing short trousers with the writing "Playing sport in a public place and exposing the thighs will incur the RUU APP".

In addition to this there is also a picture of a pedicab driver urinating in the open with the writing "Urinating just anyplace means exposing the sexual organs in a public place and facing a jail sentence because it violates the RUU APP".

Then again there is a picture of a woman and a man who want to embrace and kiss in a public place. Ups! But don't think its just nothing. It turns out the pair are husband and wife. Under the picture it reads "Kissing and embracing your own husband is a pornographic act".

Uniquely, the comic, which is a creation of Eko Nugroho, can be pirated and distributed as widely as possible among the public.

Seeking support from the DPD

In addition to handing out the comic, the ABTI representatives also sought support from the DPD over the draft law. "We are asking that the DPD struggle for and convey [our] wishes because the RUU APP will give rise to national disintegration. Up until now the voice of DPD has not be heard", said one of the activists, Yeni Rosa Damayanti.

Damayanti also held up a magazine with the photograph of a Papuan women wearing traditional clothing but with her chest blacked out by the sensor. "This is an insult to culture", she in a fiery outburst of emotion.

In response, DPD speaker Ginandjar Kartasasmita declared that the DPD's position on the draft law is still being discussed in a plenary meeting. "We have not yet taken a position. We are only accommodate [different views] and seek a solution. We will convey our friend's wishes. Whatever the outcome this republic cannot be deemed uniform", said Kartasasmita. (aan)

[Translated by James Balowski.]

Woman takes Tangerang mayor to court over bylaw

Jakarta Post - May 9, 2006

Multa Fidrus, Tangerang — Lilies Lindawati is keeping to a pledge to settle the score with those who publicly humiliated her by branding her a prostitute.

The 34-year-old pregnant wife of an elementary school teacher, who was arrested on the street by public order officers enforcing a prostitution bylaw, has filed suit against Tangerang Mayor Wahidin Halim at Tangerang District Court.

"The suit was filed at the court on May 1. We will begin proceedings if the two parties fail to reach an amicable settlement through mediation," judge

Pastra Yosep Ziraluo, who will preside over the trial, said Monday.

Pastra said his fellow members of the panel of judges — Permadi Widiyatno and Bambang Irawan — have asked Lilies' attorney and the plaintiff to try to reach an out-of-court settlement.

Lilies' lawyer Yulianto told The Jakarta Post that his client was the victim of wrongful arrest and suffered public humiliation from being labeled a prostitute. The former restaurant worker is demanding Rp 500 million (about US\$53,000) compensation from the mayor for material and other losses.

The resident of Dadap district was picked up along with 26 other women by public order officers while waiting on the sidewalk for a public minivan on Feb. 27. The women were held overnight before being tried in a misdemeanor trial held in public.

The trial, with no defense lawyers accompanying the women, were held at city hall in conjunction with the celebration of the municipality's 13th anniversary.

Lilies, who repeatedly protested her innocence, could not show her identity card nor she could present her husband or members of her family to testify on her behalf. Lilies argues she did not possess a cellular phone to call her husband, and the public order officers assumed she was a sex worker merely because she had makeup in her bag.

Judge Barmen Sinurat dismissed her explanation and fined her Rp 300,000. She was held in custody because she could not pay the fine and was released three days later.

Wahidin responded to the suit by saying it was her right to claim she was innocent and pursue the matter through legal channels. "This is the risk that we face as a consequence of the implementation of the government's function," he told the Post.

Despite mounting criticism of what some consider a morality crusade, Wahidin also said he would continue pursuing his vision of clearing Tangerang of the sale of alcohol, prostitution as well as other social vices.

"We will go ahead and punish all offenders," he said. "The regulations is not of my own making, but merely the wish of the people, as represented by the municipal council." The municipal council endorsed the contentious 2005 bylaw on Nov. 21 last year.

A coalition of several non-governmental groups, Kantif, has filed a request for judicial review of the ordinance in the Supreme Court.

Separately, head of the municipal administration legal department Erlan Rusnarlan said he could not comment on the lawsuit filed by Lilies because he was "busy preparing answers to the judicial review request as ordered by the Supreme Court".

RECONCILIATION & JUSTICE

Days of waiting, a day filled with hope

Kompas - May 12, 2006

Windoro Adi — "We are grateful that the government has finally acknowledged our fallen son a hero of reformasi. They did not die in vain", said Hiratetty, the mother of Elang Mulia Lesmana at a press conference at the Trisakti University campus on Monday May 8.

Elang, Hafidhin Royan, Hery Hartanto and Hendriawan Sie were the four students shot dead by security forces on the grounds of the Trisakti campus on May 12, 1998. The shooting that afternoon triggered mass anger against the New Order regime and precipitated the riots in and around Jakarta on May 14 that culminated in the resignation of former President Suharto on May 21. The Jakarta riots left the capital city in flames — not to mention those who died.

The wave of reformasi changed the Indonesian political constellation, including the "fate" of the activists and politicians that struggled for reformasi together with students. Amien Rais, who even became known as the Father of Reformasi, was chosen to be the speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (1999-2004), KH Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri were chosen as president and vice president respectively.

For the activists that struggled to bring down the authoritarian power of Suharto however, life has changed little, including for the parents of the four Trisakti students that were shot dead. It was not until last year that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono bestowed the Dedicated Service Award on the four, a dedication affirmed in Presidential Decree Number 057/TK/2005 dated August 9, 2005.

At the press conference on Monday, Karsiah Sie, the mother of Sie, admitted to being proud of the acknowledgment and award from the government. However it is as if accountability for the death of the four students — cut down in a hail of hot lead by security forces — is yet to be realised. "We are tired, to this day it has been as if the government and the DPR [House of Representatives] have never been serious about investigating and solving this case. Eight years have now passed. We are tired of promises, particularly from the DPR", said Hiratetty.

In fact the people's movement to bring down the New Order regime had emerged four years before Suharto's downfall, that is during the wave of democratisation that swept through Eastern Asia. "The democratic movement in Myanmar with Aung San Suu Kyi-nya inspired the pro-democracy movement in Indonesia", says Budiman Sudjatmiko, one of the founders of the People's Democratic Party (PRD) who was also jailed by the New Order.

The wave of democratisation started with demands to revoke a packet of five political laws(1). The abolition of this packet of laws was frequently articulated by PRD activists and other elements of the movement. The PRD — who at that time were called the People's United Democracy — was launched by a number of activists including Sugeng Bahagyo, Dita Indah Sari and Widji Thukul. Thukul was a poet who disappeared [and is presumed dead] and was never able to enjoy the fruits of the reform that he struggled for.

According to Sudjatmiko, the change from the PRD into the People's Democratic Party was declared on April 15, 1996. Aside from the PRD, other groups also surfaced in 1995 struggling to breakdown the rigidity of the New Order political system included the New Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI Baru), the New Indonesian Christian Party (Parkindo Baru) and the New Masyumi.

Daniel Dhakidae in the book *Indonesian Political Parties, Ideology, Strategy and Program* (1999) says that the blow delivered by the PRD and the Indonesian Democratic Union Party (PUDI) were able to create an opportunity for wholesale change to Indonesia's political map and political party politics. They tore down the regime's basis of legitimacy. "The two became the pioneers, the trail blazers, [taking] the world of modern Indonesian party politics towards the changing century" wrote Dhakidae.

The resistance by youth activists was confronted by repression from the New Order. A number of PRD activists including Sudjatmiko, were charged with masterminding the Jakarta riot that followed an attack by security forces on the central offices of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) on Jl. Diponegoro that became known as the July 27 incident(2). They were charged with committing acts of subversion and incarcerated in a number of jails across Indonesia. Likewise, PUDI leader Sri Bintang Pamungkas was also jailed. They were only released after Suharto resigned and was replaced by Vice President B.J. Habibie.

Many of these student and party activists have now gone their own ways. Sudjatmiko, who was able to continue his studies at the University of London immersing himself in the field of politics and economy and international relations at Cambridge University through a scholarship from the Ford Foundation, has now joined the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). He also heads up a research institute.

Former PRD general secretary Petrus Haryanto now manages a small publishing business. Dita Sari is now the chairperson of the PRD and is also active in labour organisations. Thukul's fate remains unknown having vanished along with a number of other activists(3).

Sudjatmiko still dreams of the ideals he held when he established the PRD which are far from the realities that exist now. "I imagined the downfall of the New Order, like the classic downfall of dictators in other countries, but it never happened", he says. "There was no Lustrasi(4) like in Czechoslovakia, no transnational justice. I realise that the dreams I had when I participated in founding the PRD turned out not to be [so] easy

[to realise]", he says.

The fruits of reformasi

The coalition of student and people's organisations that occupied the DPR and the city's streets were one of the factors that caused the fall of Suharto.

Prasetyantoko and Wahyu Indriyo in their book *The Student and Democratic Movement in Indonesia* (2001) say that student groups had an awareness of the poor relationship between the state and society. Initially, the resistance that came to the surface was a cultural resistance, both in the form of artistic offerings as well as a more open lifestyle. Within a short period this resistance changed into political activities that bore fruit.

Reformasi indeed succeeded in two ways: there were those who benefited and those who were hurt. Some of the demonstrators are now sitting sweet as people's representatives at the parliament building in Senayan. Several times now they have witnessed the parliament's gates being broken down by demonstrators. Other demonstrators chose to continue to build a bases in rural areas and play a very small role. Some were simply allotted the role as job seekers or the followers political parties. There are also those who have now become commissioners of companies or legal attorneys.

The lives of the families of the Trisakti, Semanggi I and Semanggi II victims have also changed little. Ho Kim Ngo (56), the mother of the late Yun Hap, a University of Indonesia student who was shot dead during the Semanggi II incident, is now languishing. "Yeah, above all I want to work, [I'm] old. At most just washing, shopping for vegetables. Just looking after the house", said the woman who has given birth to three children.

This afternoon, Wednesday May 5, she and the Tionghoa Association (Chinese Association) intend to visit Yun Hap's grave in Pondok Rangoon, East Jakarta. "The plan is to go to Hendriawan Sie's grave at the same time. [We've] been doing this every year", said Ngo.

Now she lives with her two children, Yun Yie and Ling-Ling, in their own house in the Tanjung Duren

area of West Jakarta, after years of only being able to rent accommodation.

Martini, the mother of the late Sigit Prasetyo, a student of the Indonesian Administration Foundation who was killed in the Semanggi I incident, is increasingly busy working with her husband, Asih Widodo, to find additional income as they are currently building a new house in the Tanah Kusir area.

Martini will do any kind of job, working as a housekeeper, looking after children and the elderly or running a laundry service. Her husband is no less busy as a freelance construction worker.

Hiratetty is still alone after her husband who was affectionately known as Pak Boy died after a protracted illness. She now lives in a house with her two daughters and is still a member of the New Indonesia Party.

Karsiah Sie, works at a cooperative near the Trisakti University. This afternoon she is busy arranging a supply of goods for the cooperative. "Later on this afternoon, I have an appointment to be interviewed by a journalist from a television station. It's customary, [I'm a] regular at each commemoration of Reformasi Day", said Karsiah.

Sumarsih (54), the mother of the late BR Norma Irmawan, formerly a student of the Atma Jaya Catholic University that was shot in the Semanggi I incident on Friday November 13, 1998, is dressed simply in black — a colour that contrast with her hair which has turned almost entirely white. She is also persisting with demanding responsibility from the state for the Trisakti and Semanggi I and II killings. Sumarsih, who won the Yap Thiam Hien Award even threw eggs during a protests at a DPR plenary meeting that was debating the DPR's position on Trisakti and Semanggi.

The group of families of the victims of the May riots(5), who have obtained the assistance Kontras (the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence), are trying to survive the difficulties of their lives. Some of them have tried to open small shops together, making snack food and pouches for cell phones. "Most of them are families of the victims of the May riots at the

Jogya Department Store in Klender", said Kontras coordinator Usman Hamid.

They and the activists and people who served to bring down the New Order are now waiting out the days and waiting in hope. The hope is the coming of justice. And, they who are enjoying the fruits of reformasi cannot of course forget those who were left behind. It would not be proper if those who are enjoying the fruits of reformasi suffer amnesia. Likewise also for the ordinary people. It may be appropriate to scrutinise what was written by Milan Kundera in the book *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. "Humanity's struggle against power is humanity's struggle against forgetting. Including being forgotten by the forces that do not want to deal with the past!" (Budiman Tanuredjo)

Notes:

1. The five repressive political laws were passed in 1985. They allowed only three recognised political parties; banned party activity from villages and small towns; allowed the government to appointment of 575 non-elected members (75 representing the military) to the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR); imposed a single state-defined ideology on all social, political and cultural organisations; and give the state the right to intervene in the internal affairs of organisations.
2. July 27 - Following Megawati Sukarnoputri's popular election as chairperson of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) in 1996, the Suharto regime, who feared a PDI lead Megawati (who could draw upon the tremendous popularity of her father Sukarno, the founding president of Indonesia) might threaten the state party Golkar's dominance in the upcoming 1997 elections, sponsored a rebel PDI congress in Medan, North Sumatra, and succeeded in replacing her with their own pro-regime candidate, Suryadi. Following weeks of protests and the occupation of party's headquarters in central Jakarta by pro-Megawati PDI supporters, on July 27 paid thugs backed by the military attacked and destroyed the PDI offices resulting in the death of as many as 50 people. Popular outrage at the attack sparked several days of mass rioting and violent clashes with police which was blamed on the People's

Democratic Party, who's members were hunted down and arrested as the masterminds behind the riots.

3. Between 1997 and 1998 as many as 14 pro-democracy activists were abducted by members of the elite special forces Kopassus. After extended periods of detention — in many cases the victims were severely tortured — most were released although four remain missing and are presumed dead. In April 1999, 11 low-ranking Kopassus officers were tried by a military court for the kidnappings and given sentences of between a year and 22 months in prison, although six of them were allowed to remain in the army.

4. Lustrasi - Laws prohibiting government officials of certain levels from a previous regime from holding office or being nominated for election for five years.

5. May 1998 - Following by the fatal shooting of student protesters in Jakarta in May 1998, mass rioting broke out resulting in the death of as many as 1 thousand people eventually leading to the overthrow of Suharto.

[Translated by James Balowski.]

Mothers worn out by lags in Trisakti tragedy process

Jakarta Post - May 10, 2006

Jakarta — For the mothers of two Trisakti University students who were killed on May 12, 1998, there is no justice, because those who ordered officers to open fire on their children remain free.

Karsiah Sie and Hiratetty — respectively the mothers of the late Hendriawan Sie and Elang Mulia Lesmana — said Monday they were "tired of the long and monotonous process of pursuing justice." Both attended a gathering to mark the beginning of a week of Trisakti tragedy commemorations, representing parents of the two other students killed, Hafidhin Royan and Hery Hartanto.

"As a human being and a mother, the outcome of the long investigation will never be enough," Hiratetty commented on the slow and virtually stagnant investigation carried out by the government-sanctioned Joint Fact Finding Team, which comprises military and police representatives, officials and activists.

The results of the first stages of the investigation were discussed by the House of Representatives, which later issued a recommendation the shooting be classified as a minor human rights violation.

"That's what hurts the most," said Karsiah. "But at least our sons have become known as reform heroes and not just as troublemakers and looters." Four Trisakti students were killed during a heated demonstration inside the campus in West Jakarta in 1998. The shooting triggered widespread students rallies and social unrest, which led to the resignation of former president Soeharto.

"Trisakti has been doing the best it can to pursue justice for our sons, but if the government is still like this, then what else is there to expect," said Hiratetty.

Hiratetty said that each year's commemoration was crowded with people vowing to see the case through to the end. "We receive the same fruitless promises on each May 12," said Hiratetty.

Employed by a university cooperative, Karsiah simply commented, "After eight long years, where is the evidence the promises are going to be met." "All of us (the parents) share the same loss," she said. "My only son is more precious to me than all the riches of the world."

LABOUR ISSUES

Labor unions, business groups agree to end ongoing dispute

Jakarta Post - May 15, 2006

Jakarta — Representatives from the business sector and labor unions agreed Friday to jointly find the best ways to improve the business climate by holding an official national bipartite meeting in June.

Relations between the two parties had been tense since violence broke at out recent labor union rallies rejecting planned revisions to the 2003 Labor Law.

The labor unrest has caused a number of foreign buyers to postpone orders. The Indonesian Employer Association (Apindo) claims industries lost Rp 850 billion due to the first rally on May 1.

After an informal meeting between the business associations and labor unions, the head of the Indonesian Prosperous Workers Confederation, Rekson Silaban, said both parties agreed that concerted efforts were needed to bring about an economic recovery.

"The upcoming bipartite meeting aims to find out the main problems that unions and businesses face," he said. As for labor unions' stance on the 2003 law, Rekson said, they reject any kind of revision.

He said a team consisting of representatives from labor unions and business associations had been set up to arrange the meeting and determine the agenda.

Chairman of the Indonesian Employers Association (Apindo) Sofyan Wanandi said the recent labor rally had hit the business climate hard. He said the discussions would cover ways to improve the overall business climate in Indonesia, including the protracted dispute over the planned revision of the Labor Law.

Sofyan noted various business sectors such as electronics and textile industries had experienced a 30 to 40 percent drop in the first four months of this year.

The Indonesian Footwear Association, as previously reported, said that after the violent second rally on May 3, European buyers postponed repeat orders until the labor unrest subsided.

Indonesia, Malaysia ink MOU on protection of

workers

Jakarta Post - May 15, 2006

Abdul Khalik, Nusa Dua — Indonesia and Malaysia on Saturday signed a long-discussed memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the protection of Indonesian migrant workers, especially domestic workers, in Malaysia. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the Developing Eight (D-8) Summit in Nusa Dua, Bali.

The agreement was signed by Malaysian Internal Affairs Minister Ahmad Mohd. Radzi and Indonesian Manpower and Transmigration Minister Erman Suparno. The signing was witnessed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

A series of discussions and meetings led up to Saturday's signing, including a meeting between Yudhoyono and Abdullah in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra.

Erman said the MOU would provide a legal basis for the protection of Indonesian workers in the neighboring country, helping to prevent abuses of the workers and guaranteeing their rights.

"The agreement shows both governments have the intention to protect the rights of domestic workers. The MOU stipulates the rights and duties not only of the workers, but also of the recruitment companies both in Malaysia and Indonesia," he said.

Radzi said he was pleased the countries had been able to reach an agreement on protecting domestic workers, adding that he and his family employed maids from Indonesia.

"This MOU will provide standard protection for Indonesian domestic workers in Malaysia," he said.

The countries reached this agreement during Vice President Jusuf Kalla's visit to Malaysia in late March. The MOU is considered an important step toward dealing with the physical abuse and unfair treatment of Indonesians employed in the neighboring country.

Approximately 300,000 Indonesians are working legally in Malaysia, most as domestic helpers.

Many Malaysians choose to employ Indonesians because they are cheaper and are considered more compliant than domestic workers from other Asian countries, such as the Philippines.

The MOU requires Malaysian employers to sign contracts with Indonesian workers before they begin work. The contract should specify the salary, rights and duties of the workers.

Employers are then required to submit a copy of the contract and their contact details to the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia. Employers must also obtain permission from Indonesian representatives in Malaysia if they want to take their domestic workers out of Malaysia.

All of the costs relating to the recruitment process are to be borne by employers, including registering the workers in Malaysia's foreign workers compensation program.

In the event of a dispute, Malaysian authorities will intervene in the case.

Although the MOU is comprehensive enough to protect most of the workers' rights, the mechanisms for punishing employers who fail to adhere to the articles in the agreement are unclear. The MOU also fails to touch on the issue of the civil rights of workers, including the right to form or join unions.

With the signing of the agreement, Indonesia and Malaysia have two legal instruments that protect the rights of Indonesian migrant workers. The countries signed a formal agreement on workers in May 2004.

Indonesia has signed similar agreements with Kuwait, Jordan, South Korea and Taiwan.

Erman said with the signing of the MOU, the government could be more active in assisting Indonesian workers facing legal problems in Malaysia. Meanwhile, Radzi promised Malaysia would build schools and provide teachers for thousands of children of Indonesian workers who are currently unable to attend school in Sabah, East Malaysia.

Hanafi Rustandi: Standing up for workers' rights

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Ridwan Max Sijabat, Jakarta — At a ceremony to mark World Labor Day (May 1) at Jakarta International Container Terminal (JICT), Tanjung Priok port, Indonesian Seafarers Association (KPI) chairman Hanafi Rustandi took the microphone and shouted loudly: "Stop speaking and down your tools." The noise stopped abruptly. All activities at the port were halted. Thousands of workers bowed their head while ships, container cranes and trucks switched on their headlamps and blew their horns for 10 minutes.

"The strike lasted just 10 minutes but it has been effective. We may lose 10 minutes but our employers and the government suffer billions of rupiah in losses. Someone may call it sabotage but we have the right to (strike) and it is part of our bargaining power," he said, winning applause from his audience.

Hanafi, also a representative of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in Indonesia, was behind the recent strike of container truck drivers who protested the imposition of value-added tax on trucks operating at major ports in Java and Sumatra.

The government acceded to the drivers' demand of phasing out the tax and eliminating illegal charges at ports.

He was also the brains behind a strike last year of state-owned flag-carrier Garuda Indonesia's flight attendants and of state train company PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI). Again, the government had no alternative but to improve labor conditions at the state enterprises.

Hanafi, who looks far younger than his 60 years, did not previously like the idea of deploying some 350,000 ITF workers in the massive labor rally, despite his strong opposition to the government's plan to revise the labor law.

"That was because, like most workers in the manufacturing and service sector, relatively uneducated stevedores, seamen and truck drivers could not easily be controlled if they got aroused at a rally." Hanafi has been dubbed Indonesia's Lech Walensa, after the Polish unionist who led a labor movement that toppled the Communist regime and which took him to the presidency in the 1990s.

He was proud of the strong solidarity among workers and the peaceful rally inside the port thanks to close coordination by junior unionists.

In leading the labor movement in the transportation sector, Hanafi has preferred collective bargaining to staging massive rallies that had the potential to be hijacked by non-labor interests.

"We have to use their bargaining power in bipartite negotiations with managements in fighting for their interests. It is more effective and democratic to put them and employers in an equal position." The government and employers, said Hanafi, could no longer adopt a cheap labor policy in the reform era to attract more foreign investors, as had happened in the past.

"It would be better for the government to eliminate rampant corruption and red tape in the bureaucracy, revise the investment and tax laws, repair damaged infrastructure and enforce the law to provide certainty for workers.

"Insya Allah, foreign investors will come and invest here." Hanafi, who worked as a mechanic on cargo vessels for PT Djakarta Lloyd until 1976, cofounded KPI in 1973 with other senior seafarers.

After undergoing trade union training for a year at Cylde Cameron College in Australia in 1976, he was appointed as an ITF liaison officer in Indonesia.

In his capacity as secretary-general of KPI, he launched a series of training programs for junior unionists and workers in the transportation sector to improve their skills in their workplaces and in collective bargaining with their employers.

Under his leadership, the seamen's union networks well with ITF and their counterparts in developed

countries. So far, a total of 400 junior unionists have been trained to improve their skills so that they are paid in accordance with international standards.

At home, he has encouraged all trade unions in the air, sea and land transportation sectors to improve their bargaining power in preparing collective labor agreements (PKB) with management.

He said stevedores had yet to sign a PKB with ship owners and port authorities because they were retained by port cooperatives on contracts and paid on a daily basis. "Stevedores are paid Rp 35,000 per day but are employed on average 15 days a month," he said.

Asked what his monthly income was, Hanafi said KPI paid him well because the trade union was well organized and strong financially. It had 35,000 members who paid about Rp 20,000 (about US\$2) a month for their membership while the management contributed up to (Rp 150,000) per worker per month.

KPI has contributed 0.5 percent of funds collected from seafarers to ITF. "All unionists and staff are paid well," he said, adding he who was reelected to the top position in 2004, with his tenure valid until 2008.

Hanafi, born in the West Java town of Tasikmalaya in 1946, admitted to having "lost" his beloved wife with whom he has three children, because he spent almost all his time with workers.

"Upon my return from an ILO meeting in Geneva and an ITF gathering in London in 1997, she had left me a letter asking for a divorce. My children knew something was wrong in the relationship and accepted the divorce. I couldn't do anything to salvage our marriage because it was a matter of personal commitment. My wife remarried, and I did, too."

Outsourcing still 'slavery' to unions

Jakarta Post - May 11, 2006

Ridwan Max Sijabat, Jakarta — Allowing the outsourcing of jobs would lead to a form of “modern slavery” and only create more insecurity among white-collar workers, the country’s labor unions say.

Speaking at an International Labor Organization-sponsored workshop here Tuesday, Syukur Sarto of the Confederation of All-Indonesian Labor Unions and Rekson Silaban of the Confederation of Prosperous Indonesian Labor Unions said the government and employers would not win any concessions from workers over the new employment legislation.

Although workers realized they and employers have “different perceptions on job outsourcing”, unions would continue to oppose its implementation in all businesses, Syukur said.

He said the current labor law already allowed for limited outsourcing to help businesses in uncertain economic times.

Rekson said job security had been low for workers since November’s steep increase of fuel prices. Allowing increased outsourcing of jobs would only make their futures more uncertain, he said.

"Outsourcing may be accepted only if its implementation is regulated rigidly, the minimum wage level is upgraded and social security programs are revised to protect dismissed and retiring workers," he said.

Less restrictions on labor contracts and outsourcing are two contentious issues in the draft revision of the 2003 labor law. The proposed changes to the law have triggered strong opposition from workers nationwide during the past two months, with unions staging huge protest rallies in Jakarta on May 1 and 3 to reject the draft.

Hassan Abdurrahman, the deputy chairman of the Indonesian Employers’ Association (Apindo), said outsourcing was vital if Indonesia wanted more efficient and competitive industries.

"The globalization of manufacturing has led to massive job redistribution around the globe and it’s unstoppable. Even the US has created a law

forbidding federal states from outsourcing certain jobs to other countries, but the legislation was found to be unworkable," Hassan said.

The country had already benefited from outsourcing, winning many manufacturing contracts from multinational corporations in Britain and the United States, he said.

China and India, the world's two most populous countries, have become international centers for production subcontracted by companies in high-wage countries.

Apindo chairman Sofyan Wanandi said the association and three labor union confederations would hold bipartite meetings this week to seek a win-win solution to the standoff, despite a temporary "ceasefire" announced by the government.

"The matter is mainly between employers and workers. The meeting scheduled for Friday aims to seek breakthroughs to the deadlock," he said after the workshop's opening ceremony.

Trade group plans legal action against unions

Jakarta Post - May 10, 2006

Jakarta — Associations representing a number of labor-intensive industries, hard hit by the recent labor unrest and intimidation of their workers, are demanding tougher law enforcement measures against illegal actions by unions that have the potential to damage the country's economy.

One business association says it is planning to sue the labor unions involved.

Indonesian Footwear Association secretary-general Yudhi Komarudhin told The Jakarta Post that the violent labor rally on May 3 had made a number of European investors postpone placing repeat orders until they saw whether the labor unrest would subside.

"Up until June, we were actually receiving additional orders for shoes from the European countries to replace supplies from China and

Vietnam. However, due to the recent unrest, they have postponed placing more orders," said Yudhi.

Indonesia's shoe industry now has a big opportunity to increase exports to Europe after the European Union imposed antidumping measures against Vietnam and China, whose combined annual shoe sales to Europe previously reached US\$2.4 billion.

"Companies from Italy, Britain and France have confirmed that they will postpone orders due to the May 3 incident," he said, without giving the value of the canceled orders. "Local investors who are interested in putting their money into the shoe industry are now also hesitant about proceeding with their plans."

Ernovian G. Ismy, the secretary-general of the Indonesian Textile Producers Association, voiced similar concerns, saying that he had received reports from foreign investors in the textile fiber industry of employees being forced to down tools by union activists.

"We have received reports about such illegal acts from factories in Bandung, West Java." He added that on May 3, 120 factories had to close, with each suffering losses of up to Rp 18 billion (\$2 million). He also said that because they had been forced to close, some of the factories would have to delay deliveries.

"Some other firms have had to ship their deliveries by air in a last ditch attempt to meet delivery deadlines. Of course, this costs them a lot more." He added that failures to deliver on time would result in penalties being imposed by buyers.

Yudhi said that the footwear association had received reports that five shoe producers had been forced to halt operations during the labor protests on May 1 and 3, causing them some \$1.5 million in losses.

Elsewhere, Ernovian told the Post that his association planned to sue the labor unions responsible for the intimidation of workers at a number of factories. "We are calculating the total losses resulting from this intimidation. We are working together with the Indonesian Employers

Association in bringing our actions," he said.

Indonesia's total exports of textile products increased by 10.5 percent from \$7.6 billion in 2004 to \$8.4 billion in 2005. The association says that exports will further increase to \$9 billion in 2006.

Meanwhile, in the case of shoe exports, Indonesia's earnings increased from \$1.38 billion in 2004 to \$1.5 billion in 2005. For 2006, the association is targeting \$2.9 billion in exports, including exports worth \$2.4 billion to Europe.

'Protesters voiced real concerns'

Jakarta Post - May 10, 2006

Without justifying the destructive behavior exhibited in last week's labor protests, many people think the protesters' demands were reasonable. How can the workers build stronger political bargaining power to fight for their rights and how can the government and employers accommodate them? The Jakarta Post asked some people about this issue.

Bambang Aria Wibawa, 28, works for a manufacturing company. He lives in Bekasi: It is the politicians who said the labor protests were smeared by political interests. For the workers themselves, the rally was an expression of real worries and concerns.

The government has taken the easy way out in trying to create a better investment climate by revising the Labor Law in favor of businesses. The main problem, and the most difficult one to solve, is the high-cost economy. Systemic reform is needed here, instead of putting the nation's most vulnerable people under pressure.

Muammar Ali, 23, is a college student who lives in Depok: I am not trying to justify the violence, but accumulative pressure from the companies (demonstrators work for) — both financially and legally — triggered the ugly events of last week. It was also an expression of their disappointment

at knowing the government — supposedly their last resort — had somehow betrayed them.

That is why they do not trust the tripartite forum or any sort of discussion they are excluded from. It is just very unfortunate that the ones who have to deal with the laborers' rage are low-ranking officers.

Labor law are necessary for protection of workers

Jakarta Post - May 10, 2006

B. Herry-Priyono, Jakarta — On Sunday night, April 30, I was still stranded in Aceh (Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam) when I turned on one of the television channels and heard a chilling warning to shoot on spot any protesters committing violence and vandalism. It was the eve of Labor Day, the night when many labor organizations were making last-minute preparations for the next day's rally.

While I was still musing on that warning, a question came to my mind. Would that sort of warning also be applied to business tycoons? Say, "any business tycoons who wreck forests or steal from the Bank Indonesia Liquidity Fund will be shot on spot"? Certainly not! Of course, even in the land of amok, no violence is to be dignified. That is true not only for the act of vandalism in the recent local elections in Tuban, East Java, but also for the violent incidents during the labor protests on May 3, 2006.

But why is the rule applied to workers but not to business tycoons? This is a fact of how policing is conducted discriminately on the basis of the power of purse, and that is how this country is run. It then seems that "government... is in reality instituted for the defense of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all". Are these the words of Marx or Lenin? No! They are the words of Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*.

There is indeed something farcical about how the plight of the poor is treated in this republic.

And this is how the aftermath of the violent incidents during the labor protest on May 3, 2006 have unfolded. As is widely known, the air is now marred with a series of exchanges between the President's office and the opposition. While the former indicated that political rivals instigated the violence during the rally on May 3, the latter refuted the accusation as a way of deflecting the issue.

The point is not whether the violence was instigated — to hunt down the instigators is part of hunting down the perpetrators of violence. Rather, what is at stake is that, like many problems concerning the plight of the poor in this country, the roots that make workers go to the street will again disappear from sight. What is tragic is that this process is often greatly assisted by the media. In their day-to-day job of running after headlines, the media are much more interested in the gimmicks of the politically famous. Says a poignant Swahili proverb, "whether the elephants make love or make war, it is the grass that suffers".

So, perhaps there is a virtue to returning to the issue, the workers' demand that the government not slash further their already minimum levels of welfare. And that is what makes them doggedly defend the 2003 Labor Law. It is easy from the high podium of a seminar at a comfortable hotel to accuse workers of being ignorant of the country's need to attract investors. Such an accusation is a form of ignorance, for most workers are by no means unaware of the dilemma, as often assumed.

Why do they address their demands to the government? This question may sound trivial, for it is simply stating the obvious, that the government is in charge of public affairs. But, what if under the pressure of economic globalization, the government's policy wings are increasingly clipped by the powers of investors? Indeed, this last point is evident in the current state of the political economy.

That leaves us with one thin hope. The workers' demands are addressed to the government because it is the government, or at least its legislative wing, that is in charge of law formulation. This point is of course highly normative, and any issue that concerns law could not be other than being

normative. Otherwise, law loses its *raison d'être*.

From the first moment of its inception, the construction of labor laws was a normative project, whose agenda was to redress the asymmetric relations between employers and workers. That is true both with the onset of labor laws in Indonesia in the early 1900s or with those in Western Europe in the 19th century.

Labor law concerns labor precisely because it aims to protect workers from the caprice of their employers. Bluntly put, labor laws are a form of affirmative action with a quite deliberate bias in favor of workers.

Of course, no thoughtful persons will see this affirmative action as something that can be separated from the other factors, for instance, the investment climate or economic growth. But the inseparability of affirmative action for workers from the investment climate or economic growth does not cancel out the centrality of affirmative action for workers itself.

As much as the subordinate position of workers does not disappear simply by establishing “industrial cooperation” between workers and investors, so does the affirmative action for workers not lose its centrality simply by putting it in the wider context of economic growth or the investment climate.

Where does this point lead us? While it is virtuous to put labor law in the wider context of economic growth and the investment climate, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's government should not lose sight of the reason why the Labor Law is there in the first place. To reiterate the point, when it falls short of affirmative action for workers, labor laws loses their *raison d'être*. Then the present government as the guardian of the Labor Law also loses its reason for being there, at least for most workers.

The above point seems crucial, as the expansion of free-market economy in this country, while virtuous, also has its downside. It is the growing power of money in politics: The weaker the purchasing power, the lower the access to policy making.

On this count, the financial clout of investors is of course no match for workers. But this is simply another way of saying that the ground is ripe to perpetually reduce the political influence of the workers.

After toiling day after day in sweat, workers need the Labor Law for affirmative action.

[The writer is a lecturer at the Graduate Program of the Driyarkara School of Philosophy, Jakarta, and holds a PhD from The London School of Economics]

Kalla reported for stirring up rally

Jakarta Post - May 9, 2006

Jakarta — A student organization has reported Vice President Jusuf Kalla to police for inciting violence at the May 3 labor rally.

The Muslim Students Association said Kalla breached Article 335 of the Criminal Code on improper conduct. "Jusuf Kalla made irresponsible statements, which urged the workers on," the association's chairman, Didi K. Safari, said.

The vice president was quoted on May 2 by mass media as saying the planned revision of the 2003 Labor Law would proceed, if five state universities made positive recommendations.

According to the association "the workers lost faith in the House of Representatives' promise it would press the government to cancel the revision, which saw them returning to the streets in anger." The association urged Kalla to issue a public apology for his "ill-timed" statement.

STUDENTS/YOUTH

Student movement in total slump

Jakarta Post - May 14, 2006

M. Taufiqurrahman, Jakarta — Eight years after

bringing down an authoritarian regime, the once thriving student movement is now in disarray.

No longer having a common enemy to unite their struggle, the movement is now deeply fragmented and can no longer produce a coherent platform. It is capable only of launching random attacks on the establishment.

And while eight years ago rallying students were given free lunches by sympathetic bystanders, what they get now is public scorn whenever they hit the streets and block traffic.

The absence of an authoritarian regime has prompted some student groups to join the power struggle, allowing themselves to be corrupted along the way.

The role of these student groups became clear when they took part in campaigns to topple the country's former presidents, from B.J. Habibie and Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid to Megawati Soekarnoputri.

These groups have relied on their "patrons" — former student activists who accumulated their own personal clout — for logistical support and in turn they backed whatever agenda was promoted by their patrons.

The patron-client relationship prevails and there is no critical discussion about any political agenda, which is dictated from above. "All discussion is completed at the elite level," a former student activist told The Jakarta Post.

Other groups have taken a more coordinated effort. Certain religious-leaning student movements have aligned themselves with the country's fastest growing political parties. These movements, which continue to build their networks on university campuses throughout the country through piety-oriented study clubs, have won the hearts of many students.

On the opposite side, there are also leftist-leaning student groups like City Forum (Forkot) which still earnestly attempt to channel popular demands. These groups, perennially dealing with logistical problems and dwindling membership, have been the most vocal in speaking out against the

fuel price hikes, unchecked privatization and low wages.

Recently, Forkot brought dozens of residents who live near to high-voltage power lines in West Java to the capital for a hunger strike.

Formal student organizations on campuses like university student senates and student councils have fared the worst. A lack of ideological discussion within these organizations seems to have rendered them helpless in the face of ever-changing political and social issues. Complicating matters, the appeal of consumerism, especially in Jakarta, has lured many students away from activism.

Jakarta, however, is not the only city to see student movements hit the wall. "Even in Yogyakarta, the bedrock of the student movement, they are in retreat," political analyst Hermawan Soelistyo told the Post.

Hermawan, a researcher at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, is familiar with student movements as he has had a hand in organizing students in the period approaching the downfall of the New Order regime.

The only place where students are admired for their activism, Hermawan said, is in Makassar, South Sulawesi. "Students there are still united by a common enemy, Jusuf Kalla. There has been constant resentment against him, even before he was Vice President," he said.

This however does not explain last week's students' actions in Makassar. They rallied against Chinese Indonesians following the arrest of one Chinese Indonesian who was arrested and charged of torturing his maid to death.

La Ode Ridaya Ngkowe, a former Yogyakarta-based student leader, said that what was needed was a reorientation of the direction the student movement should now take.

"Such a reorientation is possible only when students seriously ponder their ideological choices. You know the 1998 student movement was born out of intense discussion that started in the early 1980s," he told the Post.

Politics, activism lose appeal for students

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Jakarta — There are only a few post-graduate students having dinner at around 7 p.m., in a cafeteria in a state university in Depok, some one hour south of Jakarta.

Ujang, a food vendor in the cafeteria recalled, "Four or five years ago, students still spent their nights here, engaged in discussions or simply playing bridge, "Not to mention those involved in late night meetings,"he added."Nowadays, this place empties out even before maghrib (dusk)." University cafeterias, student body meeting rooms, as well as dormitories, were the silent witnesses of progressive student movements in 1998.

Eight years later, their silence is more a sign of how things have changed. "It is a classic problem. Less and less people want to be involved in student organizations and activities," University of Indonesia student executive body chief Azman Muammar said.

"School fees are getting higher and most students are just interested in getting through university fast,"he added."The rectorate has also slashed (the maximum) study period to only six years." For the majority of students, the May 1998 rallies are only a part of history, not a part of their lives nor interests.

"That is exactly why we have to move more strategically. Our focus should be our core academic competence in dealing with issues in society," Andi Tirta, chairman of the UI engineering school student council.

"Social and political issues should be handled by those from related schools, while we discuss, through seminars, things like power rates and alternative energy," he said.

Meanwhile, Indonesia Christian University (UKI) student activists face different problems. "The college authority subtly represses activists,

especially those concerned with social and political issues," said an economics student at the university, who requested anonymity. "That is why we moved off campus." The member of student organization Forum Kota (Forkot) said this condition meant students were less aware of what was going on in society.

Similar problems occur at different universities in Jakarta. Jakarta State University (UNJ) student council head Akmal Diky Hujatul Islam said that, although his organization had implemented programs to enlighten students on political and social issues, the response was lukewarm.

The student council inserted in its annual freshmen orientation program sessions on the history of the student movement, as well as those on how to manage and coordinate a movement. "Everything is included, from the technical side of organizing a rally to how to select and build up an issue," he said.

He said that although freshmen had undergone the program, those interested in involving themselves in social and political affairs were still a minority.

"The majority of students only come for classes then return home. Without knowing what is going on in society," he said. "While some others are only interested in having fun." Diky blamed such ignorance on the high number of contact hours.

Meanwhile, Lamgiat Siringoringo, former chief of Atmajaya University's campus bulletin Viaduct, said the college authorities had not supported student movements.

"The rectorate does not want to know. They just do not want to take responsibility," said Lamgiat. "All of this is the price of the struggle." Trying to reach students who were not familiar with the 1998 movement was also a bit pointless, he said. "They have been disconnected from history."

CORRUPTION/COLLUSION/NEPOTISM

Activists want Soeharto in court

Jakarta Post - May 15, 2006

Tony Hotland, Jakarta — The government's decision to drop graft charges against former president Soeharto has been slammed by anticorruption and human rights groups, which say the ailing former strongman could still be tried in absentia.

They say the decision to drop the charges, announced Friday by the Attorney General's Office, is an insult to justice and will set a bad precedent for future efforts to stamp out corruption in the country.

Berlin-based Transparency International Indonesia (TII) said the prosecution of Soeharto remained necessary to produce legal certainty in the case, before the state considered pardoning the former president on health grounds.

The corruption watchdog, the board of which includes prominent Indonesian lawyer-cum-activist Todung Mulya Lubis, said the decision was inappropriate because, according to the Criminal Code, such a move meant the case was closed because of a lack of evidence and/or the absence of a crime.

TII said that to prevent this decision from becoming another precedent for legal impunity for the rich and powerful, the government must confiscate all of Soeharto's wealth believed to have been amassed through corruption.

Senior lawyer Adnan Buyung Nasution has a similar view. "The legal process in Soeharto's case is important to see that a moral standard and the values of truth and justice are upheld. The government should continue the legal process, if necessary through an in absentia trial to declare whether or not Soeharto is guilty of anything," he said.

Buyung said the government also should take into account the fates of the thousands of people who were victimized by the policies of the Soeharto regime. "I hope the elites will not only see Soeharto's services to the country and his poor health, but also the fact that many victims died, their graves unmarked and their families still pursuing justice," he said.

Lucky Djani of Indonesian Corruption Watch said the decision to drop the charges against Soeharto

marked the end of the national drive against corruption. Like Soeharto, whose prosecution was halted due to ill health and his past services to the nation, other high-profile criminals could use similar excuses to escape justice, Lucky warned.

The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation said the courts had the power to force Soeharto to stand trial, as part of the principle of equality before the law.

The Presidium of the Indonesian Youth Congress, which was set up by a number of different youth organizations in 1999, said halting the prosecution of Soeharto violated the spirit of democracy, and that an in absentia trial was the most feasible option.

Longtime Soeharto critic Amien Rais said the country needed closure in this case. "It (Soeharto's case) has been discussed over the past eight years. There should be no more delays in settling this case once for all," he said.

The former People's Consultative Assembly speaker suggested that Soeharto be tried in absentia to give witnesses the opportunity to testify against the former president. Then the judges could deliver a verdict, determining Soeharto's legal status. "After the verdict, the President could grant a pardon, clemency or amnesty," he said.

Attorney General Abdul Rahman Saleh and Supreme Court Chief Justice Bagir Manan have both dismissed the idea of trying Soeharto in absentia, saying the former president does not qualify for an in absentia trial according to regulations governing such proceedings.

An in absentia trial, the two said, is possible only when the suspect is physically absent as a show of resisting the law, such as fleeing abroad.

Moves to clear Suharto's name spark outrage

Associated Press - May 13, 2006

Jakarta — For 14 years, Murad Aidit lived in a

penal colony on the jungle-covered Indonesian island of Buru with 12,000 other suspected communist sympathizers.

Sent into exile under the orders of long-ruling dictator Suharto, he was never tried for any crimes, never knew if he would leave the island alive. He was finally freed in 1979. But now, he fears his last chance for justice may be slipping away.

Indonesia's government announced Friday it was dropping corruption charges and is reportedly considering an official campaign to "rehabilitate" the name of the ailing Suharto, who was ousted from power in 1998 after a brutal 32-year rule.

Recuperating from colon surgery and stricken by a series of strokes, Suharto's deteriorating health was cited by prosecutors as the reason for dropping charges that he embezzled a staggering US\$600 million from the country's coffers before being forced out of office by nationwide riots and student protests.

Doctors said Suharto had regained full consciousness Saturday. He remained in a Jakarta hospital, where he has been treated for the last week and a half.

Critics allege Suharto, 84, is feigning illness and should be brought to trial, or tried in absentia.

"Suharto is the architect of my suffering," said Aidit, 85, who was released from Buru only after the United States pressured Suharto to close down the penal colony. "To drop the charges against him really hurt us," he said. "But he will be tried by history."

Suharto's opponents say embezzlement is not the worst of the former strongman's crimes. They say Suharto, one of the world's longest-ruling dictators, should be charged in connection with at least 500,000 political killings, mostly of communists and left-wing government opponents. Some put the figure closer to 1 million.

Hundreds of thousands of others are said to have been thrown into prison without trial. "Suharto was the mastermind of massacres that left an

estimated 1 million people dead across Indonesia and East Timor," said Carmel Budiardjo, a former political prisoner who now runs the London-based Indonesian human rights group TAPOL.

"He must not be allowed to go unpunished because millions of his victims still endure continued discrimination and suffering," she said, referring to former prisoners, exiles and their families. Justice, opponents say, is taking a backseat to political expediency.

Suharto, who has kept a low profile since his ouster, continues to carry substantial political clout. Many government leaders served — and profited — under him, and powerful members of the bureaucracy and military want to see his name cleared.

It was not immediately clear how that might be achieved, though a presidential declaration was seen as a possible start.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who was a general in the army under Suharto, was expected to make some sort of announcement on the rehabilitation issue after he returns from a summit of developing Muslim nations being held this weekend on the resort island of Bali.

But while senior officials have expressed support for clearing Suharto's name, Yudhoyono has expressed concern that any move to do so would be highly divisive. "The waves of opposing and supporting voices are getting higher and this could lead to conflict," he told a news conference before leaving for Bali on Friday.

The moves to clear Suharto's name also come almost eight years to the day after the killing of six students when police fired on thousands of protesters in the riots that led to Suharto's downfall. Indonesian television showed videos of those riots throughout the day Saturday.

Some of Suharto's critics have called for him to apologize to the country, or return money he allegedly stole, in exchange for the case being dropped.

A day after the charges were dropped, public reaction remained subdued. A small group of

demonstrators gathered outside Suharto's residence soon after the announcement, some carrying posters reading "Bring Him To Trial," but no incidents were reported. No significant protests were held Saturday, a national holiday.

[Associated Press writer Ninik Karmini contributed to this report.]

Godfather of corruption Suharto stays above the law

Paras Indonesia - May 15, 2006

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's cornerstone policy of combating top-level corruption was badly dented after the Attorney General's Office dropped graft charges against former dictator Suharto in view of his poor health.

Yudhoyono is Indonesia's sixth president and the fourth since Suharto was forced to step down amid massive social and economic upheaval in May 1998. He has by far been the most determined to tackle endemic corruption, but more still needs to be done, such as cleaning up the crooked judiciary and bureaucracy. Letting Suharto off the hook may be sending a message to other corrupt officials that graft conducted while in service to the nation will be tolerated.

Corruption and legal uncertainty are seen as the major impediments to attracting badly needed new foreign investment, although government officials in recent weeks have been claiming that reducing labor rights, such as severance pay, is the key to greater investment and national prosperity.

Fans of Yudhoyono argue that the Suharto case is a one-off, as his administration has overseen the jailing of numerous prominent figures for corruption, including Suharto's half-brother Probosutedjo and suspended Aceh governor Abdullah Puteh.

Some observers say it was inevitable that Suharto would never be brought to justice on account of the nation's culture of deference to authority

figures, so the government should instead try to appease critics by going after Suharto's children and cronies accused of corruption.

Anti-corruption groups have accused Suharto and his family of amassing anywhere from \$9 billion to \$35 billion during his 32 years in power. The former president, who was only ever charged over the embezzlement of some \$600 million from state charities, has also been accused of responsibility for human rights abuses that left more than 500,000 people dead.

Suharto was formally declared a corruption suspect in August 2000 but escaped trial after his lawyers and doctors claimed that a series of strokes had left him irreversibly brain damaged.

The Attorney General's Office last month announced it would re-examine his health to see if he could be brought to court, as he had appeared healthy and mentally alert at occasional family gatherings and reunions with old cronies. But on May 4, Suharto was hospitalized for intestinal bleeding and later underwent colon surgery. He is still recovering and underwent a minor follow-up operation on Thursday night to aid his digestion.

His hospitalization prompted his many sycophants within the political elite to begin clamoring for the corruption charges to be dropped on humanitarian grounds.

Case closed, mostly

Yudhoyono's response to the demands was characteristically indecisive and revealed cracks within his government. State Secretary Yusril Izha Mahendra on Thursday announced that a meeting between the president, senior legislators, the attorney general and Supreme Court chief on late Wednesday had concluded the case against Suharto should be dropped because of his poor health and service to the nation. He said the attorney general would soon issue an order declaring the investigation over.

Presidential spokesman Andi Mallarangeng immediately denied that Yudhoyono had made any decision on the case. Mahendra responded the following day by saying he knew more about the matter than Mallarangeng. He also presented

Yudhoyono with a draft decree for the "rehabilitation of Suharto's name". He said the decree would also rehabilitate the reputation of founding president Sukarno, who was overthrown by Suharto in 1966 and spent his final years under virtual house arrest.

Yudhoyono on Friday declared he would postpone making any decision until "the appropriate time", claiming he wanted to avert potential conflict between Suharto's supporters and opponents.

It was standard Yudhoyono talk, indicating that his military advisors might have been urging him to end the legal process against Suharto, whereas others had no doubt cautioned that such a move could undermine his high-profile war on corruption and damage his popularity.

Just hours after Yudhoyono stated he was sitting on the fence and not saying anything, the buck was passed to Attorney General Abdul Rahman Saleh to announce the Suharto case was axed.

He said an independent team of doctors appointed by his office had met with Suharto's own medical team on Thursday to discuss the prospect of putting him on trial and "the results are not good". The buck was then passed further, with Saleh saying the prosecutor in charge of the case, South Jakarta Prosecutor's Office head Iskanto had on Thursday issued a letter of order canceling the investigation (Surat Ketetapan Penghentian Penuntutan — SKPP), so the case was "closed by law" due to the defendant's "permanent illness".

Saleh said the case could be reopened if there are new developments, such as Suharto being declared fit for trial. "His status is legally free. However, he is not entirely free. This [SKPP] could be lifted again if there are other reasons. The only reason at the moment is his health. If the doctors say he's healthy, it [an investigation] could be put forward again," he was quoted as saying by detikcom online news portal.

He then tried to explain why Mahendra had broken the news of the decision to drop the case a day before other officials or any final statement from Yudhoyono. "The SKPP had actually been finished yesterday [Thursday] and I sent it on to the state secretary. But I did not yet know whether or not

the president had read it. We eventually confirmed the letter had arrived, so I have just announced it now. That's the rule."

Saleh said that despite the dropping of the corruption charge, his office was considering pursuing a civil lawsuit against Suharto in an effort to recover state funds allegedly embezzled from charities under his control. He said the results of an audit conducted in 2000 showed that Suharto's alleged embezzlement of seven foundations had robbed the state of \$419 million and Rp1.3 trillion (\$149 million).

He denied that Yudhoyono had ordered him to issue the SKPP, saying the Attorney General's Office has the authority to stop or postpone an investigation, whereas the president has the final authority to determine whether Suharto should be absolved or granted amnesty.

Yudhoyono had admitted that Suharto is unlikely to be brought to court and said justice could be served if his foundations, at the center of the case, were to be taken over by the state.

One of Suharto's lawyers, O.C. Kaligis, said his client's foundations and assets cannot be touched or further investigated because the case is now closed. He expressed gratitude to the government and the Attorney General's Office for dropping the corruption case "because Suharto has become very feeble in his old age and is really sick".

Criticism & disunity

The announcement that Suharto would not be prosecuted came on the eighth anniversary of the May 12, 1998, shooting by state troops of four students at the end of a pro-democracy rally at West Jakarta's Trisakti University. The shooting was followed by organized mass riots that left more than 1,000 people dead and hastened Suharto's resignation.

In keeping with the national tradition of covering up the truth behind momentous political events, the government has refused to try senior generals over the Trisakti killings because parliament has ruled the incident did not constitute a grave violation of human rights.

Student protesters on Friday attempted to march to Suharto's residence on Jalan Cendana in Menteng, Central Jakarta, but were held back by police. The students demanded Suharto be tried and called for justice for the Trisakti victims.

Separately, senior political analyst Arbi Sanit of the University of Indonesia said the contradictory statements made by Yusril Mahendra and Yudhoyono on the Suharto case indicated a lack of unity in the government. "The government is not unified. This is not a coalition government, but a government of conspiracy. If the government were a coalition, then its senior members would share the same platforms. But now the platform between SBY and the people around him is different," he was quoted as saying by detikcom.

He said Vice President Jusuf Kalla had demanded the legal process against Suharto be stopped and Mahendra later leaked the tentative ruling of the Attorney General's Office because both had benefited in the past from Suharto's patronage. Mahendra is Suharto's former speech writer, while Kalla is a successful businessman and chairman of Golkar Party, Suharto's former political vehicle.

Prominent lawyer Adnan Buyung Nasution opted to criticize Yudhoyono, accusing him of meddling in the judiciary by discussing the Suharto case with Saleh and Supreme Court chief justice Bagir Manan.

He said Saleh and Manan had behaved unprofessionally by agreeing to discuss a case that was still ongoing, so both of them should resign for allowing the president to undermine the judiciary's independence.

"If the president had wanted to intervene in the case, he should have exercised his right to grant Suharto amnesty or abolish the charges against him," said Buyung. "But don't have the case stopped like this."

Former People's Consultative Assembly speaker Amien Rais said the decision to stop the case would tarnish Indonesia's international image. He said Suharto should be tried in absentia and then pardoned if his family hands back much of its wealth to the state.

Human rights activists agree that at the very

least Suharto should have to surrender ill-gotten wealth to the state and apologize for his wrongdoings.

Suharto's lawyers counter that he already apologized to the nation in his brief resignation speech of May 21, 1998. "For the people's assistance and support during my term to rule this Indonesian nation and country, I would like to say thank you and apologize for any mistakes or shortcomings on my part," he said. In a rare interview later that year, he denied allegations that he had stashed billions of dollars in embezzled state funds abroad, saying he did not have a single cent in a foreign account.

Former student activists Eka Saputra and Nur Kholis on Sunday said Suharto must be brought to justice for the sake of law enforcement and the nation's history. But they acknowledged he was likely to go the grave without being tried.

"Suharto must be punished. When he goes to the grave then he will be punished. God will certainly give him a difficult punishment in the hereafter," said Saputra, adding that Suharto's children and grandchildren should be brought to court.

Kholis, who now heads the Legal Aid Foundation's chapter in Palembang, South Sumatra, said that after Suharto dies, authorities may become sufficiently bold to investigate his corruption cronies.

Thanks or no thanks? still critical

Mahendra said Suharto expressed gratitude to Yudhoyono upon being informed the government was planning to drop the corruption case against him. "I told Mr Suharto about what the government is preparing and he told me to extend his gratitude to SBY," he was quoted as saying by state news agency Antara after visiting Suharto at Pertamina Hospital on Thursday.

Suharto was apparently feeling less chatty when his lawyers informed him of the same news. "Not a single word came from him because he is still in critical condition," lawyer Juan Felix Tampubolon was quoted as saying by the Financial Times.

Mahendra acknowledged that Suharto was unable to

say much because he remains weak after surgery. "I just visited Mr Suharto on his sick bed after the operation. He is still very weak and can speak only a few words in succession and has difficulty breathing." Doctors on Sunday said Suharto's health was improving although he was still in a critical condition and receiving blood transfusions.

Parliament speaker Agung Laksono visited the hospital but said Suharto was sleeping. "I dared not wake him up. It's better that he rests," he was quoted as saying by detikcom.

"The doctors his condition was better but still critical. He still has a cough because of a lung infection," he said, adding it was fitting the legal process be stopped because Suharto was old and senile and had served the nation well.

Antigraft body staying out of Soeharto case

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Jakarta — With growing support from politicians to halt the prosecution of former president Soeharto, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) says it is up to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to decide on the case.

"We leave it to the President. In making this decision he must certainly involve the public through legislative leaders," commission deputy chairman Erry Riyana Hardjapamekas told The Jakarta Post on Thursday night.

He said if the case against Soeharto was dropped it would not "significantly affect efforts" to fight corruption in the country. "It's an extraordinary case," Erry said.

A source at the independent antigraft commission said, "The KPK can accept this if the decision on Soeharto does not halt the corruption investigations into his cronies." Meanwhile, human rights and antigraft activists have insisted the legal process against the ailing former strongman go forward.

Activists said Soeharto could be tried in absentia if he was unable to stand trial because of his health. They did not rule out the possibility of a pardon for the former president if he was found guilty.

"It is the President's prerogatives to forgive him (Soeharto). But the President should first allow legal authorities to complete the legal process against him," Usman Hamid from the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras) said Thursday.

Hendardi, from the Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association, said from a legal standpoint it would be possible to try Soeharto in absentia. "If Soeharto is not strong enough to stand trial, his case must still be taken to court, even without his physical presence," he told a news conference Wednesday.

The joint press briefing was attended by activists from several other non-governmental organizations, including Indonesian Corruption Watch, Human Rights Watch Group, Imparsial and the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation.

However, Supreme Court Chief Justice Bagir Manan said Soeharto could not be tried in absentia because it would violate regulations. An in absentia trial is allowed only when a suspect is physically absent as a show of resisting the law, such as fleeing abroad, he said.

"Soeharto is here, but he is physically unable to stand trial. Let's not get into technical squabbles; let's be logical. We should see objectively whether the man can stand trial," Bagir said Thursday.

Usman from Kontras said before the government decided to pardon Soeharto, it should consider the fates of victims of human rights abuses that took place during his 32-year autocratic regime.

He suggested the government set up an ad hoc special team to identify victims across Indonesia and provide them with some form of compensation. "Many victims are living in economic hardship due to Soeharto's unjust policies. And it is the responsibility of the current government to help them," he said.

Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) lawmaker Mustafa Kamal said the prosecution of Soeharto remained necessary to determine whether or not he was guilty, after which the government could consider giving him a pardon. "Simply granting a pardon isn't an option because that would leave problems, and it would set a bad precedent for future cases," he said.

People's Consultative Assembly Speaker Hidayat Nur Wahid, who attended a meeting late Wednesday between President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and leaders of legislative and legal institutions, said there was no decision yet on whether to drop Soeharto's case. "It's not true that the government has decided to halt the corruption probe into Soeharto. The meeting was only to seek input," said Hidayat, who is a former PKS leader.

On Wednesday the Assembly said Soeharto should issue a public apology over the excesses of his regime and hand over his cash-rich charitable foundations to the state before the government considered closing his case.

Corruption charges dropped against Suharto

Associated Press - May 12, 2006

Eric Talmadge, Jakarta — Corruption charges against ailing former Indonesian dictator Suharto have been dropped, and he is a "free man," Indonesia's attorney general announced Friday. "Now Suharto is no longer a defendant, he is a free man," said Attorney General Abdul Rahman Saleh.

Suharto, 84, is currently in the hospital in Jakarta, where he has undergone colon surgery. Doctors say he is in frail health, and Rahman indicated his inability to stand trial was behind the decision to drop the charges.

"Our conclusion, after hearing the statement from the doctors, is that Suharto's condition is getting worse," Rahman said in his announcement. Rahman added, however, the case could be reopened if "new developments" were found — suggesting

that Suharto could still be tried if his health improves.

Rahman also said prosecutors were still investigating a total of 3.4 trillion rupiah (US\$392.5 million) allegedly collected by seven fundraising foundations controlled by Suharto.

Suharto was ousted after 32 years in 1998 amid student protests and nationwide riots. In 2000, prosecutors charged him with embezzling \$600 million, but he never saw the inside of court after his lawyers argued that a series of strokes had left him with irreparable brain damage.

Dropping the charges has been hotly debated recently. Rahman's announcement came just hours after Indonesia's president said he decided not to drop the case, citing what he said was public anger over the proposed move.

"The waves of opposing and supporting voices are getting higher and this could lead to conflict," Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono told an early morning media conference. "I have chosen to shelve this problem... until the right time."

On Thursday, State Secretary Yusril Ihza Mahendra — appointed by Yudhoyono to investigate the Suharto case — said the government intended to drop charges and take steps to "rehabilitate" his name.

In recent days, the plan to drop the case has been front page news in Indonesia and has drawn much editorial comment for and against the move, but there have been no threats of large demonstrations. A few dozen protesters had gathered outside Suharto's home Friday, but no incidents were reported.

Suharto, whose regime was widely regarded as one of most corrupt and brutal of the late 20th century, still has many powerful supporters in the government, parliament and military who want his name cleared.

Some people have called for Suharto to apologize to the nation, or return money he allegedly stole, in exchange for the case being dropped. Others allege that he is feigning illness, and should be brought to trial or tried in absentia.

Doctors say Suharto — who has been hospitalized at least four times since 1998 — is weak, but recovering well from his latest operation, performed after he was diagnosed with intestinal bleeding.

Critics say that the \$600 million embezzlement case represents only a tiny fraction of the money he and his family stole. They also say Suharto should be charged in connection with at least 500,000 political killings during his regime, mostly of communists and left-wing government opponents. Suharto has kept a low profile since his ouster.

[Associated Press writer Ali Kotarumalos in Jakarta contributed to this report.]

Indonesia must continue fighting war on graft: World Bank

Jakarta Post - May 9, 2006

Hera Diani, Jakarta — Indonesia may have progressed in controlling corruption during the past two years, but it should continue its efforts or risk lagging behind other countries, an expert warns.

World Bank Institute global programs director Daniel Kaufmann said Monday that Indonesia had moved from 16th position from the bottom of the institute's global corruption index in 2002 to about 40th from the bottom in 2004, among the more than 200 countries the bank rated.

According to the index, the country has also made progress in several governance indicators — the rule of law, government effectiveness, political stability and "voice and accountability" — from 1998 to 2004.

Despite this, Indonesia was still ranked among institute's "red alert" countries, Kaufmann told a seminar on corruption here. "While the progress is not negligible, Indonesia needs to continue improving its governance, as no other country wants to stay at the bottom," he said.

Kaufmann said countries like Indonesia needed to honestly question efforts that had failed to improve governance. Focussing only on bureaucratic corruption, attempting to end graft by overregulation, creating excessive anticorruption agencies and blaming graft on history, culture or legal issues — all were ideas that should be reevaluated, he said.

Increased transparency was essential to controlling corruption, he said, and there were 10 criteria that needed to be met by the country to improve its graft “scorecard”.

These included the need for the public disclosure of the assets and incomes of candidates, public officials, politicians, legislators and all of their dependents. Political campaign contributions by individuals and firms, campaign expenditure, and the results of parliamentary voting also needed to be made public, he said.

The government needed to effectively enforce conflict of interest laws, separating business, politics, the legislative branch and government. It should also publicly blacklist firms found to have bribed officials and effectively enforce laws governing the freedom of information, he said.

Other important reforms involved fiscal/financial transparency; e-procurements (Internet transparency and competition); creating a transparent, streamlined regulatory framework, corruption surveys and governance monitoring.

World Bank Jakarta official Joel Hellman said the country’s Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) was on the right track by continuing to prosecute corrupt officials. “But the committee needs to get serious and strategic with the issues (of corruption),” he said without elaborating.

Kaufmann said it was important to explode myths surrounding good governance; that it was a luxury only rich countries could afford and that it took generations for governance to improve.

“A number of emerging economies, including the Baltics, Botswana and Chile have shown that it is possible to reach high standards of governance without yet having joined the ranks of wealthy nations,” Kaufmann said. “There are also

improvements exhibited by some African countries in a short period of time."

REGIONAL/COMMUNAL CONFLICTS

Makassar violence highlights ethnic tension in city

Jakarta Post - May 15, 2006

Andi Hajramurni, Makassar — Peace has returned to Makassar following protests triggered by a housemaid's death at the hands of her Chinese-Indonesian employer, but there's still an uneasy feeling in the air.

The reactions of residents and students have made many city residents, especially Chinese-Indonesians, feel uneasy. Chinese-Indonesians are a minority population numbering around 30,000 out of the city's around 1.2 million residents.

Over the history of their 400-year presence, there have been several conflicts pitting Chinese-Indonesians against the native population.

The latest was in 1997. It was triggered by the murder of a girl, Anni Mujahidah, by a Chinese-Indonesian man, Benny Karre, who was suffering from a mental disorder. Soon after learning of the murder, residents went on a rampage — killing Benny and then moving on to other targets. They attacked and set fire to residences and stores belonging to the city's Chinese-Indonesians, and some took advantage of the week-long chaos by looting.

Last week, Wandu Tandawan's abuse of his two maids in Makassar, resulting in the death of one, 20-year-old Hasniati, reignited the fire. Locals and students went to the streets to protest the killing.

A student activist, Ibnu Hajar of the Alauddin State Islamic University in Makassar, claimed the protest reflected students' disappointment with the alleged unfair treatment of locals by Chinese-Indonesians. "They (the Chinese-Indonesians) are newcomers, but they act however they like toward locals. We hope this case will make them behave properly toward locals, many of

whom work as maids in their houses," Ibnu charged.

Another student activist, Maulana, of Makassar State University, claimed the protest was a spontaneous act of solidarity aimed at pressing the police to thoroughly investigate the case instead of making "a backroom deal with the suspect".

He claimed Hasniati was the third abuse victim. He said the previous cases had caused conflicts in the city and the students did not want such clashes to happen again.

"We don't want this case to develop into a racial issue that might trigger another conflict. That's why we want the police to handle the case thoroughly and transparently," Maulana said.

The fear of such incidents has left its mark on Chinese-Indonesians in Makassar. Some prefer to limit their interactions with locals. Others trust high fences for protection.

This was not the case some 400 years ago, when Chinese-Indonesians first came to the city as traders and migrants, blending in with locals and other foreigners.

But the good relations turned sour when Dutch rulers implemented a policy of division in 1935. The policy split Makassar residents into three groups — locals, Europeans, and easterners, including Chinese, Indians and Arabs.

Each was placed in different parts of the city: locals in the south and in the northern outskirts, Europeans in the city center, and easterners in the north. The easterners were given easy access to the bureaucracy for purposes such as buying land that had belonged to the locals.

A sociologist from Makassar-based Hasanuddin University, Muhammad Darwis, said the unfair treatment became the root of the locals' discontentment toward the Chinese-Indonesians, who slowly came to control the economic sector. The feeling was like a time bomb ready to explode, he added, especially since the local government nowadays also tends to keep its doors open for Chinese-Indonesian businesspeople.

Darwis, who has conducted a study of social interaction between the Chinese and Makassar's Bugis people, said exclusivity among the Chinese-Indonesians was among the factors that could be blamed for their lack of interaction with the locals.

"Apart from their exclusivity and inability to interact with locals, there is also social jealousy since the Chinese-Indonesians, who are not as populous, control the economy and are favored by the administration." He said the locals are an open community who can tolerate differences.

But several Chinese-Indonesians said their exclusivity is born out of the situation, since they are busy with their businesses and still feel frightened by the previous incidents targeting them.

"We're traumatized by past incidents because Chinese-Indonesians were always blamed and became the target of the locals' anger," said Yonggris, secretary of South Sulawesi United Communication Forum.

He said historically, Chinese-Indonesians are not exclusive by nature since they are traders who need to interact with their customers.

He admitted they could not reach the grassroots of the local culture, however, since there is a tendency among locals to see them as not being entirely Indonesian citizens.

"All of us, both locals and Chinese-Indonesians, should look hard at ourselves to see what's really going on, why there's disharmony among us. But we really hope that we can be accepted as Indonesian citizens by the locals. Let's open up. If there's a crime committed by a Chinese-Indonesian, it's not related to his ethnicity. Please don't generalize it and make us the target of anger," Yonggris said.

Makassar calmer after student protests

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Andi Hajramurni, Makassar — The South Sulawesi capital of Makassar is returning to normal despite rallies staged by students following the death of a domestic helper allegedly after being tortured by her Chinese-Indonesian employer.

Many shops in the downtown area, owned mainly by Chinese-Indonesians, remained open Thursday. Others opened their shops for only part of the day over fears that they may be vandalized during student rallies.

Hundreds of students threatened Wednesday to launch a sweeping operation against Chinese-Indonesians in Makassar within 48 hours if the police failed to investigate the death of the domestic helper and to charge the arrested suspect, Wandu Tandiwana.

The students, who claimed to represent an alliance of native Indonesians, raised their demands with the Makassar Police under the watchful eye of hundreds of police personnel.

Police began to remove the road block Thursday along Jl. Gunung Latimojong, where the suspect lives.

Police were seen only in the business district, residential areas where Chinese-Indonesians lived, and junctions through which the protesters passed.

Chinese-Indonesians have been the target of those who claim to be native Indonesians since the New Order government possibly because they often enjoy greater prosperity and because of their dominance in the country's economy.

Racial tensions rose in Makassar in 1997 when mobs set fire to buildings following the murder of a child by a Chinese-Indonesian.

At the Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar, students staged a rally at the campus by burning tires and giving speeches along Jl. Sultan Alauddin. A similar rally was also held by students of Muhammadiyah University.

During the demonstration, the students expressed concern over earlier anarchic student protests. "Our action is peaceful. We condemn the anarchic

actions of certain groups," said an unidentified student. The students also reminded the people not to be easily provoked by groups who wanted to create unrest in Makassar.

Meanwhile, the regional police of Makassar continued investigating the case, by questioning a number of witnesses and holding a reconstruction of the crime at the scene.

Makassar Mayor Ilham Arief Siradjuddin denied Thursday that there was an exodus of Chinese-Indonesians from Makassar following the death of the domestic helper and the subsequent protests. "We have verified the reports and there wasn't any exodus at all. They were worried, but they did not leave Makassar," Ilham said. Ilham urged the public to view the incident purely as a criminal case and to leave it to the police.

A similar call was raised by chairman of the National Unity Communication Forum Anton Obey, who acknowledged that businessmen visiting Makassar had been forced to shorten their stay. "There isn't any exodus. Where will we go? We do not have any other country except Indonesia," he said.

Anton also admitted the recent incident had raised fears among Chinese-Indonesians that Makassar would be hit by riots again. "Please don't generalize any problem. It is a coincidence that the suspect is a Chinese-Indonesian, but it doesn't mean that all other Indonesians of Chinese descent have to bear the burden of his mistake," he added.

Makassar tense as students threaten ethnic Chinese

Jakarta Post - May 11, 2006

Jakarta — Hundreds of students are threatening to launch a sweeping operation against Chinese-Indonesians in Makassar, South Sulawesi, within 48 hours if the police fail to investigate the death of a maid after she was allegedly tortured by her Chinese-Indonesian employer.

Some 1,000 students, who claimed to represent an

alliance of native Indonesians, raised their demands with the Makassar Police on Wednesday, under the watchful eye of hundreds of police personnel.

The students caused massive traffic congestion in the city and forced some stores, which had earlier reopened after closing Tuesday due to growing protests, to close their premises.

The protest was triggered by Saturday's death of domestic helper Hasniati, 20, after she was allegedly tortured by her Chinese-Indonesian employer Wandu Tandiawan.

The students' spokesperson, Maulana, urged the police to thoroughly investigate the case, impose a heavy penalty on Wandu Tandiawan and reject the presence of Chinese-Indonesians in the city.

The students said that if the police failed to enforce the law within the next 48 hours, they would conduct a sweeping operation against Chinese-Indonesians.

Despite the threats, security remained under control, although several students pelted stones at stores, forcing some stores to put up signs that the store "belongs to native Indonesians" or "belongs to native Muslims".

They also forced Chinese-Indonesians they stopped outside the Association of Islamic Students (HMI) in Makassar to give a speech on Hasniati's death. "I have no idea about the dead victim. I'm a Makassar-born Indonesian citizen," A Liong, a Chinese-Indonesian, told Antara.

Apart from the students, dozens of other protesters, including students and residents from Hasniati's native village of Sinjai, also arrived at the police station to get a close look at the suspect.

The protesters expressed distrust for the police who claimed the suspect was suffering from a mental disorder, the same excuse used during a 1997 abuse case against another housemaid by her Chinese-Indonesian employer which had also triggered unrest in the city.

"This time, it's the same. The suspect, Wandu

Tandiawan, who tortured Hasniati until her death and (injured) her friend Nurbaya, is said to be suffering from a mental disorder. So we want to get a close look to see whether or not he is really insane," a protester, who was not named, was quoted by Antara as saying.

Deputy chief of Makassar Police, Adj. Sr. Comr. Budi Susanto, met the protesters, saying the police have examined the suspect and would process the case transparently. "The students are permitted to monitor the investigation conducted by the police," Budi told Antara.

Earlier, Makassar Police Chief Sr. Comr. Kurniawan said the suspect was scheduled to undergo psychological tests Wednesday.

Several community leaders, including those from South Sulawesi's Indonesian Ulema Council, the Communication Forum for National Unity and the police, met Wednesday with the families of Hasniati and Nurbaya.

In the meeting, the participants condemned Wandi's actions and demanded that the police thoroughly investigate the case while at the same time, maintaining security and order in the city.

Villagers fight off police to protect Poso suspect

Jakarta Post - May 11, 2006

The National Police appealed Wednesday to villagers in Lawangan to give up a man accused of masterminding the 2005 beheadings of three Christian schoolgirls in Poso, Central Sulawesi.

"How can we do an investigation if the citizens prevent us from doing our job," National Police spokesman Brig. Gen. Anton Bachrul Alam said.

Anton said a suspect, Taufik Badahu, was being protected by people in his village of Lawangan, who attacked police officers trying to capture him on Monday and Tuesday.

He said when two members of the police counterterror squad visited Taufik's house Monday

to arrest him, several local residents called for help and banged on power poles to alert their neighbors.

Around 100 people ran out of their houses and attacked the two policemen, injuring one of them, Anton said. During the incident, the locals also burned the policemen's two motorcycles.

On Tuesday, a team of officers led by Poso Police chief Adj. Sr. Comr. Rudy Sufahriadi visited Lawangan village on a second attempt to arrest Taufik. This time, local residents threw rocks at their cars and the team retreated.

Anton said Tuesday's statement by National Police chief of detectives Comr. Gen. Makbul Padmanegara that police had arrested Taufik was incorrect. Taufik along with another suspect, Hasanuddin, are alleged to have masterminded the beheadings of the three girls and the 2004 murder of Helmi Tobiling, the wife of a soldier. Police arrested Hasanuddin in Palu on Monday.

The police said a total of six men, including Hasanuddin, had been arrested for their alleged roles in the two separate incidents.

Anton said the police planned to use persuasion rather than force to capture Taufik. However, he said police would take action against all the villagers who had attacked officers doing their duty. "We hope that citizens will not be provoked by irresponsible people wanting to take advantage of the situation," he said.

LOCAL & COMMUNITY ISSUES

Hundreds of schools in Jambi unusable

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Jambi — Up to 3,464 out of about 16,499 elementary school classrooms throughout Jambi are so badly damaged they are unable to be used, an official said.

"The damage has disrupted classes as most of them cannot be used any longer," Hendri Mashyur, a member of the Jambi Legislative Council, said, adding that classrooms in 4,289 other schools were

slightly damaged "This is an example of neglect," he said.

The damaged classrooms has resulted in 14,269 out of 443,961 elementary school students failing to pass the required test to go on to the next grade in the 2004/2005 school year, he said. By comparison the number of students who failed the end of year tests in 2003/2004 reached only 9,681, he said.

Hendri said that this reflected the poor condition of education in Jambi, which was also worsened by the fact that 6,000 out of a total of 6,485 teachers in the province were not qualified to teach.

Bogor commuters run amok as trains delayed

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Theresia Sufa, Bogor — Bogor train station and several shops inside the station became easy targets Thursday morning when commuters, who were waiting for the economy train to Jakarta, turned nasty upon hearing news of further delays.

The commuters were left stranded on three economy trains — scheduled to leave the station at 5:21 a.m., 7:02 a.m., and 7:20 a.m. — without explanation, and tempers ran high by the time an announcement was made at 7:30 a.m., but, again, with no explanation for the delays.

The waiting passengers quickly became a mob, grabbing stones and blocks of wood from the train tracks, smashing office windows and public facilities, including a Dunkin' Donuts shop inside the station. No one was hurt in the incident.

"The passengers were probably already late for work and became impatient and disappointed by the delays," the head of the Greater Jakarta division of train company Kereta Api (KA), Fating Setiawan, said.

He said the delays were caused by a faulty railway switch on one of the tracks. Bogor station master

Zaenal Abidin was not in the office when the incident happened, and was unavailable for comment.

The mob calmed down after 20 minutes when an economy train finally departed for Jakarta. Ten minutes later, Police came on the scene.

"These kinds of delays happen all the time," Ahmad Karim, an economy train passenger who works in Tebet, South Jakarta, said, adding that passengers were sick of inconsistencies in the train schedule. "What's worse, officials didn't say why the delays happened or how long we were supposed to wait," another passenger, Wachid, said.

Fating said the incident would serve as a warning to the company to lift its game. "We will try to improve the maintenance of our equipment, and make sure our officials are more responsive to complaints".

Land dispute turns violent

Jakarta Post - May 11, 2006

Pangkalpinang, Bangka Belitung — Dozens of residents of Riau Silip village, Bangka regency, attacked people and equipment Tuesday over a land dispute.

The residents set fire to a car, motorcycle and heavy equipment owned by agricultural company PT THEP. They also vandalized the local government office. Bangka Police chief Adj. Sr. Comr. Sudarsono confirmed the incident to Antara on Wednesday. He said the residents accused the company of expanding its operations onto 28 hectares of land owned by the people of the village.

Three of the company's employees were injured in the incident and taken to hospital for treatment.

Riau Silip district chief Basuni expressed regret over the attack on his office. "The district office belongs to the government. Why did the protesters damage it?" he was quoted by Antara.

PT THEP spokesperson Rohana denied the company had trespassed onto the villagers' land.

GENDER ISSUES

Lampung supplying women for sex trade: Activist

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Oyos Saroso H.N., Bandarlampung — Lampung province is no longer just a transit point for human trafficking, but has become a supplier of women for the sex trade in Batam, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, according to an activist.

Women's Advocacy Commission executive director Siti Noor Laila said the province's high unemployment rate and a lack of awareness of the problem had caused the province to become one of the main suppliers of sex workers after North Sumatra.

"And the number (of women being trafficked) is likely to increase this year. In 2005, there were 13 known human trafficking victims from Lampung, while 20 victims have already been found between January and May of this year. And these are just those who have been rescued. The number of cases that has gone unnoticed could number in the hundreds," Laila said Tuesday.

She said traffickers used a number of different methods to lure victims. One of the most common methods is for traffickers to pose as employment agents recruiting women to work overseas.

Some of the victims are sent overseas to Malaysia, Singapore or Hong Kong, while many others are trafficked to Batam in Riau Islands province, via Jambi and Bengkulu provinces, Laila said.

Lampung Manpower Office deputy head Haryo Satmiko said an unemployment rate of 57.22 percent in Lampung, or at least 500,000 people out of work, made many women eager to find jobs overseas, putting them in danger of being targeted by human traffickers.

Haryo said the public had to become more aware of the proper procedures for working overseas to avoid falling victim to traffickers. He said many

of the people looking to work overseas had little education or experience and were easy prey for middlemen.

Supervision of migrant workers is also slack and cases of document forgery rampant, he said. "The number of (trafficking) victims from Lampung is considered high. People must be informed of the dangers of human trafficking, which is a violation of basic human rights," Haryo said.

Lampung Women's Empowerment Bureau chief Elya Muchtar said Lampung's geographical position as a buffer area for Jakarta made it more liable to human trafficking.

Elya said more than 100 trafficking cases had been discovered in Lampung, but many more went unnoticed because crooked agents sought their victims directly, sometimes going door-to-door in Bandarlampung city and South Lampung, Tanggamus, East Lampung and Tulangbawang regencies. The agents usually target women between the ages of 13 and 30 from poor families.

"Many of the trafficking victims who end up in Batam come from Lampung. But they don't have Lampung ID cards, but rather IDs from other areas to conceal their identities," Elya said.

The Lampung provincial administration is trying to fight back, including educating the public about the dangers of the trade and issuing a decree on a 2005-2009 action plan to combat human trafficking. The administration also has formed a human trafficking task force, comprising representatives of the government and related agencies.

Authorities and organizations have been able to rescue some of the women caught up in the trade.

The Women's Advocacy Commission is currently handling a trafficking case in Panjang, Bandarlampung. "We have placed the victim, CN, 14, in protective custody. She was held captive and raped. She was able to escape before being sent to Batam to be sold," Laila said.

And at the end of last year, police in Bandarlampung rescued 24 girls who were to be trafficked to Batam. Unfortunately, for every girl and woman rescued, there are many more who

disappear into the sex trade.

Women's commission urges revision of Criminal Code

Jakarta Post - May 12, 2006

Jakarta — The National Commission on Violence Against Women is seeking a revision of the Criminal Code Procedures (Kuhap) to make them more gender-sensitive.

Speaking at a discussion on violence against women at the Sahid Hotel in Jakarta earlier this week, commission chairwoman Kamala Chandrakirana said the State Ministry for Women's Empowerment should be at the forefront in pressing for legislation that was not biased against women.

Kamala singled out the code's articles on rape, which require women to prove a sexual assault with a medical report in which the presence of sperm is essential evidence.

"It means that there has to be penetration, whereas the international standard rules that attempted rape is already a punishable crime," she said.

The discussion also involved visiting City University of New York law professor and International Women's Rights Law Clinic director Rhonda Copelon. Copelon said that under international law, it was not necessary to present evidence of rape in the courtroom during the trial.

"In many cases in Indonesia, however, women are blamed if they do not present evidence. Many rape cases here could turn victims into defendants because they cannot bring the evidence to court," she said.

If national laws failed to address women's interests, Rhonda, said, instances of human rights abuses and violence against women could be made into international cases.

"We can bring charges under the International Criminal Code (ICC). But the ICC usually only

takes on special cases," Rhonda said. Victims could also take try to take advantage of the principle of universal jurisdiction, she said. This jurisdiction allowed a human rights violator from one country to be tried in another country, she said.

Publicity played an important role in taking human rights violators to court. "The mass media have a very important role to keep reporting violence against women to build public opinion," she said.

Komariah Emong, a professor at Bandung Padjadjaran University's School of Law, said the government had yet to fulfill its obligations to protect victims of violence. "The government does not seem to be aware that it is responsible for helping victims recover physically and emotionally after experiencing violence" she said.

OPINION & ANALYSIS

Breaking the Jakarta code

Melbourne Age - May 15, 2006

Damien Kingsbury — The recent Indonesian ban on academic contact with Deakin University over the West Papua issue is the latest shot in a wider political battle. But that battle is not with Deakin, or even Australia. The real battle is within Jakarta.

Based on alleged support for West Papuan independence by Dr Scott Burchill and me, Deakin University has been informed that Indonesian institutions must cease working with it. The instruction came from Indonesia's Department of Education, although it conforms closely to similar efforts by its State Intelligence Agency.

A list of Australian academics, politicians, activists and institutions claimed to be in favour of West Papuan independence compiled by the agency was leaked in late April. Some of those identified, such as activist groups, are formally in favour of West Papuan independence. Others have simply expressed concern over continuing human rights abuses in West Papua, and the questionable way West Papua was formally incorporated into the Indonesian state in 1969. Some have just called

for a negotiated settlement.

This most recent attack on Australian individuals and institutions can be seen as part of the diplomatic fallout over Australia's acceptance of 42 West Papuan asylum seekers.

The Australia-Indonesia row over West Papua and the identification of Australian individuals and academics is not really about Australia, or indeed over the prospect of West Papua achieving independence. As is widely acknowledged, West Papua is highly unlikely to achieve independence in the foreseeable future.

The dispute is more about the place of West Papua in Indonesia's internal politics. This is a subset of a broader contest between proponents of Indonesia's process of gradual reform and those wishing to turn back the political clock.

To illustrate, one respected Australian academic on Indonesia noted that the recent bans were as bad as or worse than bans imposed under Indonesia's authoritarian New Order. Indeed, to find a parallel, one would have to go back to 1986, to the dispute after the publication in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* of an article on President Soeharto's corruption.

There was no doubt that Soeharto was angry with the publication of his corrupt activities. But studies of that issue have since noted that Australia was used as a whipping boy in a dispute between Soeharto and his then military commander in chief, General Benny Murdani.

In the present situation, the dispute in Jakarta is primarily over reform of the Indonesian military (TNI) and the retention of the military's effective independence from government. In particular, for a military that is at best only one-third funded by the Government, West Papua is a key source of TNI legal and illegal income. The intelligence agency is associated with the TNI's intelligence organisation.

This is also a contest of wills, especially after the failure of the TNI's opposition to a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Aceh, in which it also had substantial economic interests. Some observers have noted that the TNI has been

depoliticised in recent years. It has lost its representation in the Indonesian legislature. However, it continues to dominate security policy, such as bans, which are formally an immigration matter. Beyond its continued influence on daily politics, the TNI's real power has always lain in its distribution throughout the archipelago. This continues to locate the TNI close to the recently devolved sources of economic power, and it has hence fiercely resisted attempts to reduce its distribution.

Despite President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's criticisms of Australia, which can be primarily seen as playing to an Indonesian audience, he wants to bring the TNI under civilian authority. That is the main game. Attacks against Australia generally and individuals and institutions in particular are thus collateral damage in an internal Indonesian battle.

[Damien Kingsbury was an adviser to the Free Aceh Movement in the 2005 Helsinki peace negotiations. Ostensibly for commenting on the Aceh conflict, he has been banned from entering Indonesia since December 2004.]

State secrecy bill stinks

Jakarta Post Editorial - May 15, 2006

The House of Representatives is scheduled to deliberate a number of important bills, including the long-awaited Freedom of Information Bill. This bill was first proposed in November 2001 by the previous members of the House, but languished in the legislature until last July when it was revived. Many observers wonder why it has taken so long for the bill to be passed into law.

Two months ago, the government asked for a five-year grace period once the bill becomes law. This before lawmakers had even begun to deliberate the bill. If the grace period is granted, the law would not come into effect until 2011, or two years after the end of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's current term.

Why delay such an important tool for fighting corruption when combating graft is one of the government's stated priorities? Has the government lost steam? The whole episode is confusing.

Is it possible that the government is afraid of information? When uncertainty still shrouded the bill in February 2002, the government hastily prepared the State Secrecy Bill, in what looked like an attempt to counter the bill on freedom of information. It is difficult to shed the impression the government is reluctant to support the information bill. Why? It is not clear. What is clear is that the State Secrecy Bill can be used to silence critics, especially in its current form, with no clear definition of what exactly constitutes state secrets. It looks like a tug-of-war is taking place between the public's interest and the state's interest, where the information bill favors the first.

Once the bill on state secrecy becomes law, it will make it very difficult to investigate certain scandalous cases. And there is no shortage of irregularities that should be investigated.

We are not against protecting state secrets. The question is how to package this need into law. In truth, the protection of state secrets does not require a separate law, having already been incorporated in the Freedom of Information Bill. This allows clear guidelines on what constitute state secrets.

The world is moving in the direction of more open information, as more and more countries adopt freedom of information laws. There are valid reasons why Indonesia must join this trend. The country has just emerged from a 32-year dictatorship that caused much suffering for the people. There is an urgent need to throw off the mind-set nurtured under this system.

It is an uphill battle since the current bureaucracy is a legacy of the New Order administration, notorious for its close and repressive political culture. The Freedom of Information Bill can help break up this culture. Cultivating a culture of providing information to whoever wants or needs it is, therefore, a logical step.

Moreover, controlling the bureaucracy is more urgent than controlling the people. History shows that state secrets are more often than not leaked by the bureaucracy or the powers that be. A number of high-profile cases come to mind. One example, when the rupiah crashed in 1998, who profited the most? Another reason for ensuring greater access to information is the irony that information concerning public interests is not easy to come by. Can anyone obtain bid documents for public projects, for example, as is the case in neighboring countries? Can anyone obtain data from government ministries with ease? It is not difficult to obtain secrets in this country, as long as you have cash. This must change, unless the government wants to maintain the closed political culture of the New Order regime. That would be a betrayal of the people who put their trust in the hands of President Yudhoyono.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer: Indonesia's greatest novelist

Green Left Weekly - May 10, 2006

Max Lane — Scores of activists and young writers, as well as family members, were at the Karet Bivak cemetery in central Jakarta on April 30. Many were crying, tearful. The loss was felt greatly, a burden. But they rallied their spirits to also sing songs of struggle to farewell the man who they had just laid to rest: Pramoedya Ananta Toer. They sang the Internationale and they sang that most moving of all songs that grew up during the struggle against the 1966-98 Suharto military dictatorship: *Darah joang* ("Blood of the struggle").

The acclaimed author and democracy campaigner had died that morning after suffering a week or more of declining health. He had been taken to the emergency ward of a major Jakarta hospital and was then moved to an intensive care unit. Finally he asked to go home, to stay in the family house in the Jakarta suburb of Utan Kayu.

On the third day at home, after pushing aside the tubes and equipment that got in his way, he asked

for another of his beloved kretek cigarettes. He passed away at 9.15am that morning.

Indonesian custom requires that burial takes place as quickly as possible after death, Pramoedya was buried later in the afternoon. Those who had received news of his death via text messages and could get there, did so.

Already there are plans in Indonesia for activities to commemorate Pramoedya's life and work. Here in Australia, the Inside Indonesia magazine is planning a special issue around Pramoedya.

Many Australians know Pramoedya primarily from his novel *This Earth of Mankind*, which I translated in 1980. Many people still send letters saying how much they enjoyed reading it or how their lives may have been changed by it. Others are familiar with its sequels — *Child of All Nations*, *Footsteps* and *House of Glass*. The first novel in the series is now in its 15th printing in the United States. The novels have been widely adopted into all kinds of courses in world literature in US universities.

In Indonesia itself, all of Pramoedya's books are still formally banned, although the state seems to be turning a blind eye to the fact they can easily be found in the major bookshops.

Pramoedya was 81 years old when he died. He was a literary and political figure whose presence in Indonesian political and cultural life had lasted for more than 40 years. As a young man, he had taken up arms against the Dutch colonialists, had been captured and spent two years in prison. While in jail, he wrote some of his early well-known short stories which were set in the midst of the violent upheaval of an anti-imperialist revolution.

After the armed struggle ceased in 1949 and the Netherlands accepted Indonesia's independence, Pramoedya became one of the country's most prolific writers. He was stirred by the injuries that people suffered as a result of their involvement in the revolution, at others' hands or at their own.

His orientation began to develop further as the

country moved towards the end of its first decade of independence. His stories began to bring out the realities of failed social change, of injuries to humanity flowing from the stubbornness of corruption and injustice in spite of the country having won independence. Pramoedya's stories in the collection *Tales from Jakarta* ring with a disappointed and cutting humanity.

From the late 1950s, he began a new journey, posing the question: Why had political independence not delivered the justice and prosperity for which so many had given their lives in the revolution? Pramoedya joined millions of others who were steadily rallying to the cry: The revolution is not finished!

He threw his political support behind President Sukarno, whose political legacy Pramoedya embraced for the rest of his life, and who was then leading the movement to rally people behind this cry. Tens of millions eventually joined under this banner, joining the Communist Party, the Nationalist Party or other, smaller, parties or one of the many mass organisations rallying to the call.

Pramoedya worked with the Peoples Cultural Network, which soon had thousands of members and also the *Bintang Timur* (Eastern Star) independent left newspaper. He gave his support to this movement in more than one way. He buried himself in the work of hunting out the origins of Indonesia's cultural problems, finding them in a characterless elite with no backbone, with an inward-lookingness and a too-quick abnegation before authority. But he also sought to uncover the source of dynamism of the new Indonesian culture, the source of the revolutionary energy exploding in the 1960s as every kind of art and literature began to burgeon. Where did that come from?

Among other things that influenced Pramoedya, Maxim Gorky's essay *The People Must Know Their History* stirred him. From the late 1950s, Pramoedya became Indonesia's first self-taught full-time historian. No source was alien to him — government documents, diaries, what a barber knew about his long-term customers (among whom was perhaps a political figure), the daily newspapers, detective novels. Pramoedya was even the first historian in Indonesia to use tape recordings of

oral histories, borrowing a tape recorder — then a rare piece of equipment — from a friendly small business.

Pramoedya became a prolific essayist in *Bintang Timur*, writing hundreds of essays on history and politics. His unique contribution to helping finish the revolution was interrupted in October 1965 when he was arrested along with hundreds of thousands of others. The right-wing of the army, under the command of General Suharto, seized power, making use of a failed attempt by left-wing officers to seize control of the army.

The Suharto coup marked the interruption, for nearly 40 years, of the Indonesian national revolution. More than a million workers, peasants and other left-wing activists were killed. Tens of thousands were imprisoned for one or two years and another 20,000 — including Pramoedya — were imprisoned for 14 years without charge and without trial.

Fourteen thousand prisoners were sent to the barely inhabited and barren island of Buru in eastern Indonesia, where they were forced to build their own barracks, clear the savage land with their own bare hands and start their own agriculture.

Many died in the initial years. It was in these demoralising years that Pramoedya began to draw on the memory of his work to tell the story of a 14-year-old Javanese girl, Sanikem, sold by her money-grubbing father to a Dutch plantation owner as a concubine and how this young girl transformed herself into a woman of strength and capacity, Nyai Ontosoroh — far superior to that of her coloniser — and how she educated the first generation of Indonesian revolutionaries. The story inspired the prisoners and helped restore their morale.

Later when he obtained a typewriter and was allowed to write, Pramoedya churned out eight novels, a play and scores of essays while on Buru Island. When he was released in 1979, he was not supposed to publish. Such activities were illegal for former political prisoners. But Pramoedya, and two other former prisoners — Joesoef Isak and Hasyim Rachman — defied the dictator Suharto and began publishing Pramoedya's prison novels,

starting with *This Earth of Mankind*, based on the story of Sanikem and Nyai Ontosoroh. This was followed by the other great historical novels *Child of All Nations*, *Footsteps* and *House of Glass*. All are available in Penguin book editions.

Then came Pramoedya's novels set in the prequel period to these four novels — *Arok and Dedes*, a story of rebellion set in the 13th century, and *Arus Balik*, an epic novel of maritime politics set in the 16th century. These were his greatest works, explaining the origins of the Indonesian revolution, with more than half of them translated into more than 50 foreign languages. These later works were an expression of Pramoedya's commitment to finish the revolution after his release from prison in 1979.

In the last 20 years of his life, Pramoedya repeated again and again in speeches and interviews the same call to Indonesia's younger generation — the revolution is not finished. He joined the small radical Peoples Democratic Party (PRD) to emphasise this meant political commitment and joining a political organisation. He never tired of saying that *reformasi* (reform) was not enough. What was needed was "total revolution".

In the soon-to-be-published long interview with Pramoedya, entitled *Exile*, he makes his stance clear: "Capitalism is the same everywhere. Its only purpose is to make as high a profit as it is allowed to. I believe in each country's right to self-determination but, in reality, such rights are not being honoured. Everything is determined by big business, even the fate of nations. Can the present situation change without a revolution? It can't. There has to be a revolution!"

BOOK/FILM REVIEWS

Book Review: Fear and reporting in Indonesia

Asia Times - May 13, 2006

[In the Time of Madness: Indonesia on the Edge of Chaos by Richard Lloyd Parry. Reviewed by Scott B MacDonald.]

Since the upheaval of the Asian financial crisis in 1997-98, Indonesia has been a country on the

move — the old authoritarian regime of Suharto was pushed from power, democratic government has taken root and the economy has been stabilized. East Timor departed from Indonesia and a peace settlement is in place in the formerly deeply troubled province of Aceh.

Although far from perfect, Indonesia's development since the late 1990s has been largely within the confines of a representative political system and a capitalist economy. Part of Indonesia's experience over this period has been captured in Richard Lloyd Parry's *In the Time of Madness: Indonesia on the Edge of Chaos*.

If you are looking for a depiction of Indonesia in the late 1990s, when the old order of Suharto's authoritarian regime was coming to an end and societal upheaval ruled, this book is for you, though none the positive developments are discussed.

Parry, who wrote for *The Independent* and now works for *The Times* of London, made a number of forays into Indonesia from Japan. Through Parry's eyes we are taken into the murderous jungles of Borneo, where Dayak tribesmen were seeking to drive out the Madurese by ethnic cleansing, into Jakarta's universities during the drive to oust Suharto, and into the turmoil of East Timor, seeking its independence from Indonesia. Parry makes the point early on: "This is a book about violence, and about being afraid."

One could add that Parry also is fascinated by what he found in Indonesia. As he states, "Although I prided myself on deploring violence, if it should — tragically — break out, I wanted to witness it for myself." Indeed, deeper in the book (and deeper into Indonesia's heart of darkness), he notes: "In Borneo, I saw heads severed from their bodies and men eating flesh. In Jakarta, I saw burned corpses in the street, and shots were fired around and toward me."

The climactic last part of the book deals extensively with East Timor and the bloody rear-guard actions taken by the Indonesian-supported militias in seeking to overturn the popular vote for independence. It is in East Timor where the author comes to terms with being afraid, yet carrying out the responsibility to report the

injustice of what happened.

The fear theme permeates the book, both on a personal level (as Parry opts to depart from East Timor after several brushes with death) and with Indonesians. One encounter is most notable, when Parry asked an Indonesian carpenter named Jamari what he fears. The man answered: "We are afraid that 1965 will happen again. We're afraid that if we speak out, somebody will come and take us away during the night, and perhaps they will kill us." An abortive left-wing military coup in 1965 led to a successful right-wing counter-coup and the rise of General Suharto as the country's undisputed leader.

Parry also has a solid grasp of the issue of magic that permeates Indonesian society, especially in the rural areas. Here again he touches upon the fear of dark magic and the ability of Suharto, long at the helm of his country, to use that fear to help keep order.

While this reviewer enjoyed Parry's opus, it is not without flaws. It helps to have some prior knowledge of Indonesia's history and society prior to reading. While some explanation is given to the turn of events, some explanations are brief. Sadly, we are left with the image of Indonesia as a place of darkness, smoldering under the tropical sun and the puppetmasters in Jakarta.

As Parry states: "It was a thrilling time. Like many people... I was experiencing self-conscious flushes of excitement at the momentous of it all. A struggle was taking place between something old, murderous and corrupt and something new." Can it be that Indonesian history from 1965 to 1998 was old, murderous and corrupt, nothing more? And what was the "something new"? Could it be that Indonesia is struggling to create a more open, democratic society in the post-Suharto era? These are lingering questions when one finishes Parry's book.

Some have compared *In the Time of Madness* to Aidan Hartley's *The Zanzibar Chest*, another book focused on the journalist dealing with a modern heart of darkness. Parry's book is an echo of Hartley's, which deals with family history, colonialism, barbarism and current affairs. Both books leave you with a sense of sweaty griminess and a Joseph

Conrad-like vision of the world. (Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was published in 1902 and looks at genocide, repression and imperialism by the Belgians in the Congo.)

That said, Hartley's Africa has fallen into far harsher times than Parry's Indonesia, and the Southeast Asian nation has made some advances in terms of the standard of living and its effort in forming a more open political system. Indonesia is hardly Africa, though similar problems afflict both regions.

And Hartley's personal adventures are given some degree of clarity — his relationships are explained, his likes and dislikes covered, and his turn to drugs and alcohol understandable considering the nature and pressures of his work. Parry makes brief mention of a bypassed love and proposal of marriage among other personal musings.

The criticisms of his book are minor. *In the Time of Madness* is well worth reading, especially for anyone interested in the events that shook Indonesia during the late 1990s. At the same time, one should not entirely write off Indonesia's history through Parry's lens of a murderous, corrupt place, seemingly without any hope.

One of the points worth noting is that change did occur: Suharto was forced out of office, and the country has gone to the polls more than once since 1998, finally having the option of directly electing a president. All the same (and this is why *In the Time of Madness* is worth the read), many of the problems of corruption and fear remain in post-Suharto Indonesia, making it one of Asia's more interesting points on the map.

In the Time of Madness: Indonesia on the Edge of Chaos by Richard Lloyd Parry. New York: ISBN: 0802118089. Grove Press, 2005. Price: US\$24; 315 pages.

[Scott B MacDonald is senior managing director at Aladdin Capital and a senior consultant at KWR International.]