

East Timor News Digest #4 April 1-30, 2006

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Contents

- [TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)
- [POLITICAL/SOCIAL CRISIS](#)
- [JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION](#)
- [TRANSITION & DEVELOPMENT](#)
- [HUMAN RIGHTS/LAW](#)
- [DAILY MEDIA REVIEWS](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POLITICAL/SOCIAL CRISIS

- * Troops on the streets after riots in East Timor
- * Army deployed after Dili riots leave at least two dead
- * Two killed, 21 injured in Timor protest
- * East Timorese protesters damage houses, market in Dili
- * East Timor soldiers vow to continue protests
- * Soldiers attack traders in Dili protest
- * Sacked soldiers demonstrate, set deadline over grievances
- * Timor ex-soldiers threaten guerrilla war

JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION

- * Anger and accolades for Timor expose
- * National Mandate Party won't dismiss Guterres
- * Compromising justice in East Timor

TRANSITION & DEVELOPMENT

- * Four years after independence, Timor on right track: FM

HUMAN RIGHTS/LAW

- * 'East Timor police brutality as bad as occupation days'
- * East Timor 'must rein in torture police'
- * East Timor police accused of human rights abuse

DAILY MEDIA REVIEWS

East Timor daily media review - April 1-28, 2006

POLITICAL/SOCIAL CRISIS

Troops on the streets after riots in East Timor

Agence France Presse - April 29, 2006

Dili — Troops have fanned out across the East Timorese capital Dili, a day after a violent protest left two dead, as the president called for calm and urged thousands who fled their homes to return.

Police commissioner Paulo Martins told reporters that 34 people had also been injured in the unrest, which saw rioters wielding planks and steel pipes smash windows outside Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri's office building.

The rioters, who were originally marching in support of some 591 soldiers who were sacked last month after deserting their barracks, also burned at least five cars. Martins said about 100 homes were vandalised in Dili's Tacitolu area while a market was also badly damaged.

"Police have arrested seven rioters and they have been taken for questioning, while the rest of them are still hiding in the surrounding hills of Dili," he told reporters after meeting President Xanana Gusmao.

Hundreds of soldiers meanwhile were deployed across the capital at strategic locations, an AFP correspondent witnessed.

The streets of Dili were largely deserted with most public transport not operating though a few taxis still sought fares. Shops and markets mostly remained shuttered but the airport was operating

under tight security.

Gusmao toured the city with local media and saw about 50 houses torched in Tacitolu.

The AFP correspondent said one corpse was seen at Tacitolu but no further information about the circumstances of the death was immediately available.

"With sadness, I apologize to the people because they had to flee their homes because the situation ran out of control yesterday (Friday)," the popular president told several thousand refugees sheltering at Dom Bosco seminary.

"But now, I ask that all be prepared to return home calmly because I have already talked with Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri and the situation has returned to normal," he said. "I also call on the youth to remain calm and rebuild peace in this country."

Gusmao, a former guerrilla leader who fought against the Indonesians during their 24-year occupation of the tiny nation, also said that the incident was a lesson for the nation's political leaders.

"If there is an internal problem, it should be immediately settled, and not allowed to drag on," he said. Gusmao also encouraged several hundred refugees outside the US embassy to return home.

A US embassy official told AFP on condition of anonymity that only some staff members and their immediate families were being sheltered inside.

Several thousand protestors took to the streets Friday for the third rally in a week supporting the sacked soldiers.

East Timor's Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta blamed the unrest on "groups that wanted to take advantage of the situation, some them linked to the opposition" and said the soldiers themselves were not involved.

Gastao Salsinha, the most senior of the dismissed soldiers, has said that the troops, mainly from East Timor's 10 western districts, deserted because they were being passed over for promotion in favour of those from the east.

Ramos-Horta said earlier this month the government was setting up a panel to review the complaints of the soldiers, who had made up about a third of East Timor's fledgling army. He said the men may be reinstated but only on a case-by-case basis.

East Timor became the world's youngest nation in May 2002, after a UN-backed referendum that handed the former Portuguese colony independence from Indonesia. It is Asia's poorest nation.

Army deployed after Dili riots leave at least two dead

Lusa - April 28, 2006

Dili — The government ordered the army to help restore order in East Timor's capital Friday, after two people were killed and 34 wounded, including three officers, in clashes between police and soldiers protesting their dismissal from the tiny Defense Force.

Interior Minister Rogerio Lobato, who participated in crisis talks with Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri and Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta, told Lusa the government was adopting "more muscular measures" to deal with the unrest. "They will all be arrested if necessary", Lobato said of the hundreds of sacked soldiers and supporters who rioted across Dili for hours earlier Friday, assaulting government headquarters, stoning buildings, and burning cars and market stalls.

"This is a matter of the Timorese State", the minister said after visiting the three injured officers, one seriously wounded by machete blows. "It is necessary to guarantee stability, to guarantee this country as a nation, united and indivisible".

A government communique released late Friday evening in Dili blamed the bloody clashes on "young opportunists linked to Ososio Leki", leader of the shadowy Colimau 2000 group of ex-guerrillas and disgruntled villagers. Leki wants to turn his group, legal under Timorese law, into a political party, the government statement added.

Police Superintendent Paulo Martins told Lusa that army units had been deployed between the city center and the outlying western suburb of Taci Tolo, where many of the rioters gathered late Friday afternoon after the downtown rampage and clashes with police.

The violence erupted on the fifth day of round-the-clock protests by hundreds of sacked soldiers and supporters when a group of demonstrators tried to storm the government's headquarters, stoning the building and setting cars afire, witnesses told Lusa.

Police fired live rounds and tear gas to disperse the demonstrators from around the government headquarters and at other flashpoints in the city, including the Taibesse market, the scene of earlier violence.

President Xanana Gusmao was following events from Cinzas Palace and Alkatiri met with key cabinet ministers at his residence to discuss the crisis, officials said.

Shops and offices closed after the violence erupted during the late morning, leaving downtown Dili largely deserted for the remainder of the day. The Portuguese and Australian diplomatic missions cautioned their resident nationals to remain indoors. There were no reports of injuries among the large Portuguese expatriate community, composed mostly of aid workers.

The clashes broke out the day after nearly 600 soldiers dismissed from the 1,600-strong army two months ago over labor disputes rejected the government's offer Thursday to set up a top-level commission to investigate their allegations of regional discrimination in the military.

The prime minister's office announced Friday morning that it now considered the demonstrations by the disgruntled soldiers, underway in Dili since Monday, "illegal" and that authorities would re-impose order.

During the demonstrations earlier in the week, some of the sacked soldiers threatened to make "war" against the government if their demands were not met.

The director of the national hospital, Antonio Caleres, told Lusa at least two people had been killed and 34 wounded by gunfire and stabbings.

A tour of downtown Dili by Lusa found three burnt-out cars and many shattered windows at the main government building. Smoke was seen rising from burning street market stalls. A building housing Portuguese and Australian diplomatic offices and Portugal's RDP radio bureau was also stoned.

Two killed, 21 injured in Timor protest

Associated Press - April 28, 2006

One East Timorese police officer was killed by mobs during a protest in support of nearly 600 dismissed soldiers in the capital Dili, police said.

The commander of East Timor's police rapid reaction unit, Soares Hale, told reporters that a police sub-inspector had "died because he was beaten in the neck". "The situation is serious but we have things under control," he added.

Earlier, witnesses were reported as saying that two bodies had been lying down at the Intensive Care Unit of Dili's National Hospital, where four policemen and 17 civilians were also admitted to for various injuries, some in serious condition.

Police earlier fired tear gas to disperse the rally of several thousand protesters after some of them smashed windows outside Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri's office building, a correspondent witnessed. He said there were about 100 police seeking to control the crowd before the tear gas dispersed them.

The rally was the third held by the disgruntled soldiers this week. They were dismissed after they had deserted the tiny country's armed forces.

The protesters, many armed with wooden planks and steel pipes, also set fire to five cars before police dispersed them. At least five protesters

were injured in the melee, the correspondent reported.

The soldiers' leader, Gastao Salsinha, has said the troops, mainly from East Timor's 10 western districts, deserted because they were being passed over for promotion in favour of those from eastern districts.

East Timor's Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta said earlier this month the government was setting up a panel to review the soldiers' complaints. He said the men may be reinstated but only on a case-by-case basis.

East Timor became the world's youngest nation in May 2002, after a UN-backed referendum that handed the former Portuguese colony independence from Indonesia, which had occupied it for 24 years.

East Timorese protesters damage houses, market in Dili

Agence France Presse - April 26, 2006

Dili — A protest rally by hundreds of former East Timorese soldiers sacked after deserting last month turned ugly Wednesday when at least five houses and a market in Dili were vandalised, witnesses said. About 2,000 protesters held a demonstration in support of nearly 600 soldiers who complained of poor working conditions and discrimination before they deserted.

Their leader, Gastao Salsinha, has said the soldiers, mainly from East Timor's 10 western districts, deserted because they were being passed over for promotion in favour of those from eastern districts.

Some of the demonstrators vandalised five houses in the eastern districts of East Timor, including the home of a policeman in downtown Dili, witnesses said.

"I was with my sleeping child when the house was suddenly attacked by people, some wearing fatigues," homeowner Lorenca Miranda said. "I also

saw three policemen in the area run away when the attack was taking place," she said.

Petrolina Soares, 26, said she was taking a siesta and her husband was eating when men stormed into their house and damaged belongings.

East Timor Police Chief Paulo Martins went to the site, police inspector Armando Soares said, and nearly 400 police provided security for the protest, which followed a peaceful rally through the capital on Monday.

Meanwhile a market in the Taibessi area of Dili was also attacked by youths who were not among the protesters and did not discriminate between stalls owned by those from the east or west, an AFP correspondent said.

East Timor's Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta said earlier this month the government was setting up a panel to review the soldiers' complaints.

He said the men may be reinstated but only on a case-by-case basis, and accused Salsinha of becoming disgruntled after being demoted when he was caught smuggling sandalwood more than a year ago.

He said the soldier then sought to spread stories about discrimination within the ranks but most of the men had left simply because they did not like life in the barracks.

East Timor became the world's youngest nation in May 2002, after a UN-backed referendum that handed the former Portuguese colony independence from Indonesia, which had occupied it for 24 years.

The deserters accounted for almost a third of the tiny fledgling nation's military forces.

East Timor soldiers vow to continue protests

Voice of America - April 25, 2006

Nancy-Amelia Collins, Jakarta — Some East Timorese soldiers who were fired last month vow to continue their protests in the world's newest

nation unless the government takes action over their complaints.

For weeks, nearly 600 soldiers in East Timor have protested that they were fired unfairly. Their protests are drawing support and on Monday, around 3,000 people joined a peaceful demonstration in the capital of Dili.

The soldiers, most of whom fought against Indonesian rule of East Timor, accuse the country's defense force of nepotism and creating poor working conditions.

East Timor voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia in a UN sponsored vote in 1999. Soldiers from the anti-Indonesian guerrilla movement were incorporated into the East Timor Defense Force formed in 2002.

Government spokesman Jose Guiterrez says officials are working to address their grievances.

"The government is considering their demand," he said. "The government is going to talk with the president and will hear the opinion of the parliament and will try to find a solution for the claims of the soldiers."

The fired soldiers have rejected a commission formed by President Xanana Gusmao to investigate their allegations. The troops complain the commission is biased in favor of the East Timor Defense Force.

The fired soldiers account for more than a third of the 1,600 men who are in the fledgling army.

East Timorese human rights activist Joaquin Fonseca says the government must solve the problem because it appears the military cannot.

"In terms of institutional development, this means that there is a need to review the whole strategy which the defense forces have developed," he said. "The military continues to say the (case) is finished and the remaining problem is political and it's left for the government and the politicians to solve it."

Among their complaints, the soldiers, who are mostly from the country's western area, say commanders discriminated against them and favored troops from the east.

Soldiers attack traders in Dili protest

Sydney Morning Herald - April 25, 2006

Jill Jolliffe, Dili — A march by dissident soldiers through the East Timorese capital yesterday turned ugly when demonstrators attacked market traders from the eastern Lospalos region.

The soldiers, from the western regions, were fired last month after a long dispute in which they claimed commanders discriminated against them in favour of easterners.

Led by former lieutenant Gastao Salsinha, the demonstration of about 5000, including civilian supporters, took over the city centre from early morning.

They marched to Government headquarters in protest against their sacking by army commander Taur Matan Ruak. The protesters called on President Xanana Gusmao to settle the dispute.

They then headed to Mr Gusmao's office. As they approached the marketplace, some broke ranks and chased terrified eastern stallholders, attacking them with rocks and pieces of wood.

One soldier was injured, but casualties from the other side are not known. The attackers were mainly civilian youths, who were reined in by the military men.

Ethnic violence has been rare in East Timor, but prejudice against easterners has been rising in recent years.

Well-armed police accompanying the march kept a low profile, allowing the soldiers to run the show.

Relations between the two forces are bad after previous physical clashes. Members of the new army claim the police were recruited from collaborators with the Indonesian army.

The soldiers represent about one-third of the army. Mr Salsinha said they would continue

demonstration until Thursday evening.

The men went absent without leave in February after accusing their commanders, many of them former guerillas from eastern regions, of overlooking them in promotions.

Mr Gusmao had agreed to mediate with commanders, but they were fired by Defence Minister Roque Rodrigues and army chief Taur Matan Ruak while he was abroad last month, triggering an earlier round of violence.

Sacked soldiers demonstrate, set deadline over grievances

Lusa - April 24, 2006

Dili — About 2,000 demonstrators, backing hundreds of soldiers dismissed from the East Timorese army, marched through Dili Monday, launching five-days of announced protests against alleged regional discrimination in the military.

The demonstrators, including many soldiers, some in uniform, stopped at four official buildings, including the presidential and government headquarters, where they delivered written ultimatums giving authorities until Friday to resolve their grievances or face an unspecified “strike”.

There were no reports of violence or other incidents on the first of five days of planned protests that took place under the gaze of a re-enforced police presence in the capital’s streets.

The Portuguese and Australian diplomatic missions issued warnings to their nationals at the weekend to take precautions and avoid public gatherings.

There were reports that some Dili residents, fearing violence, had left the city ahead of the protests.

The demonstrators condemned the sacking two months ago of 591 soldiers, about 40% of the fledgling army, who held protests and went AWOL in February to demand action against alleged discrimination of

"loromonu" troops from the country's western districts.

They also denounced an inquiry commission set up by the army as biased, with some saying they were ready to "die for justice and transparency" if their demands were not met.

The army crisis has divided the Timorese leadership, with President Xanana Gusmco, who was praised by the demonstrators Monday, having strongly criticized the decision by the government and military brass to sack the disgruntled soldiers as of last March 1.

At the weekend, Interior Minister Rogirio Lobato accused unnamed "political parties, embassies and priests" in the predominantly Roman Catholic country of helping fuel unrest among troops.

Vigilance would be tightened along borders, Lobato said, to preempt the exit of anyone who attempted to use the demonstrations to "create problems and then try to flee the country".

Rumors of similar demonstrations last month provoked the flight of many people from Dili and vandalism of some properties belonging to "lorosae" easterners.

Timor ex-soldiers threaten guerrilla war

Associated Press - April 24, 2006

Nearly 600 soldiers dismissed last month from East Timor's armed forces for striking over labour conditions have threatened to wage a guerrilla war if the government failed to resolve their dispute with the military leadership.

About 3,000 people joined a protest rally on Monday organised by the soldiers in the capital. Protesters marched 10 kilometres into Dili, waving banners and posters denouncing the dismissals.

"We urge the government, the president, Parliament and Supreme Court to solve our problem... in five days," said 2nd Lieutenant Gastao Salsinha, a spokesman for the soldiers who coordinated the

February 8 strike.

"We the petitioners are ready to conduct a new guerrilla war in East Timor if our formal leaders in this country have no political will to solve our problem," he said.

There was no immediate response from the government or the military. The strikers were protesting working conditions and promotion rules, and they demanded the elimination of alleged "nepotism and injustice" in the service.

The ex-soldiers also rejected a commission formed by President Xanana Gusmao to investigate the problem, accusing it of bias.

The dismissal of the soldiers was a serious blow to the 1,600-strong East Timor Defence Force, which was set up after East Timor voted for independence from Indonesia in 1999.

Most of the soldiers came from the ranks of the East Timorese resistance to Indonesian rule.

JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION

Anger and accolades for Timor expose

South China Morning Post - April 11, 2006

Minutes after James Leong and Lynn Lee arrived in Jakarta to present their documentary on East Timor, Passabe, at a film festival, they were told it had been struck off the programme.

Given the subject, it is easy to understand why the Indonesian authorities were concerned.

The documentary focuses on the hearings of East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation concerning Passabe, a hamlet in the Oecussi enclave where residents — many of whom were members of the local pro-Indonesia militia — killed 74 men from neighbouring pro-independence villages after East Timor voted to become independent in September 1999.

The hearings, sponsored by the United Nations to heal the country's wounds after the period of instability at the end of the 1990s, were never

intended to punish the perpetrators of the serious crimes such as murder or rape, say the filmmakers, who were invited by the UN to cover the proceedings.

The hearings turned “quite explosive” when a villager confessed to killing a man.

Passabe chronicles the horrors, featuring chilling testimonies from both the perpetrators and the victims. The filmmakers were taken to the killing fields where the villagers were allegedly tortured and massacred. But the film also attempts to illustrate the uncertain future for the country. Lee says its problems have dropped “off the radar” as the world zeroes in on the strife in the Middle East.

"Everybody [in the villages] is sick and tired of fighting, but there is a simmering resentment there," says Lee. "There's a lot of deep sadness because there's a sense that justice may never happen." This was partly because of the difficulty in getting hold of many of the militia leaders who escaped to Indonesian-held West Timor and punish them.

While the film was not allowed to be shown in Indonesia, it has received glowing reviews at the festivals where it did run. When shown in Singapore, Indonesian students were among those who praised it the most, Leong said. The Sundance Institute Documentary Fund also backed the film with a grant.

What excited Leong and Lee, however, was the February screenings in East Timor. High water levels however, prevented them from taking the film back to its subject village, Passabe.

The acclaim the film received has been a relief for the first-time filmmakers, who have worked in television production. Lee studied law but went into media work, while Leong harks from a film-making family: his father, the British-born director Leong Po-chih, was part of Hong Kong's new wave in the late 1970s with output such as *Jumping Ash*.

Leong Snr — who was listed as post-production consultant on the film's credits — had been “generous” in providing advice, said the son. His

father suggested injecting Passabe with “cinematic” touches, which helped greatly.

Visuals aside, Passabe works because of Lee and Leong’s success in getting close to the subject, including spending almost a year living in the villages.

National Mandate Party won’t dismiss Guterres

Tempo Interactive - April 17, 2006

Raden Rachmadi, Jakarta — The National Mandate Party (PAN) promises not to dismiss PAN’s East Nusa Tenggara Regional Executive Board (DPW) Chairman, Eurico Guterres, despite the fact that his appeal for a human rights violation in the East Timor case was rejected by the Supreme Court.

"We appreciate Guterres’s struggle in maintaining the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia," said PAN’s Central Leadership Council (DPP) Secretary General, Zulkifli Hasan, at PAN’s National Working Meeting I in Jakarta yesterday.

By acclamation, Eurico was elected PAN’s East Nusa Tenggara DPW. Some of his colleagues from other DPW officials seemed to support Eurico.

Eurico told the press that he chose the party with the sun logo because the party is consistent in fighting for the people’s goals. "What PAN fights for is in line with my conscience," he said.

He promises that in the General Election of 2009, his area could send representatives to the House of Representatives (DPR). "We target three chairs from East Nusa Tenggara for the House in Election 2009," he said.

Compromising justice in East Timor

Far Eastern Economic Review - April 2006

Jill Jolliffe — In October 1999, Indonesian

troops filed silently through the smoldering remains of East Timor's capital, Dili, and on to its port. Their sullen embarkation signified the end of a bloody imperial adventure which began in the former Portuguese colony 24 years before.

The Suharto dictatorship had fallen. United Nations officials in New York were busy drafting resolutions which would shape a new country about to rise from the ashes. Recently arrived UN peacekeepers observed the historic departure.

They had been sent to restore order after violence accompanying an overwhelming pro-independence vote in August.

Around 1,400 people had died and countless others were injured or missing in the violence unleashed by the departing Indonesians and their Timorese militias. Another quarter million had been forcibly deported to Indonesian (West) Timor.

As the peacekeepers continued to arrive, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan commissioned five international jurists, led by Costa Rican expert Sonia Picado, to visit Timor, assess breaches of international law and recommend UN action.

The team advised:

Victims... must not be forgotten in the rush of events to redefine relations in the region, and their basic human rights to justice, compensation and the truth must be fully respected.

It stressed "the need to act against impunity in order to discourage future violations of human rights" and recommended that the UN establish an international tribunal to judge "those accused ... of serious violations of fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law...."

The secretary-general's response was to pass the Picado report to the Security Council without endorsing its recommendations. The Council voted instead to establish a two-pronged system of justice for East Timor. A special court in Jakarta would try Indonesian perpetrators, while a UN-funded Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) in Dili would prepare cases to be tried before international panels of judges.

It also approved a truth commission for Dili, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (known by its Portuguese acronym, CAVR), to collect testimony on human-rights violations committed between Portugal's botched April 1974 decolonization and Indonesia's 1999 withdrawal. Its brief was to reconcile perpetrators of minor crimes with their communities, while referring serious crimes to the SCU for prosecution.

Two important points to note are that, firstly, the resolution assumed that democracy was complete in Indonesia, that the reformasi process begun before Suharto's fall in May 1998 had succeeded. This is still not the case. Some enlightened reforms, including decentralization of power and direct election of all political representatives, have been instituted, but military figures still exercise inordinate influence. Secondly, the resolution concerned only war crimes committed in 1999, despite a clamor by the East Timorese public for redress in cases stretching back throughout the 24-year Indonesian occupation.

As a result, many Timorese distrusted the UN's justice arrangements, not believing Jakarta capable of trying its own military officers who had ordered and directed the bloodshed. The SCU prosecutions in Dili were viewed more positively, even if their power was limited.

Seven years on and millions of dollars later, these various strands of the justice process have been tested and found wanting. There is discontent with the UN's performance and a tendency by UN, Timorese and Indonesian leaders to meet criticism by patching together inferior solutions without consulting victims, or civil society in general.

By the time the UN was due to pull out of East Timor on May 20, 2005, the Jakarta court known as the Ad Hoc Tribunal had tried a mere 18 men accused of orchestrating the violence, mostly senior Indonesian officers. All were acquitted except Timorese militia leader Eurico Guterres, whose five-year sentence was increased to 10 years on appeal.

The SCU prosecutions in Dili had more to show, but also disappointed. International judges tried perpetrators by due legal process, but although 317 people had been indicted by May 2005, only 74

had been convicted. East Timorese militiamen were behind bars, but not their Indonesian commanders.

The reason was that although the UN transitional administration in Dili had signed an April 2000 extradition agreement with Jakarta, President Megawati Sukarnoputri reneged on the deal. Most of those indicted still enjoy sanctuary in Indonesia.

In a bid to raise the psychological stakes, Timorese SCU chief Longuinhos Monteiro negotiated local police membership of Interpol. "Wanted" notices of indicted Indonesians now appear on the organization's Web sites, and when they travel abroad they risk arrest by Interpol agents and handover to Dili police.

In early 2005 the UN secretary-general ordered a new report to determine why the 1999 Security Council resolution had failed. But even before the three-person commission began work, a new scheme was being hatched by politicians to satisfy the clamor for justice without actually delivering it. The CAVR had not handed in the report of its investigation into the violations of 1974-99, yet a new truth and reconciliation commission was underway, undermining CAVR's credibility.

The idea of a bilateral Indonesian-East Timorese commission as an alternative to prosecuting war criminals had been raised earlier by Timorese Foreign Minister Josi Ramos Horta. By year's end a deal was in place between President Yudhoyono and East Timor's President Xanana Gusmao. This second Truth and Friendship Commission consisted of five Indonesian and five Timorese commissioners.

Presented as a project to facilitate truth-telling by Indonesian officials, it offered an amnesty to those who testified. Former Indonesian Defense Minister Gen. Wiranto, indicted for war crimes in Dili but untouchable in Indonesia, was a desired witness.

Its Timorese supporters argue that its truth-telling functions, facilitated by the amnesty, will assist President Yudhoyono to effect reforms within the military. They contend that by advancing Indonesian democracy it will serve Timorese interests (failing to consider that the commission could equally be a tool for Mr. Yudhoyono to vanquish political rivals).

The commissioners sought access to sensitive testimony in SCU and CAVR archives, triggering fears this material might end up in Jakarta's secret police files. The Timorese commissioners were mainly recruited from the CAVR under pressure from President Gusmao's office. The Indonesian commissioners include West Timorese archbishop Petrus Turang and retired general Agus Widjojo, billed as a "respected reformist general." In 2001 Mr. Widjojo told a Jakarta conference that human-rights training was unsuitable for Indonesian soldiers because it interfered with their performance.

In Dili, critics underlined that the commission had not been debated publicly, and the influential Roman Catholic Church, which advocates war-crimes trials, expressed its dissent in a letter to Mr. Annan.

Meanwhile, the UN experts presented their findings on May 26, 2005, six days after the bulk of UN personnel had withdrawn from Dili. Their findings echoed those of the Picado report. They said the ad hoc trials in Jakarta showed "scant respect for relevant international standards" and recommended retrials, or, if Indonesia did not comply within six months, a war-crimes tribunal.

The report called on the Security Council to extend the SCU's work for two years.

On the bilateral Truth and Friendship Commission, UN experts urged the international community to withhold financial support "unless the two governments reconsider the terms of reference," saying the impunity offer violates international law. The experts also found "an absence of political will and government support in [East Timor] for the continuation of the serious crimes process, which impedes... bringing to justice those responsible for crimes against humanity..."

Josi Andrade is an energetic parliamentarian for the governing Fretilin party. Officially he supports its impunity policy, but as a torture survivor his personal feelings tend to be at odds with the party line. He was arrested in 1999 in the border town of Maliana by Lieut.-Col. Siagian Burhanuddin, whose face now features on Interpol posters. Beaten insensible on Mr. Burhanuddin's orders during interrogation, Mr. Andrade was

blinded in his right eye by blows from rifle butts. The SCU indictment brought him a sense of relief, but it could be dropped, leaving Mr. Andrade's torturer permanently at large.

There are an estimated 10,000 former political prisoners from the Indonesian period in East Timor. A sample of 45 recent in-depth interviews by the archival project Living Memory showed that more than 90% had also been tortured. Of these, a substantial proportion had suffered severe torture, defined by practices such as the application of electric shocks and the extraction of fingernails or toenails with pliers. The ex-prisoners are a forgotten group who struggle with personal demons, untreated injuries and anger over the injustice of impunity.

The capacity of the justice issue to generate tension was demonstrated when the 2,500-page CAVR report was finally tabled in late 2005. Based on 8,000 witness interviews, it was a damning litany of Indonesian abuses, blaming Jakarta for more than 100,000 deaths from killings, starvation and disease during the occupation.

President Gusmao delivered a copy to the UN secretary-general in January. The president told reporters that East Timor would not be seeking reparations from Jakarta. Nevertheless, Mr. Yudhoyono canceled a scheduled meeting with the Timorese president and relations chilled.

Mr. Annan has not responded to a September request from the Security Council for guidance on the latest experts' report. He is bound to speak before the UN's current Timor mandate expires in May, but insiders predict he will once again ignore anti-impunity resolutions and the very advisors he commissioned, allowing the justice issue to fester. At the end of his term, it would not be costly for the secretary-general to take a principled, if unpopular, stand. Such a stand might even secure his reputation in history, but his legacy looks like being otherwise.

East Timor's vain quest for justice is a casualty of the new world order in which Indonesia's value as a moderate Muslim power supporting the war against terrorism outweighs its undemocratic shortcomings. It is, however, also a victim of international cynicism, which could see East Timor

revert to its former status as a forgotten territory that lacks the international leverage necessary to redress decades of violence and abuse that still haunt those who live there.

[Ms. Jolliffe is a free-lance journalist working on The Living Memory Project, a video archive of testimony by East Timor's former political prisoners. She recently shared the award of Journalist of the Year 2006 from Yale University's Globalist magazine.]

TRANSITION & DEVELOPMENT

Four years after independence, Timor on right track: FM

Agence France Presse - April 26, 2006

Dili — Four years ago as East Timor became the world's youngest nation, hundreds of cars driven by UN personnel criss-crossed the streets of Dili as the nation's strife-torn people faced an uncertain future.

Today, the man who was the international face of East Timor's fight for independence during Indonesia's 24-year occupation, Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta, relishes the changes that have occurred.

"Today you see thousands of cars, 99 percent of which are driven by East Timorese," said the Nobel peace laureate, reflecting in his airy office under a map of the tiny oil and gas-rich nation that turns four years old next month.

"And you would have seen that today, in spite of the departure of the UN, we have many more restaurants — and quality restaurants — and shops and street vendors than in 2001-2002," he said of the improved economic situation.

Ramos-Horta, sporting his signature five o'clock shadow and elegant spectacles, is keen to tout the achievements of East Timor which, he said, inherited nothing more than the "skeleton" of a nation from the United Nations.

The UN held East Timor in stewardship for more than two years after the East Timorese voted

overwhelmingly for independence in 1999.

The vote by the former Portuguese colony infuriated the Indonesian military and the militias they backed, who murdered at least 1,400 East Timorese and destroyed almost three-quarters of all buildings before leaving.

Even today, some buildings in the scenic seaside capital of Dili remain nothing more than burned-out shells where shiny-coated goats roam and wild pigs forage for scraps of food.

'Statistics not matched by reality'

"We have been able to largely build the foundations of a democratic state by creating a civil administration that is largely quite functional, adopting the laws that were lacking in every area," Ramos-Horta told AFP in an interview. "And particularly important, in spite of the departure of the UN from Timor... we have been able to stop the downhill trend of the economy," he said. East Timor clocked modest growth of 2.3 percent last year and the government is shooting for growth of at least seven percent next year.

The nation's economic progress, Ramos-Horta insisted, is far brighter than indicated by a recent UN Development Program report, which painted a bleak picture of life in the half-island nation of one million people.

The report put per capita income at just 370 dollars per year, making East Timor the poorest nation in the region, and said that its economy had eroded as UN personnel and aid workers departed.

"The statistics about the collapse of the economy with the departure of the UN are not matched by reality," the minister insisted, estimating that some 20,000 East Timorese are now regular salary earners, while many small business owners and subsistence farmers are also doing well.

"If you travel from Dili to Los Palos, you see thousands of heads of buffalo, cows, goats, pigs, chickens — this is wealth," he said.

Another success, Ramos-Horta said, has been the maintenance of peace and stability in the wake of the deadly militia violence stoked by pro-

integration East Timorese that scarred the nation. "This in my view is one of our greatest strengths: our ability to forgive and embrace everybody else," he said.

But consolidating this stability and improving democratic rights, including strengthening the weak judiciary, remained East Timor's challenge, he conceded.

Another is job creation for the fast-expanding population — the mainly-Catholic nation has a fertility rate of seven births per woman — with the government focusing on spending up big on infrastructure.

Projects are largely to be funded by money flowing from East Timor's oil and gas projects, with about 500 million dollars already in government coffers.

But international assistance is still needed, the minister pointed out, in particular calling for the UN to provide assistance for elections due in May next year.

'The government is rethinking its defence doctrine'

One of the most dramatic incidents in East Timor's young history has been the dismissal last month of nearly 600 soldiers — about one-third of its armed forces — who deserted their barracks complaining of discrimination and poor working conditions. Ramos-Horta played down the significance of the incident — pointing out that the men "have been reasonably quiet and respectful of law" — and said the government was setting up a panel to review their complaints.

He said the loss of the men, who may be reinstated on a case-by-case basis, had however hastened along a rethink of East Timor's defence force structure, currently based on the idea that its army should be able to defend an invasion until allies arrive to assist.

"The government is rethinking its defence doctrine and the force structure to deal with the realities, the threats that the country faces," he said, referring to non-conventional threats such as people smuggling and piracy.

The idea being floated is for East Timor to have a two-battalion strength force of around 500 men each, with one battalion trained primarily to serve on UN peace-keeping missions and another trained for civic duty, he explained. "That way you have two battalions that are always productive, highly educated and trained," he said.

As for the future of Ramos-Horta himself, the minister's name has been whispered as a potential candidate to replace Kofi Annan as UN secretary-general, but he is non-committal for now.

"I remain a non-candidate. I am not excluding this possibility, but it is not something that has preoccupied me too much," he said. "I have to meditate and reflect before I make a decision."

HUMAN RIGHTS/LAW

'East Timor police brutality as bad as occupation days'

Sydney Morning Herald - April 22, 2006

Mark Dodd — East Timor's Government is under pressure to eradicate torture and ill-treatment of detainees by its police force amid fears of a return to Indonesian-era human rights abuses.

Human Rights Watch said in a report this week that use of torture in the world's newest country was becoming routine. "We were shocked to find so many credible accounts of torture and severe ill-treatment by police officers," said Asia director Brad Adams. The grim findings follow a raft of security problems affecting the impoverished half-island state.

More than a third of the country's armed forces have been discharged over a mutiny linked to claims of poor service conditions and biased promotion.

Several people interviewed had gone to hospital because of the severity of their injuries, the 50-page report said.

The report is a serious blow to the Australian Federal Police. It continues to provide urgently needed training for Timorese police officers, many

of whom served in the Indonesian police force held responsible for widespread human rights abuses during the country's brutal occupation of the impoverished state. "East Timor won independence in part because of Indonesia's horrific record here," Mr Adams said. "Some people are saying that the new police force is no better than the old one, and this should worry the Government."

One young man told the group about his arrest near the western border town of Maliana, scene of some of the worst pro-Jakarta militia atrocities in 1999.

"I was arrested by the PNTL (police) and put in a cell for two days and two nights," he said. "I was continuously tortured, sprayed with pepper spray, beaten and drenched with water."

"They constantly threatened me, saying if you oppose the police then you will know the consequence. Both nights were different people, but both times they were beating me."

HRW called on the Government to ensure through public measures and statements that there was a "clear, unambiguous and consistent signal from the top that police use of torture, arbitrary detention and excessive force will not be tolerated".

In response, East Timor Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri said the organisation's report was "too negative".

East Timor 'must rein in torture police'

Agence France-Presse - April 20, 2006

From correspondents in Dili — East Timor's government must urgently act to stop police torture and other ill-treatment of detainees before the practice becomes widespread, a Human Rights Watch report said today.

Dozens of witnesses and victims of police abuse in the world's youngest nation interviewed by HRW said that beatings and torture were routine, with

several detainees having to be hospitalised.

"We were shocked to find so many credible accounts of torture and severe ill-treatment by police officers," Brad Adams, the HRW Asia director, said in a statement announcing the report's release.

One man arrested in Maliana told the rights watchdog that he was repeatedly beaten during a two-day incarceration. "I was continuously tortured, sprayed with pepper spray, beaten and drenched with water. They constantly threatened me, saying: 'If you oppose the police, then you will know the consequence'," he said according to the statement.

"On the first night they beat me at around 1am, on the second night they beat me around 3am. Both nights were different people, but both times they were beating me," he said.

The government and independent oversight bodies have failed to take reports of police abuse seriously or discipline officers, HRW said.

"East Timor's leaders are ignoring police abuse when they should be taking urgent steps to end it," Mr Adams said. "East Timor won independence in part because of Indonesia's horrific record here. Now some people are saying that the new police force is no better than the old one, and this should worry the government."

The watchdog called for international donors to express their concern to the government and increase support for the independent monitoring of police violence and for agencies providing services for victims.

It also urged donors to fund and plan long-term strategies on capacity-building, training, and other support to the police force.

"This report should serve as a wake-up call to the government and donors," Mr Adams said. "This young country can avoid emulating its former colonial master, but only if concerted action is taken now."

Indonesia occupied East Timor for 24 years, with its rule ending after East Timorese voted for independence in a 1999 UN-backed referendum.

Military-backed militias sacked the country in response, killing an estimated 1400.

After three years of UN stewardship, East Timor became the world's youngest nation in 2002.

East Timor's independent Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation has found that at least 102,800 Timorese died as a result of the occupation through massacres, disease or starvation.

United Nations civilian police trained East Timor's police force, which took full control of policing operations in December 2003.

East Timor police accused of human rights abuse

ABC World Today - April 20, 2006

Reporter: Geoff Thompson

Eleanor Hall: As the United Nations prepares for its final pull-out from East Timor next month, a human rights report has leveled allegations of torture and abuse against the local police.

Released just a few hours ago, the report by Human Rights Watch documents dozens of cases of abuse by prisoners in custody.

And the organisation's Asia Director, Brad Adams, has been telling our Indonesia Correspondent, Geoff Thompson, that East Timor is in danger of developing a culture of impunity for officials who commit abuses.

Brad Adams: One of the saddest things we've heard from a lot of East Timorese was that they're now comparing their police to the police under the Indonesians and they're comparing a colonial police force which was very brutal — the atrocities are well documented — with what they're facing now.

That may be because a lot of the people that used to work for the Indonesian police and have stayed on and learned very, you know, brutal methods of policing from the Indonesians, but I think that we

expected that there would be greater political leadership, greater moral leadership and the effect of the international involvement would mean that there wouldn't be such wanton violence.

Geoff Thompson: What sort of abuses are we seeing in East Timor at the hands of East Timorese police?

Brad Adams: Well, one of the curious things is we didn't see a lot of torture to beat confessions out of people. We saw a lot of torture just to beat people. It seemed like it was punitive, that they were trying to punish people for crimes or in some cases they were just using their power to settle local scores.

Essentially, the abuse was not very high tech. It was physical, it was groups of police officers beating up individuals, kicking them, hitting them with sticks, punching them, you know, just meting out lots of brutality and then sort of leaving them, not providing medical care afterwards. And it's not clear why this is happening. This seems to be violence for its own sake.

Geoff Thompson: Is it perhaps true that any force which has the ability to inflict force on other people tend to abuse it, unless there are some checks and balances on the use of that force?

Brad Adams: Absolutely. There's no major urban police force in the world that doesn't have problems with police brutality. The reason that it's less in some places is a good culture of policing, professionalism, but also the kind of restraints that you are alluding to — internal oversight process, professional ethics process, an independent police review commission, the court system and an independent judiciary. I mean, all those things are very important and all those things are largely lacking in East Timor.

There have been some efforts to build up a professional ethics office in the police — there's an ombudsperson, there's a human rights officer in the Prime Minister's office for example, but none of these institutions are strong and none of them really have the authority to take direct disciplinary action.

It really comes down right now to the Ministry of

Interior, the national police chief, taking this very seriously while those institutions are being built up.

Geoff Thompson: The United Nations is in the process of pulling out of East Timor for good. This is not a strong indication that it is a robust and fair-handed democracy going forward, is it?

Brad Adams: Well, there's a lot of worrying signs; the military is in crisis; thousands of soldiers have been on strike off and on and a lot of institutions are still very weak.

And I think the United Nations and donors need to stay engaged as long as possible, not to treat East Timor as a protector of a colony, but to really help it get on its feet.

It was a long period of degradation under the Indonesians and it takes a long time to build a society back up. You can knock it down much more quickly than you can build it. And so we really hope that the Australians for example, stick it out, and other regional powers help them out.

It is not just a matter of having for instance, a little classroom course on police ethics and then ticking that box, it's the question of providing technical assistance, monitoring, pressure, political engagement — all those things you have say for these problems to be improved.

Eleanor Hall: And that's the Asia Director of Human Rights Watch Brad Adams speaking to the ABC's Indonesia Correspondent Geoff Thompson.

DAILY MEDIA REVIEWS

East Timor daily media review

UNOTIL - April 1-28, 2006

Four sovereign bodies form new commission

The government, through PM Mari Alkatiri, reportedly explained that an idea has been proposed to establish one State commission to investigate the petitioners' claims. In this regard, two representatives will be chosen

directly from the office of the President, two from the National Parliament, two from the government such as State Minister Ana Pessoa and Vice Minister of Interior, Alcino Barris and one from the Tribunal with participation from the Church and the civil society as a consultative member. (DN, STL, TP)

Lobato: Some individuals provoked the petitioners

Interior Minister, Rogerio Tiago Lobato reportedly stated that regarding the current situation, some individuals are taking advantage of the situation to provoke and push the petitioners to demonstrate. Minister Lobato said "there is a third party among the protesters, and some have said that the government is incompetent". The media further reported that Lobato also pointed out that intelligence has taken photographs of some foreigners supporting the petitioners and that these photos are currently in police custody. (DN, STL)

BPU and TNI jointly patrol boarder

STL reportedly quoted Commandant of Border Patrol Unit (BPU), Guilhermino Ataido, in Tunubibi as saying that in relation to the Malibaka incident which occurred on 6 January 2006, BPU and Indonesian Military (TNI) are working together to provide increased security along the Frontier of each respective country with the intention of preventing illegal border crossings. Ataido said, "BPU is cooperating with TNI, especially contingent 744 which is based near the Indonesian and Timor-Leste frontier. Therefore, we have created a "joint patrol". (STL)

Tilman: Lack of investment is no fault of the petitioners

Timor Post quotes MP Manuel Tilman, spokesperson for KOTA, as saying that the government, rather than the petitioners, is at fault for the current situation in the country which may impact investment. Francisco da Costa Cabral Lay, President of a small and medium business enterprise (SME) told TP and STL that the current situation should be resolved otherwise private investment can be affected. (TP)

Fire at Taibessi Market sees kiosk burnt down

The Taibessi Market was a scene of destruction again yesterday, with one kiosk being burnt down. The fire did not spread to other kiosks, as it was put out quickly by the surrounding community. The situation in the market became increasingly tense, and those traders who had returned to tidy up their stalls and belongings from the previous day's destruction then fled again. The community is concerned due to the threat from the leader of the dismissed soldiers, Gastao Salsinha, that there will be trouble if at the end of the week of demonstrations there is still no solution presented by the government.

There were no deaths in yesterday's market violence, and the police were able to arrest the perpetrator/s of the vandalism. (STL, DN, TP)

Salsinha meets Bishop Ricardo and PM Alkatiri

Spokesperson for the F-FDL petitioners Gastao Salsinha yesterday met with Dili Diocese Bishop Alberto Ricardo and Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Jose Ramos Horta. During the meeting, the four came to an agreement to establish a commission to investigate the charge of discrimination within the F-FDTL. Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Salsinha said that whether the petitioners agree with the proposed commission or not will depend on what the commission does and who will be involved. He said that he himself is interested and concerned to see who will be on the investigating team, and that he has doubts as to its success if only one state institution is involved. (TP)

'Church concerned with situation of the country'

Speaking to the media on Thursday after meeting with the spokesperson of F-FDTL's petitioners, Gastao Salsinha, Dili Diocese Bishop Mgr. Alberto Ricardo da Silva stated that the Church is also concerned with the situation of Timor-Leste where people destroy each other, adding that therefore the Church, consisting not only of bishops, priests and nuns but also of the majority of Timorese, tries its best to create a condition where people can live in peace in tranquillity.

"If people are concerned with the situation, the Church is also the same, therefore we all hope

that everyone will be united," said Bishop Ricardo da Silva.

In addition, Bishop Ricardo da Silva said that Timor-Leste should show a good example to the world on how to live in tranquillity, and that there should not be any chaos, otherwise Timor-Leste's reputation will be tarnished in the eyes of international community, and there will be never a better chance to receive any support. Bishop Ricardo da Silva hopes that for a new commission to be set up [by the organs of State] for investigating the allegations of discrimination within F-FDTL institution] in which the Church supports, there should be trust and good will among the people to tackle the matter so that a final solution can be found for the benefit of the nation. (Diario Nacional)

April 27, 2006

US in not behind the petitioners

United States' Envoy in Timor-Leste, Grover Joseph Rees, responding to an allegation that the United States is behind the 591 petitioners, said that "this information is false. He also said that last year some people said that the United States supported the demonstration that was held by the church, and pointing out the similarity of the two rumours. Ambassador Rees emphasized the falsification of these reports and stated that there are liars and honest people in every country." (STL, TP)

Lu-Olo: War has passed and there will not be bloodshed

President of the National Parliament, Francisco Guterres Lu-Olo, reportedly said that in the past, people were at war because of their intention to take over Timor-Leste and added that now it is the Timorese who are at war with each other (referring to the petitioners). He said "In my opinion, no one can leave the place where he/she has been born and come to occupy this nation".

The media also reported that on Wednesday, two

delegations of the petitioners re-presented their demands to the national parliament. This information was obtained from an urgent press conference that was held in Parliament saying that the letter submitted on the first day of the demonstration did not address their demands but it was related to Maubere Democratic Party (PDM).

STL reported that the 591 petitioners have given a sovereign body a deadline of Friday to resolve the matter with a positive outcome.

Diario National quotes one protester as saying that they "also protest against the people who are from Lorosae (East) who dominate the selling of goods in the three markets of Becora, Taibessi and Comoro". If a solution is not reached, then people from the West will boycott all goods imported into Timor-Leste. (STL, DN)

Horta meets informally with Salsinha

Timor-Leste's Foreign Minister, Jose Ramos Horta, on Tuesday night met informally with the 591 petitioners' spokesperson, Gastao Salsinha. It is reported that during the meeting Horta stated that the government will establish a new investigation commission to address the concerns of the petitioners. In response to this, it is reported that Salsinha did not accept this proposal and said that such a decision should have been taken before the demonstrations started, so that a solution is proposed.

Diario National Reported that the president of the National Parliament, Francisco Guterres Lu-Olo, clarified his declaration to journalists on Wednesday in which he referred to the involvement of embassies and some political parties being behind the petitioners. Lu-Olo said he meant that the problem of the 591 petitioners is an internal one for the government and people of TL; therefore the Timorese State should find a solution, and not the United Nations (UN) or other countries. (TP, DN)

Alkatiri, Lu-Olo convene meeting to find solution to petitioners

President of the National Parliament Francisco Guterres and Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri on Wednesday convened an urgent meeting with the aim

of finding a solution to the current problem with the petitioners. Speaking to journalists, Lu-Olo said that the Prime Minister would then convey the opinions that they formed together to the President. He said that there are several steps that can be taken to resolve the problem, and that he is confident that a solution will be found.

(DN, STL) Destruction at Taibessi Market, one wounded

The Taibessi Market became a scene of destruction yesterday, with people running chaotically resulting in one trader injured and one police officer remanded for firing shots without a command to do so. Trading areas and kiosks in the market were pulled down, and in other areas of Dili three houses were stoned. The destruction and rioting are related to the current "594" demonstrations. Minister of Interior Rogerio Lobato confirmed that the police have arrested some people involved in the violence, while Police Commander Paulo Martins denied rumours that police had shot a child in the Taibessi Market in the midst of the rioting, and confirmed only that one officer had fired a warning shot.

However, one young person was shot by an unknown person in the market and is currently undergoing treatment at the National Hospital for an injury to his eye. (STL, DN)

Ximenes: Come to the tribunal, a decision must be made

The president of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste's Court of Appeal, Claudio Ximenes declared that with regards to the decision taken by military authorities to expel some members of the F-FDTL, he will not be making any opinion.

However, should the case be taken to the Court, then a decision will be made accordingly. Claudio Ximenes gave this remark to the journalist at the Court of Appeal building in Caicoli on Tuesday (25/4) when asked his opinion.

Claudio, who is also the President of the Superior Council of the Magistrate, was quoted as saying "first of all, I am not familiar with the decision, and therefore I cannot give an opinion; and secondly, even if I am aware of it, I am unable to given an opinion over the decision."

When asked for further explanation, he clarified that as a Judge, he cannot give his opinion (at this stage). According to Claudio, the F-FDTL problem is more of an administrative and military problem, so only military authorities are competent to resolve it.

Having said that, he added that it may also need a political solution, but even so, the ability to do so rests with those with whom the military administration function rests, and those who have the political function and authority in relation to this matter. The President of the Court of Appeal confirmed that he has received a copy of the petition from the F-FDTL members but that he is unable to publicize its contents as he does not have the authority to disclose it. (STL)

Demonstrators assaulted houses and shops in Lecidere

STL reported that some of the demonstrators involved in the rally of F-FDTL's petitioners assaulted three houses and three kiosks in Lecidere, Dili on Wednesday. From the assault, it total losses were estimated worth US\$ 3,500.

Aside from assaulting the houses, the demonstrators also damaged one car, two tricycles of street vendors and killed one pig in the area.

We do not know anything. But, all of the sudden the demonstrators in military uniform came and destroyed our house and the car," said Jenoveva Soares, a Lecidere resident.

Soares appealed to Timorese authorities, especially President of Republic, Prime Minister and President of National Parliament to quickly find the solution for the problem, adding that as an ordinary citizen she was innocent of what went on, and said that in the era of independence what she very much wants is to live in peace and carry out a normal life.

In response to the incident, the spokesperson for the petitioners, Gastao Salsinha stated that he did not have confirmation on all of the incidents reported except that of the damaged tricycles, adding that what had happened was considered to be a technical mistake, therefore they would try correct this wrong behaviour.

Moreover, Salsinha said that once all of the damages done by the demonstrators were confirmed, he would be responsible for it. (STL, 27 April 2006)

April 25, 2006

Petitioners: 'If you want war, we are ready for it'

The 591 F-FDTL petitioners yesterday staged a protest and demanded sovereign bodies of this nation to speed-up the resolution to their claim of discrimination which they insist occurred within the F-FDTL institution. According to reports, at about 09:30 in the morning approximately more than 1,000 protesters marched from Tasi-Tolu to Dili, a distance of about 15 kilometers. The protesters carried various banners, saying: "We want to seek justice and truth," "Brig. Gen Ruak should declare 'westerners' were also involved in the independence struggle," and "Viva President".

When the demonstrators reached the presidential palace, they presented their declarations to leaders which consisted of 10 items, one of them declaring that the soldiers dismissed by Brigadier Taur Matan Ruak would be ready to die if no solution is found. The Petitioners also demanded an explanation of the Taur's earlier remark to the petitioners, "If you want war, we're ready for it."

Timor Post reported that Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri asked the 591 F-FDTL petitioners via their delegates after they had submitted their demands, that while they carry out their protest, they also maintain a secure atmosphere especially in Dili.

Malaysia invited Timor-Leste authorities Defense Minister, Roque Rodrigues, Commandant F-FDTL Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak and Superintendent PNTL, Paulo de Fatima Martins to view an exhibition on Defense Services Asia (DSA). Fatima said that he could not attend because he is responsible for internal security in the nation,

particularly at this sensitive time.

As the demonstration carried on yesterday on the way to the Court of Appeal, there was a minor incident in which two people were wounded and a vendor's stand was destroyed. The Police and petitioners managed to regain calm. (TP, STL, DN)
Government to provide free education for needy

The Special Secretary of Oe-cusse, Albino Salem, told media that the district government would start providing free education to those who have finished their study in primary school and have the capacity to continue but lack the financial ability. Salem further stated that they have already begun to identify youth that are not enrolled in secondary school and are encouraging them to return to finish their studies. (DN)

Lu-Olo: Parliament does not take any stand

The President of the National Parliament, Francisco Lu "Olo" Guterres, has stated that the National Parliament does not take a stand with regards to the protest of the petitioners because the letter that they had submitted to the Parliament through their delegation does not outline their demands but instead relates to Maubere Democratic Party (PDM). The paper reports that Lu "Olo" informed journalists of this issue at an urgent press conference held yesterday, after receiving the letter from the petitioners.

DN reports that UIR police commander and the district police commander yesterday accompanied the delegation to a meeting held behind closed doors. Journalists received no comment in their attempts to confirm reports of the said letter. On the other hand, journalists confirmed with the spokesperson for the petitioners, Salsinha, that the letter had been submitted to the Parliament but that it appears that the letter has been manipulated with the intention to "destroy the action" of the petitioners. "We do not have any letters from PDM", said Salsinha, "but the letter that we have now was written by myself with one of my colleagues, and we have signed it". (DN, STL)

Gusmao should suspend Taur Matan Ruak

The spokesperson of the 595 petitioners, Gastao Salsinha, requested the Supreme Commander of the

Armed Forces, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao to use his power as the President of the Republic as stipulated in article 74 and 75 of the National Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to take immediate steps to suspend Brig. Gen. Taru Matan Ruak for the bad decision he made with regard to the dismissed soldiers.

Lt. Salsinha said if the problems are not resolved, "we will form a commission which will be composed of the four competent sovereign institutions, including the civil society and the intellectual and religious community. We the petitioners, the people and the youths demand justice and truth. We also ask the four sovereign state institutions with the competency to resolve the problems presented by the petitioners as soon as possible, within the five days," Should there be no solution to the problems presented by the petitioners, then we ourselves would seek for alternative solutions, such as, first of all " we are ready to go on a strike and will remain here until we receive a response. Secondly, we are ready to die in order to defend justice. Thirdly, we, the petitioners continue to pledge our allegiance to the President of the Republic, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the DRTL"added Salsinha."Our petition has been delivered to the four most Sovereign State Institutions, the Government, the Parliament, and the Court of Appeal and these Institutions will talk with the President of the Republic, and then we will hear a result," said Salsinha.

Responding to the question from a journalist regarding when they plan to hand in their uniforms, Salsinha said that only on the last day of their demonstration will they know whether or not they will hand in their F-FDTL uniforms which are still being worn by all of them. (DN)

Government will solve petitioners of F-FDTL's problems

Speaking to the media on Monday, Minister of State and Presidency of Council of Ministers, Antoninho Bianco was quoted as saying that the Government would solve petitioners of F-FDTL's problems, but it should be based on the regulations currently in place.

Bianco added that he indeed participated in

yesterday's meeting which the Prime Minister held with representatives of the petitioners, adding that they did not say anything much but only handed over a document [containing their demands and aspirations].

In addition, Bianco said that it was the first time for Prime Minister to receive the official documents of petitioners, and so far he only followed the issue through media. Moreover, he said that Prime Minister would study the document after which the President of Republic would talk to other organs of State to look into it, and solve the matter.

"Government is ready to accept their aspirations. Presenting aspirations is a normal thing as it has been enshrined in the Constitution that the ordinary citizens have the rights to speak out and present their petitions," Bianco further said.
(DN)

April 22-24, 2006

Petitioners protest

The 'petitioners group' is scheduled to protest today with the support of 5,000 sympathizers, reported the media on Monday. Spokesperson for the group, Salsinha Gastco, told the media on Saturday that sympathizers from 10 Districts were expected to join the protest. Gastco said the 'petitioners group' planned to hold the demonstration in F-FDTL military uniform, following law and order, assuring it would be a peaceful demonstration and that security was under PNTL control. The venues of the protest include the Government Palace, the National Parliament, the Court of Appeal, and the Palace of Ashes ending at the seashore, Gastco said.

STL reported on Saturday that a meeting took place between PNTL Commander Paulo Martins, Operational Commander Ismael Babo and 'Petitioners Group' spokesperson, Salsinha Gastco delineating plans of the protesters. The trio also held a press conference later.

In the meantime PNTL Commander Paulo Martins reportedly said police are prepared to provide security during the four day protest adding he has asked the group to follow law, though if there are major disturbances, the police have the competence to stop the demonstration and to prevent victims and damages that have occurred in similar past events.

Bishop Basilio do Nascimento asks the leaders to listen to the 'petitioners' even if the solution cannot be found straight away, reported Timor Post today, adding that the group is holding the demonstration for a reason that needs to be looked into by both sides.

In a separate article, Diario Nacional reported F-FDTL Chief-of-Staff, Lieutenant Colonel, Lere Anan Timor as saying Minister of Defence, Roque Rodrigues, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak, accompanied by the Permanent Secretary of Defence, Filomeno Paixco and Major Coliati departed Sunday to Malaysia for an official visit. The delegation will participate in an exhibition regarding military equipment scheduled for today and will return on April 28. Anan Timor reportedly said Taur Matan Ruak would spend three days in Bali before continuing his trip to Timor-Leste where he will rest for two days before proceeding on an official trip to the USA.

MP Clementino do Amaral (KOTA) is of the opinion that any citizen has the right to support any group holding a demonstration and that includes priests in the name of the church, reported STL Saturday. (STL, TP, Diario)

Government wants to urgently define electoral law

The government wants to define the fundamental principles of the electoral law as soon as possible to allow many people to participate in the debate on the elections, as well as on candidature and voting procedures, reported STL. According to the report, the Council of Ministers raised the topic during Thursday's meeting. The Council also discussed other topics including combating HIV/AIDS and the organic structure of the public administration. (STL)

UN supports Portuguese magistrates

Three Portuguese magistrates accused of being 'colonialists' by the Minister of Interior last week were cleared of the accusations by the United Nations. Speaking at a press conference on Friday, SRSR Hasegawa emphasized that the investigation following the accusations by Timor-Leste Minister of Interior, Rogirio Lobato "reveals that by no means did this reflect colonial attitudes, nor was there evidence found of misconduct, dereliction of duty or absence without due authority by any international prosecutor". In response to the SRSR's conclusion, Prime Minister Alkatiri said, "I recognize that work has been done in the Prosecutor's office since the Portuguese began working there". On the accusations made by Minister Lobato, Alkatiri said, "one thing is the absence of the Portuguese prosecutors, duly authorized, the other is negligence and worse is to consider their attitude as colonialist. " I have knowledge of some situations in the Prosecutor General's office where Timorese and expatriates have had conflicts, but I recognize work has been achieved since the Portuguese prosecutors began work in that area," he said. (STL, Lusa)

Fretilin wants to strengthening national unity

Fretilin's Secretary General, Mari Alkatiri, reportedly said the names Maubere, Timor-Leste and Mount Ramelau have important significance in strengthening national unity. Alkatiri said the three components are in the hands of Fretilin.

Speaking at the party's central committee in Comoro, Mari Alkatiri affirmed the importance on reflecting and reviving the main symbols for which Fretilin fought. He explained the concept of Mauberism (Maubere) and why Fretilin values it.

Timor Post reported Fretilin's Secretary General as saying that the church and Fretilin cannot turn their backs on each other, adding that if Fretilin turns its back on the church, it is the same as turning its back on the party. He noted that Fretilin is the church and vice-versa.

"Those members of Fretilin, the majority are Catholics. They are part of the Catholic Church.

The majority of the people in the church are Fretilin and Fretilin makes up the church," Mari

Alkatiri explained on the occasion of 16th anniversary of the group Frente Timor Unidos (FITUN) in Kuluhun, Dili. Alkatiri appealed to the people to ignore comments made by some priests that if his party wins the 2007 election, some priests' throat would be cut, calling on the youth to carry forth the notion that religion is sacred and should be respected. Therefore, he asks those priests that want to be involved in politics to establish a political party and to speak like politicians, allowing people to question them.

Government lacks capacity to resolve citizen's problems

Director of NGO Mirror for the People (LABEH) Henry Samson, reportedly said the government cannot resolve his problem which is considered small, let alone the F-FDTL case. Samson said the immigration police have been investigating him for five years and have not yet found any facts that he is of non-Timorese citizenship. He said he is prepared to undergo DNA testing to prove his identity. STL reported the Director of LABEH as saying that the Provedor for Human Rights and Justice must investigate the Minister of State to find out the aim of investigating his identity, noting that the Minister of State initiated the investigation and not the immigration authorities. He says he is prepared to sit and resolve the problems with the authorities. (DN, STL)

PNTL commander laments report

PNTL Commander Paulo Martins told the media he greatly laments the Human Rights Watch report that gave a bad image to PNTL. Martins said he feels sad about the report but that some part of it discriminates against PNTL. Some of the discrimination Martins said the citing of the names of some PNTL officers such as the Commander of Dili District, Eugenio Pereira, accused of infringement in Bobonaro District.

In the meantime the Programme Manager for Law and Enforcement Program, Aniceto Bertenie Neves reportedly said that the Human Rights Watch is a reflection of the current situation in the country. According to Aniceto Neves, PNTL often violate human rights when they perform their duties during patrol among communities. He affirmed that HAK Association has also gathered

facts that show that a number of human rights violations within the community involve Timor-Leste police. (TP) Media still unprofessional: Suni

An organizer of Timor-Leste Journalist Association (AJTL), Francez Suni, reportedly said last Friday that the media of Timor-Leste is still unprofessional and weak in the area of writing news, therefore AJTL launched an open discussion on how to report and write professionally which began by presenting a film in which journalists had fabricated news. Suni noted that the present media in Timor-Leste does not report the news accurately even though the news is obtained based on a talking source. He added there is no one to analyze the news and the journalist writes and reports. He used as an example that journalists reported that about '80 percent of FRETILIN is not in support of Mari Alkatiri' pointing out that this piece of news was placed at the bottom of the first page when it should have been at the top. He said that the context of the news is important and it should keep readers interested. (DN)

April 21, 2006

Maubusi doesn't have the rights to speak on congress

On Thursday the media reported Vicente Maubusi as saying that 80 percent of Fretilin delegates will not vote for Francisco Guterres, Lu'Olo and Mari Alkatiri as the President and Secretary General of the party due to pending problems and no national structure connection within districts.

Francisco Guterres, Lu'Olo reportedly responded that Vicente Maubusi does not have the right to make comments regarding Fretilin's national congress because he has been suspended from the party's Central Committee. Lu'Olo said it is of no concern whether 80 percent of the delegates vote for them but he believes that same number will not vote for Maubusi. He added that the regional meeting is to look into issues of concern and to discuss changes to the statute.

President, sovereign bodies will resolve

'Petitioners' problem

Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri reportedly said President Gusmco and the sovereign bodies are working together to resolve the problem of F-FDTL institution. "Our politics is like the State. What we have been doing we will continue to do. President Xanana and I reached a consensus that the petitioners must collaborate and cooperate in the process we have defined on how to clarify the whole situation. The petitioners themselves have already declared they will not return to F-FDTL headquarters," Prime Minister Alkatiri said. He added that although the 'group' is not returning to the institution, the problem they raised must be resolved.

According to Timor Post, the Minister appealed to the population not to panic about the protest that the 591 soldiers are planning. He added that the petitioners are no longer entitled to salary as they have quit the army but the State is looking into their conditions so that they may live like any other ordinary citizen.

In response to the statement made by Minister of Interior that some priests are supporting the 'petitioners group', Fr. Domingos Soares Maubere said the church is everywhere to attend to the cries and suffering of the people and that is what the church is doing with the 591 petitioners by providing counsel to them so that they may live in the realm of peace and stability.

Minister of Interior, Rogirio Lobato has reportedly appealed to the 'petitioners group' not to listen to third parties to avoid provocations. According to the media, Lobato visited many areas of Dili to speak to youth groups to provide correct information and to calm the population.

April 20, 2006

Police can use gun to defend: Lobato

Minister of Interior, Rogerio Lobato told the media in a press conference Wednesday, that the police have given authorization for the

'petitioners group' to hold their protest. Lobato said his department received a notification from the group, informing him of their plans to hold a demonstration starting on Monday until Thursday. He reiterated that as a democratic nation, citizens of Timor-Leste have the right to protest, but added that 'if the protesters commit a crime, police will shoot'. The Minister of Interior said the work of the police is to provide security to the protesters as well as the community therefore PNTL will be in control of the security to prevent any crimes that can affect the stability of the nation. According to media reports, Lobato also stated during the conference, that he has already received information that some political parties, embassies and priests are supporting the 'petitioners group' noting that police have also identified some people who are providing food to the 'petitioners'. Lobato said police would patrol the airport and the borders to detain anyone contributing to the destabilization, from fleeing the country. He also appealed to the community not to panic as police would provide security 24 hours and he asked the heads and chiefs of villages to work together with the police in identifying new faces within their community and to question the purpose of their stay as many youths are now travelling to Dili to participate in the protest. He said police will identify the venue where the group plans to demonstrate and that participants will be searched to guarantee that they are not carrying any weapons. He asked all to maintain law and order.

The media also reported that the spokesperson of the 'petition group', Salsinha Gastao, as saying that the scheduled protest is to demand the sovereign state to speed up a solution to the problem adding, "if it is not resolved within the four days, we don't know what will happen to this country. It is not we who are destroying the nation but the sovereign bodies for not wanting to resolve it," he said, adding "We have been too patient during the last three months and we have exhausted our patience. We were once slaves and we don't want to be forever slaves, therefore the leaders must give attention to this problem." Gastao said the people planning to participate in the demonstration include the group and their families and asked police not to be in dismay as it will be a peaceful action. He stated that the

group is only receiving support from their families and people from 10 Districts and not from embassies and political parties as reported. According to the media, Salsinha Gastao believes that the demonstration will run smoothly but emphasized there must be a solution. He questions the functioning ability of the established commission and asks why they are investigating the victims and not the suspects. He also appealed to the commission to act impartially.

Suara Timor Lorosa'e (STL) reported Salsinha as saying that in order to resolve the matter, a comprehensive step should be taken to first investigate all F-FDTL members considered to be the actors of discrimination. The newspaper also reported that during a phone interview with the commander of F-FDTL's 1st Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Falur Rate Laek, he said that he is always ready for any interview by anyone: the devil, God or the Timorese authorities in relation to the expulsion. However, he said F-FDTL Commander, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak has banned anyone within the institution from commenting further on the matter. (TP, STL, DN)

Majority of Congresses won't vote for Alkatiri and Lu'Olo

A member of Fretilin Central Committee (CCF), Vicente Maubuti, said around 80 percent of the congresses would not select Francisco Guterres, Lu'Olo and Mari Alkatiri as Secretary-General and President of the party. "If their behaviour was good toward the cadres and militants during the last four years, they will be selected. But that will be difficult. The congresses are not blind and deaf," Maubuti reportedly told Timor Post. Maubuti said one of the reasons they would not be selected is because the structures of the party is paralysed, adding that a few people worked very hard for the re-structuring of the party and in the end were paid no attention and promises that those that took part in the clandestine would join PNTL and F-FDTL did not materialise. He added that the recent statement in Baucau from region I and II claiming total support for Mari and Lu'Olo, is only a formality noting, the correct results will be seen in the congress in May. (TP)

Petitioners reject continue remuneration The 591 F-FDTL petitioners have reportedly rejected the

decision to continue remuneration to them. Speaking to journalists in Taci Tolu Dili, the group's spokesperson, Gastao Salsinha stated that based on the decision of General Taur Matan Ruak who has considered them civilians since 1 March, they no longer have the right to claim any money from the state. Instead, he urged the State Institutions to address the issue stating that they were prepared to undergo investigation as long as those who had discriminated against them were investigated as well. If the "perpetrators" refuse to submit to investigation, "then they are the ones who want to destroy the nation," said Salsinha. (RTTL News)

Ineligible for external means ineligible for internal: Lobato

Commenting on the statements that the 591 petitioners could join other state institutions such as PNTL, the Interior Minister Rogerio Lobato reportedly stated that this would not happen. Speaking to journalists at the PNTL headquarters on Wednesday, the Minister said whoever is ineligible to be in external security is considered ineligible to be in the internal state security institution. "Our principle is clear right from the beginning," Lobato said. (RTTL News)

April 19, 2006

Pedro Carrascalao clarifies allegations against PM

Representative of Petro Timor in Timor-Leste, Pedro Carrascalao said an allegation of bribery against Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri was initiated in 2004 by some individuals to bring down the Minister. Carrascalao added that he had not accused Alkatiri of receiving bribes from Ocean Exploration as reported by the media in 2004. He said many people telephoned him at the time asking for evidence to use against Alkatiri but he did not have any information and his objective was not to bring down anyone. He said he has been trying to meet with the Prime Minister since then but has not had the opportunity to do so, noting that some people have been trying to prevent the meeting.

According to the media, Pedro recently met with Alkatiri to discuss investment opportunities in the country, and at the same time took the opportunity to clarify the events leading to accusations against the PM regarding accepting bribes. (TP, STL, DN)

President meets leaders of political parties

President Gusmao on Tuesday invited leaders of six political parties to discuss current issues and the preparations for 2007 elections. Those that participated were representatives from Partido Liberal (PL), Partido Nacionalista (PN), Partido Socialista Timorense (PST), and Partido Democrático Cristão (PDC). According to Nelson Tomas Correia, President of PST, the points discussed were the problem of F-FDTL, which President Gusmao said a mechanism is being discussed between the government and F-FDTL to find a solution, the martial arts group problem, the electoral law and other problems like the Commission of Former Cadres of the Resistance and the preparations for the 2007 elections. On the latter, President Gusmao asked the political parties to reorganize and revitalize themselves in order to have a composition balance in the National Parliament. On the issue of F-FDTL, Correia stressed that the Minister of Defense, Roque Rodrigues should make an organic law to regulate F-FDTL and also military court to process them according to legal procedures. (TP, DN)

Approval of electoral law is crucial

The president of ASDT party and vice president of the National Parliament, Francisco Xavier do Amaral said the Parliament hopes to receive the electoral law from the Council of Ministers sooner in order to allow the Parliament more time for discussion and debate, especially commission A which has the competency for this matter. Xavier Amaral underlined that if the document is presented to the Parliament late they will not have time to discuss and would just implement it. On the same issue, National Parliament Secretary of Sub Commission A, Alfredo da Silva told reporters that the electoral law is exclusive to the parliament and as enshrined in the constitution MPs can propose the laws, but not political parties. He said the commission will be open to the public so the political parties can

provide good inputs to make the law. Silva reportedly says he believes there will be no manipulations in the general election in 2007 because there is good mechanism to prevent this. (STL)

Evacuation into the hills in anticipation of demonstration

In relation to rumours that the 591 F-FDTL petitioners would hold a demonstration in Dili, which could potentially cause disturbances, RTTL reported that some Dili residents have fled to the hills around the capital, such as in the area of Manleuana, South West of Dili. The population of Manleuana reportedly told RTTL that some of those people have returned to their homes after staying for days while some others, particularly women and children, continue to remain in the area. (RTTL News)

April 18, 2006

Discrimination within F-FDTL must be solved immediately

Salsinha Gastco, the spokesperson for the 'petitioners group' has affirmed that the group has no intention of holding a protest but will continue to demand that the government to solve the problem of discrimination within the Armed Forces institution, as reported by the media on Tuesday. On the same issue, MP Clementino Amaral (KOTA) requested the President of the Parliament to seriously consider the case of F-FDTL as it can affect the stability of the nation, adding that up to now the issue has not been tabled for discussion in Parliament. But Francisco Guterres, 'Lu'Olo', President of the National Parliament reportedly said, "I see the petitioners group case is directly involved with the executive [government?]. Therefore we feel it is not yet possible for the Parliament to decide on the issue". STL reported Salsinha as saying the group would not surrender until the issue is resolved, stressing that "unless all of us, the 591, perish. If not the problem will continue". Gastco underlined, all the leaders must have the will to

resolve the problem and if they do not wish to do so they should say so and relocate the 'petitioners' elsewhere to avoid burdening the government. The newspaper also reported him as saying that although the group was willing to participate in Easter Sunday mass, they did not do so because neither has their problem been solved nor did they receive an invitation. Responding to the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jose Ramos-Horta that the 'petitioners' can apply to work in PNTL, Gastco said it would be difficult because on 17 February F-FDTL Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Lere Anan Timur threatened the group by saying if they joined the police force, disruption can emerge in Timor-Leste. He added that for this reason they do not intend to work as police. He underscored that the reason for the 'petitioners' demand is not to quit the defence force and join the police or return to F-FDTL Headquarters, but to change the mentality and the unjust practices in the institution to avoid discrimination against those from the west in the future. Salsinha also appealed to the population in Dili not to panic, as they would not create disturbances because the majority of the 'petitioners' are unarmed. Gastco affirmed the population the group is mobilizing those who volunteered to fight for national liberation, stressing a peaceful protest will be held if the problem is not solved.

In the meantime, Police Commander, Paulo Martins appealed to the population not to panic because of rumours of a protest by the 591 'petitioners group' as the police has not yet received information about the action. He asked the people to contact and confirm with the police about any rumours by publishing the telephone numbers of PNTL and assuring the public that the police is providing 24-hour security. Martins said police received information about some political party congress and the university students congress in Dili. He pointed that is the reason for increased movement of people in Dili. (STL, TP, DN) PNTL inspector to attend the National FBI Academy in US

It is reported that the USA Ambassador to Timor-Leste Grover Joseph Rees said PNTL Inspector Hermenegildo G. da Cruz was selected to attend the 226 session of the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia, USA. In a press statement

released on Monday, Ambassador Rees stated that the Academic session will start in July until September and it will be good experience for the police officer to share his experiences with other countries. Da Cruz is the first PNTL officer to take part in the training. (TP)

STAE not to be confused with Chief Suco election law

STL reports that MP Jose Nominando (PD) said "STAE should not be confused with the Chief of Suco election legislation" as to-date the National Parliament has not yet received any proposed bill from the government on the general elections. Nominando asked STAE "not to run without a legal base as the implementation of any national activities needs a legal base" He further explained that STAE should not speak about national and international observers for the upcoming general election because it is CNE's work. (STL)

April 17, 2006

Taur considers F-FDTL case 'small'

F-FDTL Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak told the media on Sunday, following a mass held at the Defence Force Headquarters in Metinaro, that "the problem of the 591 soldiers involved in the petition — I considered it to be small not big. I can only say big, when we go to war with the Indonesian military. Therefore the work of F-FDTL is done, now it's in the hands of the President of the Republic, National Parliament and the Government"

STL reported Brigadier General Ruak as saying, following a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jose Ramos-Horta on Thursday, that the problem involving the 591 soldiers has been handed to Prime Minister Alkatiri and the Government to find a just and transparent solution. The newspaper also reported that the Brigadier General met with President Gusmco for two hours on the same day.

In reference to Sunday's mass held in Metinaro, the spokesperson for the 'petitioners group', Salsinha Gastco stated that the group did not participate in the mass organized by President Gusmco as they are still traumatized by last week's events in Metinaro Training Centre when they were called to participate in the investigation process. Salsinha said plans were in place for after Easter but did not reveal them.

In a separate article, STL reported Minister Ramos-Horta as saying that once the problem of the 'petitioners' is resolved, individuals can apply to work anywhere including PNTL. "The soldiers have the right to apply to PNTL," said the Minister. (STL, TP, DN)

Arsenio Bano: Government's strategy to reduce poverty

Speaking to the media after delivering aid from the government to Dormitorio Irma Lucia de Portugal Lautem College, Lospalos, Minister of Labour and Solidarity Arsenio Bano said the government's strategy to reduce poverty is in national interest and therefore it is a problem involving everybody, not only the government. "If we all want to reduce poverty, we all need to study hard; work hard to liberate our people from poverty." Bano added. He also restated that 2,900 students would be awarded scholarships to help the students financially and improve the quality of human resources. (TP)

No need to make a regulation for martial arts groups

In response to the killing of Domingos Liborio Martins in Colmera, MP Alexandre Corte-Real from UDT said the National Parliament doesn't need to make regulations for martial arts groups since a decree law to regulate such groups already exists. "These groups have made a declaration but they continue fighting each other and that shows the leaders of the organizations are irresponsible," Mr Corte-Real added. On the same occasion MP Clementino Dos Reis Amaral from KOTA said the government should ask responsibility from martial arts leaders because they have violated the agreement among martial arts groups which they have signed. "If they keep creating instability in this country there will be no investors

interested," Amaral added. (TP, STL)

Timor-Leste penal code

The President of the Republic will cooperate with the Government to make changes to the penal code, RTTL reported Thursday. The code, particularly article 175 on defamation has caused concerns among the civil society groups and media in this country. Speaking to journalists, the President's Chief of Staff, Agio Pereira reportedly stated that the legislative process is not being finalized and the President was willing to cooperate with the Government to make the penal code reflect the public opinion. (RTTL News)
'Chickens will grow teeth' — Alkatiri

The Secretary General of FRETILIN, Mari Alkatiri reportedly stated in a democratic country like Timor-Leste, everyone including political parties and leaders, have the right to express their opinion and criticize and to strengthen their parties. However, he said, for PD to destroy the roots of FRETILIN, is something that would happen only when "chickens grow teeth". He added he has no doubts his party would win the next general elections. (RTTL News)

April 13, 2006

'Petition' case to be resolved during Easter:
Alkatiri

Prime Minister Alkatiri stated that President Gusmao would soon contact the former 591 F-FDTL soldiers to resolve their problem. He added that Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak and other commanders would continue to work together to try and find a solution to the problem. Alkatiri said that Easter is a good time to resolve any problems. According to media reports, Prime Minister Alkatiri and President Gusmao have started putting ideas together to try and find a solution to contribute to peace consolidation and stability for the nation. Alkatiri stressed that the soldiers would not return to the F-FDTL headquarters.

In a separate article, in response to concerns raised by the civil society regarding the former F-FDTL soldiers, Alkatiri said the leadership does not need lessons from the civil society, highlighting that the state and the nation is not governed by an NGO. He stressed that some civil society are not following the case and want to take advantage of the situation to be promoted/get their name in the newspapers and gain public approval. It was reported that some civil society are concerned that the leaders are not trying to resolve the problem seriously.

STL reported that Foreign Minister Ramos-Horta and F-FDTL Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak met on Wednesday to discuss the latest development regarding the 'petition group'. (TP, STL)

Some prosecutors not performing their duties

Minister of Interior, Rogerio Lobato told the media during a press conference on Thursday, that he has requested SRSG Hasegawa to monitor international staff, especially those working for the justice system. Lobato stated that according to information he received, some expatriate prosecutors working in Timor-Leste are not performing their duties but rather are spending their time travelling to Bali and therefore not working on court cases. Lobato said, "they come here to earn big money to spend holidays or to work in Timor? That's my question". The press conference was in relation to the detention of 32 people for alleged involvement in the murder of a 22-year-old man on Monday night in Colmera, Dili.

The Minister notes that the role of the international prosecutors is to resolve court cases, assist the government with law and order and develop the justice system. According to reports in the Timor Post, the Minister mentions that the prosecutors do not treat police officers kindly and victims are afraid to lodge their complaints. The article further mentions that the Minister asked Prosecutor General Longuinhos Monteiro, who was present at the press conference, to control 'his people' at the tribunal, especially the prosecutors. In response, Monteiro confirmed that the international prosecutors are not doing their work within the public ministry. Based on this confirmation, Minister Lobato reportedly asked the Prosecutor General to ask

those not working to return to their country, as there are other people interested in working in Timor-Leste.

STL reported MP Alexandre Corte-Real (UDT) as saying that the Minister of Justice is too weak to keep an eye on the international workers in the judicial area. Corte-Real is of the same opinion as Minister Lobato in that international staff working in the justice sector are not serious in focusing on their work in the courts.

In a separate article, Minister Lobato said he has also heard many rumours that within a few days certain groups will create problems in Dili.

Therefore, he appealed to the population to work with the police to stop these people whom he describes as criminals because the war has ended in Timor-Leste. (TP, STL)

Hasegawa establishes fact-finding commission

Dili, 13 April 2006 — SRSG Sukehiro Hasegawa established today a UN fact-finding commission into the performance of UNOTIL/UNDP international advisers working in the Office of the Prosecutor-General. This Commission is headed by Deputy SRSG, Maj. Gen. Anis Bajwa, with members Mr. Kazi Ahmed, Conduct and Discipline Adviser for UNOTIL, and Mr. Endre Vigeland of UNDP. SRSG Hasegawa noted that international advisers are assigned to various government or state institutions, including the Office of the Prosecutor-General and work under the respective ministry or department.

SRSG Hasegawa was surprised to read the comments made in the press by the Minister of Interior, Rogerio Lobato, with regards to international prosecutors assigned to the Office of the Prosecutor-General not working well. Furthermore, in reading Prosecutor-General Longinhos Monteiro's remarks, SRSG Hasegawa notes that the Prosecutor-General is responsible for the supervision and management of the UNOTIL/UNDP international advisers assigned to his office. (UNOTIL Statement)

Misunderstanding about number of observers: Tomas

Responding to a statement by some MPs that 'it is too soon for parties to present 1,000 observers

during the 2007 elections,' Tomas Cabral, Director of the STAE, said there has been a misunderstanding. Cabral said, "STAE is not in charge of observers and political parties fiscal, national and international NGO observers; that is the function of CNE. He clarified that STAE is responsible for organizing the elections, registering observers, enlisting voters, preparing ballot centres and materials. (TP)

April 12, 2006

Wolfowitz: Sustainable economic growth needs strong justice

The president of the World Bank Paul Wolfowitz asked the government to reinforce the justice system in the country or be prepared to face problems with sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, Wolfowitz underlined that the country will face many challenges, and the government has good initiatives to overcome problems even though it will take time. "With the experience you have had in the past, you continue identifying yourself as a nation that lives in peace and harmony".

In relation to Wolfowitz's statement that "there will be a big challenge for the government to implement the budget for fiscal year 2006/2007," MP Manuel Tilman (KOTA) said that this is only a recommendation from the head of the World Bank and Timor-Leste should consider implementing only what is relevant. "This country is led by a government under Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri and not an outsider," Tilman added. (TP, STL)

Too early to request for electoral observers from parties

In response to Tomas Cabral's, Director of STAE, recommendation asking political parties to prepare 1,000 members to act as observers for the general election in 2007, MPs Jose Nomiado (PD) and Lucia Lobato (PSD) said that it is still too early to discuss the issue. However, it is reported that KOTA spokesperson, Manuel Tilman, states that although there is no electoral law it is not wrong to prepare a 1,000 members from each party to be

stationed in the electoral posts around the country during the election. (TP)

Arrival of GNR depends on preparation: Barris

Vice-Minister of Interior Alcino Barris said he is uncertain when the Portuguese police Guarda Nacional da Republica (GNR) will arrive in Timor-Leste to give training to the Unidade Intervengco Rapida (UIR) unit. Barris said the training depends on PNTL preparations with equipment but that it is likely to commence after Easter. He added that training would be held in Suai and Maliana. The Vice-Minister said training for PNTL must continue according to the needs of the UIR and Timor-Leste is grateful for the assistance provided by many countries. Barris added that the training from GNR is based on the bilateral agreement between Portugal and Timor-Leste. He underlined that GNR has proven to have a rigid training discipline and UIR personnel have spoken highly of their performance. (STL)

Martial arts groups fighting

RTTL reported a fight between two martial groups in Colmera, Dili on Monday night which left one man dead and one seriously injured. RTTL reported that 22-year-old Liborio Martins died of stab wounds. Minister of Interior Rogerio Lobato laments that a life has been lost due to martial arts groups problems. He said a total of 32 people are being investigated. (RTTL News)

April 11, 2006

Wolfowitz on challenges facing East Timor

Speaking to the press after his meeting with the Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, the President of the World Bank Mr Paul Wolfowitz said that the big challenge for the government is how to manage the budget well in order to achieve 6-7% of economic growth for the fiscal year 2006/2007. "This country needs to create more jobs to decrease unemployment, but also increase the quality of education and private sector which plays an important role in this country.

Mr Wolfowitz added, that public servants need to know the role of media because the media informs society on how the government implements the budget and the process of development, so people know how the money is being used.

Mr Wolfowitz also met with President Xanana Gusmao to discuss the challenges facing the country in the future, as well as how to manage the petroleum funds. He told reporters that they discussed how the World Bank could help, especially in provision of technical assistance to improve the quality of the government's system. Mr Wolfowitz restated that Timor-Leste is progressing in development after so many years of conflict and is one of the best examples in the world. (TP, STL, DN)

20 workers from Timor going to Korea

In the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity office, Prime Minister Mr Mari Alkatiri appealed to 20 workers who were going to South Korea for work to "work hard not only for money but bring the skills to Timor-Leste when your assignment is finished to develop this country. This is a new experience for you and the government and its people, but you have to learn and use this opportunity. The government has a responsibility for all of you because you have used the right channels which the governments of Timor-Leste and Korea have opened for you", Mr Alkatiri added. He also said that many East Timorese are in Ireland and in other parts of the World, but they have proceeded to these destinations on their own accord and therefore the government has no responsibility for them. (DN, TP)

Ricardo: Church accepts help from the government

It is reported that in relation to the government declaration to help the church, Bishop Diocese Dili Dom Alberto Ricardo said that the church will accept assistance from the government to improve education quality which the church has established. Bishop Ricardo stated that the government has an obligation to help teachers to educate Timorese students and he appreciated the government's initiatives. (DN)

April 8-10, 2006

NGOs must be organised: Xanana

President Xanana Gusmao told participants during the "Open Space" dialogue held last Friday and Saturday that all NGOs must be organised, as their role is important for the development of the nation as partners. Gusmao said, "it's been four years since Timor-Leste entered the development phase and many goals have been achieved by the State but there are not yet mechanisms in place to serve the people to better their lives for the future". He said the role of NGOs is crucial in being part of the development process therefore it is important that they sit and discuss the concerns of the population. The President underlined the purpose for NGOs to organise themselves as a way to also create conditions conducive to stability and focus their work in the rural areas as well. (STL, TP)

Head of World Bank meets Bishop Basilio The Bishop of Baucau Diocese, Basilio do Nascimento, met with the President of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz in Dili on Saturday and according to media reports the Bishop said, "as President of the World Bank, he (Wolfowitz) wants to listen to opinions from the church, and to present appreciation and information". Nascimento said meetings with people such as Wolfowitz is important in order to inform them, especially regarding the population living standards in Timor-Leste.

In the meantime Paul Wolfowitz told the media upon his arrival in Dili that he was happy to see development progress in Timor-Leste although it is a fairly new country. Wolfowitz mentioned that he was interested to see how the Timorese govern, the transparency system, the petroleum fund and how the World Bank can assist in reducing poverty in Timor-Leste. On Sunday, he visited the market in Taibesse and the nearby community to see the living conditions of the people. According to the media, Paul Wolfowitz also attended Palm Sunday mass on Motael church in Dili accompanied by the World Bank Director in Timor-Leste, Elizabeth Huybens and other staff.

STL reported the President of the World Bank as saying that Timor-Leste is listed in 9th place according to its performance as a post-conflict country, noting that many countries have reverted to conflict. "This is a great history. Within a few years, the people of Timor-Leste established its economy well and a shiny democracy that started from ashes of 1999. To maintain peace and stability, is a spirit testament that the people and the leader of Timor-Leste are hoping for," said the President of the World Bank. He added that the Bank is proud to support whatever is needed despite the challenges faced by the country. (TP, STL)

Hold demonstration and URP will flatten tyres:
Lobato

Minister of Interior, Rogerio Lobato said the government is taking measures to stop a demonstration by the 591 F-FDTL Petitioners and their supporters in Dili. Lobato said according to information received, the group is planning a big protest in Dili after Easter celebrations and said that the government doesn't have other option but to station URP (Police Reserve Unit) at Ermera bridge and warn anyone wishing to proceed to take part in the demonstration that the tyres of their vehicles will be punctured because the situation in Dili has been calm and there no such thing as 'east' and 'west'. According to Diario Nacional the Minister made the statement during Fretilin's regional congress last Saturday in Baucau. He added that the issue of regionalism is a very sensitive issue and many of the party's members from Atsabe, Atulia, and Cailaco are beginning to travel to Dili to start fighting. "We know who is behind all this, trying to tease our colleagues from F-FDTL. We are controlling those people that are going to Tasi Tolu quarantine to provide information for them. It is not from the opposition parties but from overseas". The Minister added that problems such as this will continue up until the elections in 2007 therefore he appealed to members of Fretilin to be prepared and face this challenges as many people are trying to discredit Fretilin government. (DN)

The government must increase administration quality

Assistant Director General of Ausaid for ASIA

region, Michael Wilson said that if the government of Timor-Leste wants success in public investment development, it should improve the quality of budget management in order to achieve development. Wilson believes that the initiative of the Prime Minister for transparency and accountability is a base for Australia to debate about this important issue.

Speaking to the press after his weekly meeting with President Xanana Gusmao, Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri said the budget for the fiscal year 2006/2007 has increased and public investment will focus more in Dili due its central concentration of infrastructures and the maintenance of government's assets. Alkatiri restated that another argument to focus in Dili is because of the high unemployment rate. This is why the government took the initiative to invest more in Dili.

It is reported that in relation to the opposition's declaration that the government does not have a national development plan even though they increased the budget the Prime Minister said the opposition and the government always have different ideas but the government has done much for the country and its people. "I know the position of the opposition," Alkatiri added. (TP, STL)

To solve the petitioners not only rhetoric

After attending the NGOs conference at ex CNRT office, at Balide, East Timor Human Rights advocate Aderito de Jesus said that it is not too late if the Government, the National Parliament and the President of Republic want to take initiatives to solve the problem of the 591 members of F-FDTL petitioners, adding the leaders should take it seriously and not only rhetorically. De Jesus does not know what kind of mechanism the government will use to solve the problem due to the many cases still to be resolved within F-FDTL, citing as an example, the incident of 4th December 2002, Lospalos and Becora incident. On the same occasion, President Xanana said that mechanism to solve the problem of petitioners cannot be revealed as it is a mechanism used to maintain stability of the country. (TP)

F-FDTL case resolved: Lere

F-FDTL Chief of Staff, Lere Anan Timor said that in military terms, the problem of the "Petitioners" is now over and they are now considered civilians. Lere said the question now rests on the Military Commander to acknowledge whether or not the group committed a crime by abandoning the Armed Forces Headquarters and that issue should now be dealt with politically. (STL, DN)

April 7, 2006

It's better that the soldiers sit quiet

Speaking to the press after his weekly meeting with President Xanana at Palacio da Cinsas, Caicoli, Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri said that the government and the President will solve the problem of ex F-FDTL but the petitioners should stay calm and not create instability. Mr Alkatiri stated that relevant laws need to be created so people can understand what their obligations and rights are within the F-FDTL.

Fretilin Parliamentary spokesperson Mr Francisco Miranda said that they will oppose the resolution to investigate F-FDTL petitioners because the Parliament has asked the government to solve the problem. However, it is reported that the opposition party plans to create a commission to investigate the case of the petitioners.

It is reported that in relation to the opposition's declaration that the government does not have a national development plan even though they have increased the fiscal year 2006/2007 budget, Mr Alkatiri said that the opposition should build their own capacity in order to inform people correctly rather than just dreaming because they always misinform the public regarding the budget. (DN, STL, TP)

Lobato and Rate Laek discuss internal security

It is reported that Commander, Battalion 1 F-FDTL Falur Rate Laek and the Minister of Interior Mr

Rogerio Lobato yesterday met to discuss internal security. Mr Lobato said that "our discussion was about internal security and also how we can solve the problem of F-FDTL petitioners". The Minister added that as the Minister of Interior, internal security was his responsibility. (DN, TP)

SRSG Hasegawa: Verify what people say

After the closing ceremony of a two-week media training at UNOTIL O brigado Barracks yesterday, SRSG Sukehiro Hasegawa said that the function of media is to give factual information to the public and transparent, but also highlighted that the media is responsible to the society for providing correct information. Mr Hasegawa also presented certificates to 22 local journalists who participated in the media training jointly organised by UNOTIL and TLJA.

Speaking to reporters after attending a book launch of 'Tetum grammar' at the National University of Timor Lorosae, PM Alkatiri said that journalists need to speak and write good Tetum, because Tetum is the official language of Timor-Leste and needs to be developed. (TP)

April 6, 2006

Government is not denying church participation

Minister for the Council of Ministers and Government spokesperson, Antoninho Bianco, strongly disagrees with the statement made by Fr. Martinho Gusmco as reported by the media on Wednesday that a dialogue between the Government and the church is a joke. Bianco said that the Government has never denied the participation of the Catholic Church during the struggle for liberation and suggests that the priests educate the people with truth rather than making things it up. He added that Minister Ramos-Horta is of the opinion that the Government should hold a dialogue with the church and especially with Bishop Basilio do Nascimento to discuss issues of national interest. He said that the Government has received information from the working group — composed of representatives from the Government, church and

other religious groups — that Catholic Schools in Timor-Leste, especially in Baucau are facing difficulties with their activities. The MP said the State budget, which is Timor-Leste money, is meant to be allocated to areas in need and since the church has more experience in the area of education the Government wants to support it.

Diario Nacional newspaper reported MP Francisco Branco (Fretilin) as saying that the initiative of the Government is good and it is its obligation to support the Catholic Church Institution as a development partner in the education area. He said some church leaders should not see this act in a negative way. Branco added that the Government is committed to building the nation during this reconstruction phase with continued technical assistance from development partners and added that it is not the Government's strategy to seek votes for the 2007 elections. In the meantime, MP Rui Menezes (PD) said the Government's commitment is a dream due to the proximity of the elections and the prospect to win votes based on this measure. MP Clementino Amaral (KOTA) is of the opinion that the Government and the church must renew their bond, which was damaged following the 19 days of protest in April last year. Amaral notes that the people of Timor-Leste trust more the church than the Government therefore it is important for the Government to restore that bond. (DN, TP, STL)

President to hold national dialogue

President Gusmao is holding a dialogue with national and international NGOs with the theme of, "How Can We All Strengthen Our Commitment To Better Serve The People And Carry Timor-Leste Forward With Stability And Prosperity?" The dialogue is scheduled for 7th and 8th April.

According to Timor Post, the meeting is open to any discussion on the topic relating to one's day-to-day work. Belun NGO, NGO Forum and UNDP are supporting the event. (TP)

Some members of petitioners wants to return

MP Antonio Lelan (Independent) reportedly said that two members of F-FDTL Petition from Oecussi enclave have asked him for assistance to return to the Armed Force Headquarters. Lelan stressed that

the decision must come from Brigadier General Ruak and that all he can do is organize transport for those wishing to return to the Headquarters. To date, however, no one has approached him again. He added that the two F-FDTL members who wished to return have also asked for assistance with money and provisions to hold meeting which he refused to give saying he would only provide for the benefit and stability of the country.

Timor Post reported Salsinha Gastao, the spokesperson for the group as saying they are all concentrated in the former UNHCR quarantine compound in Rai Kotuk to avoid being accused of creating problems. Gastao said the purpose of them to remaining in that area is to await a solution from the leaders regarding their problem. He also said the group sent a letter to the PNTL Commissioner informing him of their decision to remain in Rai Kotuk, adding that their families are their sole support. (DN, TP)

WFP starts food program in schools

World Food Program, WFP is now providing food to schools in five districts. According to the Memorandum of Understanding signed by WFP and the Government of Timor-Leste, WFP will provide lunch and supplemental food for schools. The program started two months ago in the districts of Covalima, Bobonaro, Oecussi, Ainaro and Liquiga.

The program will soon start in Dili District focusing first on the island of Atazro. The School Director of Maumeta, Liquiga, Rozinha de Jesus said, since the program began the students are much more eager to attend classes and the numbers continue to increase. De Jesus said that before this, not many students could attend class up to twelve thirty because they could not bear being hungry and the long distance they had to walk back. She hopes that the food provided will strengthen their learning capacity, but it is too soon to tell. Food supplements (ground maize) are also being distributed to pregnant mothers. Each pregnant mother is entitled to 9 kilogram of the maize and oil. Breast feeding mothers are entitled to 15 kilogram of maize (9 for mother and 6 child). A total of 72 pregnant mothers and 104 breast feeding mothers have benefited from the program. (TP)

PNTL destroyed pornography VCDs

PNTL destroyed pornography VCDs, reportedly to demonstrate to the public that they are aware of the problem, RTTL reported on Wednesday. Speaking to journalists, PNTL General Commander, Paulo Fatima Martins reportedly stated that the VCDs were destroyed as an example for the people to stay away from these devices and to encourage parents to keep their children away from pornography. (RTTL)

Government must listen to the people

Want to make changes? Government must listen to critics and opinion from the church, civil society, opposition parties, political leaders and traditional leaders/authorities. Because criticism can be golden when it improves a situation.

Therefore if the Government wants to govern this nation properly, it must listen to the people, and the politicians who think that Timor is the property of the people must work together.

Fretilin Central Committee (CCF) member Jose Luis Guterres told this to Timor Post on 4 April after participating in the bilateral meeting between development partners and the government in Hotel Timor.

According to Timor Post, Jose Luis Guterres—a figure likely to become a candidate for Fretilin's Secretary-General in the upcoming congress—appealed to Fretilin leaders especially those in the Government to not only pay attention to those who speak nicely about the Government but also to listen to the critics as well to improve governance.

He also asked Fretilin political leaders to make changes if they want to see the party stronger in future, adding that the party does not belong to one person but to the militants and the population and therefore, the political structure must be defined and implemented by the leaders, Jose Luis Guterres said.

"I believe the economic social development and political changes yearly. Whichever party wants continued efforts, must make changes and Fretilin also wants to continue to better serve the people

of Timor-Leste and it must respect the statute of the situation in the coming congress," said Timor-Leste Ambassador to the UN. (TP)

April 5, 2006

Donor's meeting and WB acknowledges changes

The donor's meeting concluded on Tuesday with continued commitment for the development of Timor-Leste, the media reported today. Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri reportedly said that donor partners have praised his Government and called to establish a mechanism to execute the state budget that will benefit development. Alkatiri stressed that the advisory role is still important and Timor-Leste still requires technical assistance to accelerate the work.

"According to the national strategic development plans, the Government has achieved many things and the partners have also agreed with the new plans to decrease poverty, Prime Minister Alkatiri said. The Prime Minister underscored that the Government really wants to resolve the problem of poverty as soon as possible and move to the development phase.

In the meantime, World Bank Country Director, Xhun Xian reportedly said Timor-Leste has achieved a lot in the private sector and the World Bank will continue to assist the Government in the areas of poverty reduction and infrastructure development. According to STL, the World Bank welcomed the Government's plans to increase the budget for the Office of the Provedor and Public Broadcasting Services as it is crucial for good governance.

In a separate article, Diario Nacional reported MP Rui Menezes (PD) as saying that many donor partners are not committed to their pledges due to the Government's performance results which are insufficient and do not meet their objectives.

The budget for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forest increased by almost 100 percent, Minister of Agriculture Estanislau da Silva told the media Tuesday. (TP, STL, DN, WB)

Government dialogue with church a political joke
Father Martinho reportedly said that the recent request by Prime Minister Alkatiri through the Foreign Affairs Minister to Baucau Bishop on how the State can coordinate and assist the church in areas like education would not be possible in the short term. Martinho noted that the two Dioceses, Baucau and Dili, do not have on their agenda a meeting with Prime Minister Alkatiri due to busy schedules. He added that many there are many aspects involved and the context must be debated before holding the dialogue. Fr. Martinho noted that for agreement on the dialogue, the bishops, the nuns and the priests have stressed that they do not want to see church taken as a joke. "It's different from before when we all fought together. In the end it's been denied. But now that the situation is starting to go into crisis, there are talks of being together again. This is political joke," Martinho said.

MP Lucia Lobato (PSD) said the proposed effort of the Prime Minister through Minister Ramos-Horta is a promise which began sometime ago and has not yet materialized. She noted the agreement signed by the Government, the Church and the President last April following the demonstration but there has been no follow up. "These promises are only to keep us quiet, but in reality they are nothing. Nothing is realized in this country," Lucia Lobato said. Lobato fully agrees with the government's plans to strengthen ties between the two institutions (church and government) as the relationship has worsened since Government officials made statements that the church should not be involved in politics. (TP, DN)

Leadership crisis within F-FDTL: Gusmao

President Xanana Gusmco says the country's military leadership is in crisis. His comments follow the desertion of 591 soldiers in February.

The troops, who were protesting against alleged nepotism and poor conditions, were later sacked.

Mr Gusmco has told a conference of foreign donors in Dili that the military is faced with a "lack of capacity to manage the problems properly. I appeal to everyone not to become alarmed if I say that a crisis exists," he said. Mr Gusmco has vowed to solve the problem.

In a separate article Lieutenant Colonel, Salsinha Gastao said the National Parliament has just awakened to the dismissal of the soldiers after almost two months. According to Gastao, they have all supported Brigadier General Ruak's decision and he questions whether their concern is to resolve the problem or mere politics. He is of the opinion that the Parliament should be able to resolve the issue and not let it sit for too long, adding trauma to the population in Dili. Salsinha Gastao said the decision by Brigadier General Ruak to dismiss them executed on television and not in writing and therefore they still considered themselves military. He rejects the statement by Minister of Interior Rogerio Lobato who said that the group wants to burn their uniforms to create instability, adding that if they wanted to create instability, the town of Dili would be destroyed by now. The Lieutenant General said his group doesn't want discrimination within the F-FDTL, noting that it is not they who are responsible for instability but the F-FDTL themselves who want to create instability. Gastao said the meeting the group held with youth groups was to calm them and not to create instability due to their discontentment with General Ruak's decision as well as statements that people from the West did not participate in the struggle. In a separate article, Prime Minister Alkatiri said the group should stop dreaming that they are still military just because they are still wearing the military uniform. Alkatiri also asked what the group really wanted, since they do not want to resolve the problem. He said that the decision is made and that's final. (ABC, TP)

UNOTIL mission would be changed to UNSPO

Timor-Leste's Ambassador to the United Nations, Josi Luis Guterres, reportedly said that he believes the international community will continue to provide assistance to the Government of Timor-Leste. Guterres also said that the United Nations mission will end on May 20 but that the UN will continue its presence in the country with a special political office to be called United Nations Special Political Office, UNSPO. He says that with the continued presence of the UN, the international community will be committed to assisting Timor-Leste in conducting the elections and that the population should believe in their

commitment. (DN)

Intellectual groups creating division and disturbances

MP Jacinto Maia (Fretilin) on Tuesday accused the Forum Intelektual (Intellectual) who made a statement on Diario Nacional on the weekend saying the group is creating division disturbances to the situation because it only has representatives from 10 districts. Maia said the other 3 districts — Viqueque, Baucau and Lospalos — are not represented in the Forum. He added that this clearly shows the divisionism.

The MP is of the opinion that since it is a Forum composed of intellectuals it should encompass representatives from all the districts and embrace everybody. He said the group should also be able to sit and discuss problems and try to come up with solutions. (DN)

April 4, 2006

F-FDTL petitioners want to create instability

The Ministry of Interior has received information that the “591 petitioners” have been holding meetings to discuss burning their uniforms and creating instability. Speaking to reporters on Monday, Minister of Interior Rogerio Lobato appealed to the Timorese people and in particular the people of Dili not to support those people who are trying to create confusion, and to instead support the police in working to guarantee security. He emphasized that in all situations it would be the law which would determine what action should be taken. Responding to the statement of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Jose Ramos Horta that the expelled petitioners should return to their homes as civilians, spokesperson for the “591” Gastao Salsinha said that the petitioners still consider themselves as military personnel, and complained that Horta’s statement is unfair.

Meanwhile, opposition MPs in Monday’s Plenary Session in Parliament requested that a Commission

of Inquiry be established to investigate the roots of the alleged discrimination in the F-FDTL. They also requested that the soldiers continue to receive their salaries, as there has as yet been no legal decision taken on their expulsion. (STL, TP, DN)

2,900 students to receive scholarships

The Minister of Labour and Solidarity Mr Arsenio Bano said that 2,900 students will be awarded scholarships. The scholarship will be given to students who obtain high marks in their studies from pre-secondary to university level and also to orphaned students. Mr Bano explained that the fund amounting to US \$240,000 comes from the Prime Minister's Cabinet to help students with financial problems. (TP)

Ex-combatants and women urged the government to solve problems Former Combatants and women organizations from Ermera district held a press conference on Saturday in Ermera to call on the Government, including the Church, to stop and resolve the problems between the peoples of Lorosae and Loromonu. Speaking at the press conference, Ernesto Fernandes "DUDU" a former FALINTIL Commander from the area, reportedly called on the Government, the National Parliament and the President of the Republic to stop and resolve the problem. He added that the people of Ermera believe there is no east and west, but one Timor-Leste, and hence, they are against divisionism. (RTTL)

OPMT district Dili holds 1st conference

FRETILIN's women Organization, OPMT, of Dili district held its first Conference on Saturday. The purpose of the conference was to strengthen and improve the capacity of FRETILIN women from Dili District. Maria Filomena Belo who organized the conference told journalists that her organization was aimed to prepare the women of Timor-Leste to be leaders and actors of development in this country. (RTTL)

TLMDC demands STL correct its report

Timor-Leste Media Development Center, TLMDC, held a press conference on Friday to demand that the daily STL should withdraw its report in relation

to FM Horta's criticism of Internews. In the article, STL reported that TLMDC was a part of Internews, which the Organization refuted stating that it is not a part of Internews. Meanwhile, the editor in chief of STL, Salvador Ximenes said that both sides have agreed to solve the issue. (RTTL)

April 3, 2006

Horta asks F-FDTL Battalion I to stay

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Negotiations Jose Ramos Horta has appealed to all members of the F-FDTL in particular Battalion I in Baucau to continue to implement their duties as members of the Armed Forces and to maintain respect for the military hierarchy, so that they do not fall victim to the maneuvers of some people. Speaking at the F-FDTL Headquarters in Baucau on Friday, Horta appealed to the F-FDTL soldiers to join together in maintaining discipline and the principles of respect, leadership, and confidence in the military hierarchy. He stated that in his opinion people with grudges are trying to break up the F-FDTL, the State, and the people, as well as provoking instability in Timor-Leste.

In an informal meeting between Horta and Baucau Bishop Basilio do Nascimento held on Friday, Horta brought with him a message from the Prime Minister regarding a proposed dialogue that Alkatiri will hold with the Catholic Church in order to establish how the Government and the Church may cooperate in the preparations for the education budget, in particular concerning the payment of salaries to Catholic School teachers. (STL)

Parliament asks for verification on F-FDTL case

The National Parliament has asked Commission B to conduct a verification of the F-FDTL case, so that the situation may be clarified in order to prevent further unrest in the community.

Commission B has also just presented its report from its recent visit to Baucau, Lospalos and Suai districts, which stated that in order to strengthen stability in the country it is

necessary to create the conditions which will guarantee this security. In particular, they recommended that the relevant Ministries focus their attention on the equipment needs of the Border Police. Nine members of the "F-FDTL petitioners" who were arrested on charges of assault on homes in the Tasi Tolu area last week have been released, as there was no evidence of their involvement in the incident. (STL, TP)

Population of Beto develop national unity

The Minister of Interior Mr Rogerio Tiago Lobato said that "there is no east and because we all East Timorese citizenship" after he attended peace ceremony which organized by chief of Suco Comoro Mr Eurico da Costa de Jesus. Mr de Jesus, stated that national unity is important for development in this country and people should not believe rumors of west and east because it only divides people. On the same occasion, coordinator of Youth National Unity Suco, Beto Mr Jorge dos Santos, asked the Government to solve the F-FDTL petitioners as soon as possible. (STL)

Demonstrators stage hunger strike

Four demonstrators staged a hungry strike in front of the National Parliament office last Friday and demand National Parliamentarian to solve the problem of west and east issue.

Coordinator of hunger strike, Mr Vicente Reis, said that " we ask our leaders to look at what is happening in this country right now and we don't want to see people suffer anymore" People want to live in peace and harmony because 24 years of suffering is enough, Mr Reis added. (TP)