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# Leading playwright arrested

*One of Indonesia's best-loved playwrights and actresses, Ratna Sarumpaet, was arrested along with her daughter and seven others, as a People's Summit was being held on the outskirts of Jakarta to coincide with Suharto's re-appointment for a seventh term as president.*

The arrests came as the climax of hundreds of arrests in Jakarta and across the country to prevent pro-democracy activists from taking to the streets to protest against the re-enthronement of the dictator who has ruled Indonesia for 32 years.

The People's Summit had hardly got underway when a large force of police encircled the area and made a beeline for **Ratna Sarumpaet**, actress and playwright. As co-ordinator of *SIAGA*, a ginger group supporting opposition leaders Megawati Sukarnoputri and Amien Rais, she was explaining why it would be difficult to continue with the event in view of the massive police presence. A lengthy tussle ensued as a number of those present attempted to hold back the uniformed and plain clothes police officers determined to arrest her. She was eventually grabbed and forced into a police van.

According to British journalist David Watts, twenty heavily armed police arrived in lorries 'cocking their M16 rifles (as) they cordoned off activists and journalists'. Another snatch squad turned up and the actress and seven others disappeared into police custody.' Edmund McWilliams, an official from the US embassy who witnessed the event said: 'That's where we are with democracy in this country. People are just not free to demonstrate.' [*The Times*, 11 March]

Others arrested at the People's Summit were:

**Ging Ginanjar**, a journalist who is active in AJI, the unrecognised Alliance of Independent Journalists.

**Fathom Saulina**, the 23-year old daughter of Ratna Sarumpaet, who was not attending the Summit but was waiting nearby to be ready to drive her mother home.

**Coki Naipospos**, a former political prisoner and director of MIK, the Indonesian Humanitarian Association. Coki was released on parole some years ago after completing half of an eight-year sentence. If jailed again, he would also almost certainly have to serve the remainder of the earlier sentence.

**Alexius Suria Tjahaja Tomu**, a human rights lawyer, who was present at the event in his capacity as a lawyer, to help others in case of arrest.

**Wira**, a human rights activist.

**Joel Thaher**, activist and member of Ratna Sarumpaet's theatrical group.

**Aspar Paturus**.

**Hendri Hermawan**, a journalist from Lampung, South Sumatra.

The last two have been allowed home but will nevertheless face charges.

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# CRACKDOWN

All nine have been charged under Law No 5/PNPS/1963 for engaging in anti-state political activities (see separate article) and face up to five years in prison. Ratna faces an additional charge under one of the 'spreading-hatred' articles of the Criminal Code, under which she could be sent to prison for up to seven years.



*Ratna Sarumpaet being taken away by the security forces*

## Police pervert the course of justice

Six of those arrested, including Ratna and her daughter, filed a lawsuit for unlawful arrest against the police chief who carried out the arrests and the Jakarta chief of police who ordered their detention. The first hearing was due on 23 March but the police holding the plaintiffs refused to allow them to go to court and the hearing had to be cancelled by the judge. A further hearing has been scheduled. Lawyers acting for the plaintiffs immediately lodged a complaint with the Supreme Court against the police for contempt of court and for acting to prevent people from seeking redress for an injustice.

## International support for Ratna

Five leading Irish writers and playwrights have come on board to campaign for the release of Ratna and her daughter. In a letter to President Suharto, Roddy Doyle, 1996 Booker Prize Laureate, Donal O'Kelly, Pat McCabe, Tom Kilroy and Jim Nolan said that the continued detentions was an attack on 'every citizen's right to freedom of expression under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights', adding that they were watching the situation with grave concern.

Readers of *TAPOL Bulletin* No 145, February 1998, will be familiar with Ratna's earlier battle with police who banned performances of her play *Marsinah*, which is a tribute to the woman labour activist who was murdered by the military in May 1995. \*

# Mass arrests as Suharto gets a 7<sup>th</sup> term

*Heavily-armed troops patrolled the streets of Jakarta to prevent opponents of the regime from demonstrating while Indonesia's 76-year-old despot was being enthroned for a seventh term. Hundreds were arrested, many of whom face imprisonment for up to five years. Suharto's re-appointment has ushered in a period of intensified repression which can only get worse as the economic crisis impoverishes tens of millions.*

With the country reeling under the most severe economic crisis in more than fifty years and Suharto's claim to legitimacy at rock-bottom, tens of thousands of troops were deployed and scores of people were arrested to 'secure' his re-appointment for another five years. Not that it was ever in doubt that the hand-picked MPR would re-elect him without a murmur of dissent. Had they even considered doing to, they would have had problems as mikes had been removed from the places where the 'honourable' members sat.

## Paving the way

During a meeting in February of army commanders from across the country held to discuss measures to 'secure' the MPR, the People's Consultative Assembly, at which Suharto would be re-appointed, the dictator issued instructions to the troops 'to crack down on protesters wanting to trigger national disintegration'. Armed forces (ABRI) commander, General Feisal Tanjung, said repeatedly that groups daring to take to the streets against the government would be 'cut to pieces'. The Jakarta military

commander, Major-General Syafrie Sjamsoeddin, announced that an operational command, *Koops-Jaya* with 50,000 troops at its disposal had been established under himself as commander and the Jakarta chief of police as his deputy. [*Forum Keadilan*, 23 February]

At the beginning of February, troops of the much-feared combat force, *Kopassus*, anti-riot police units and *Brimob*, police crack units, along with army units from the Jakarta military command and other commands in Java held a three-day 'show of force' at strategic points in the capital. Armoured vehicles patrolled the streets and British-made water cannon were used to force back mock demonstrations.

All demonstrations and public events were banned for the duration of the MPR session and the following week. To keep tabs on groups planning to 'cause trouble', the police demanded the collaboration of cellular phone companies to intercept communications and cut off calls deemed to be 'rabble-rousing'. [*Jakarta Post*, 13 February]

## Political dissent a punishable offence

At the start of the latest crackdown, it became clear that the authorities had unearthed a law that has not seen the light of day for many years. The law was originally enacted as a presidential decree by President Sukarno in 1963 to penalise anyone engaging in political activity deemed to be at variance with state guidelines and government policies. It was enacted onto the statute books in 1969 as Law No. 5/PNPS/1963.

This is the latest addition to the range of laws used to punish dissidents. Until now the regime has made do with the Anti-Subversion Law - also a legacy from the Sukarno era - which carries a maximum sentence of death, and a number of so-called 'spreading-hatred' articles in the Criminal Code, which are a legacy from the Dutch colonial era.

Article 2 of Law No 5/PNPS/1963 stipulates that all political activity must be directed towards 'advancing the revolution', must uphold the concepts of Guided Democracy and *Resopim* (slogans used in the latter years of Sukarno's rule) and must not disrupt security and order. Article 3 states that the local police must be notified at least 72 hours in advance of all political activities such as meetings and demonstrations and the purposes and nature of such activity. Failure to comply is punishable by up to one year.

According to Article 5, anyone engaging in meetings, gatherings, demonstrations, producing publications, issuing announcements, producing display material or photographs that fail to comply with Article 2 face a punishment of up to five years.

Charges so far preferred against activists arrested in the current crackdown are based on Articles 2 and 5 of this draconian law.

## SBSI activists arrested

At least eight labour activists, members of the unrecognised trade union, the SBSI, the Indonesian Welfare Trade Union, were arrested in the March crackdown. **Farah Diba**, a woman, was arrested while taking part in a demonstration in Jakarta on 8 March. Others arrested at the same event were:

**Kuldip Singh, Wandi Nicodemus and Widi Wahyu Widodo**, all of them activists of the political reform organisation, PIJAR.

Other SBSI activists to have been arrested in March are: **Yudi Rahmat and Yudi Hermanto**, who were grabbed by the police on 9 March on suspicion of holding an 'illegal meeting' and distributing an SBSI protest letter; **Sanusi**, arrested on 10 March in Jakarta, and **Sukirman**, arrested on the same day in Lampung. Three SBSI members were arrested in Serang, West Java on 10 March: **Seno, Mahmut and Sumanti**.

At least four of the SBSI activists and all three PIJAR members have been formally charged under Law No 5/PNPS/1963.

## Many more protest, hundreds arrested

Many others took to the streets before and during the MPR session to call for fundamental economic and political reforms and for Suharto to step down. Altogether at least 330 people were arrested of whom more than 150 will face charges. The following are just a few of the incidents leading to the scores of arrests and detention:

## CRACKDOWN

- On 7 February, seven activist members of a political association, *Aldera* were arrested while demonstrating near a mosque in Bogor, West Java. They were distributing a speech delivered by the ousted leader of the PDI, Megawati Sukarnoputri. Although they were released the next day, four have been charged under the 'spreading hatred' articles. Five days later, four of those arrested on 7 February were again taken into custody along with 13 other *Aldera* members. Office equipment was confiscated during the raid. All were later released.



*The Red-and-White Front on the streets of Jakarta*

- On 11 February, several hundred people took part in a march in central Jakarta organised by a pro-democracy group called the *Red-and-White Front*. (Red and white are the colours of the Indonesian flag.) Of the 146 people arrested, several of whom were hit by the security forces as the arrests took place, 123 are still in custody and have been charged under Law No. 5/PNPS/1963 which could land them in jail for up to five years. Among those arrested was a woman selling food nearby, who was held along with her three-year old child.
- A group of fifty people who were taking part in a demonstration in Jakarta as part of a Global March Against Child Labour, were rounded up, held for several days and threatened with Article 217 for refusing to move from a public place. The group included fifteen child labourers who were released earlier than the activists.
- Three students were arrested in Bandung, West Java on 13 February, after being found during a police traffic check to have pro-democracy literature in their car. Two were later released without charge but the third, **Juandi R**, will face charges for 'spreading hatred'.
- On 23 February, a number of women, members of a group called *Suara Ibu Peduli*, Voice of Concerned Mothers, held a rally on a busy thoroughfare in front of a major hotel, complaining about steep rises in the

prices of milk and other basic children's requirements. They were held in police custody, charged under Article 510 for public disorder and sentenced to seven days. They have appealed against the sentence. One of the three is very well known. She is **Dr Karlina Leksono Supeli**, an astrophysicist and lecturer in the philosophy of science, and is one of the few women in the world to have received training as an astronaut.

- **Berar Fathia**, a woman who declared herself as a candidate for the presidency was arrested while attending the trial of the three SIP women. Found to be in possession of leaflets proclaiming her own bid for the presidency, she will face charges under Law No 5/PNPS/63 as well as Article 160 which carries a penalty of up to six years for those refusing to obey an order from government officials.



*Demonstrators demanding Suharto to step down*

Other arrests took place in various parts of the country, including five members of *PUDI*, the Indonesian United Democratic Party, held in Malang, East Java for 27 hours; five student activists in Garut, West Java who were held for three days during which they experienced physical abuse under interrogation by the local military; a number of demonstrators in Palu, Central Sulawesi, at least one of whom is still thought to be in police custody.

## Two men missing

Two men, one an activist and the other a human rights lawyer, have been missing from their homes in Jakarta since early February. **Desmond Mahesa**, director of the Nusantara Legal Aid Institute in Jakarta, was last seen on 3 February. **Pius Lustrilanang**, an activist of the political organisation, *Aldera*, went missing the next day. They are thought to be in military custody but all attempts to trace them have been unsuccessful.

Before her own arrest, the playwright, Ratna Sarumpaet, took up their cases with the authorities, demanding an explanation about their whereabouts. Lustrilanang's mother visited Jakarta in March and pleaded with members of the National Human Rights Commission to help her find her son.

## Three PRD members arrested

On 13 March, three members of the People's Democracy Party, the PRD, were taken from their home in Jakarta by the military and are now under police custody. They are: **Mugianto**, **Nazar Patria** and **Aan Rusdianto**. The police say that they were in possession of 'communist literature'. Within days, the police announced that they would be charged with subversion which carries the death sentence because they are members of a banned organisation. 'The suspects sought to garner mass support to subvert the government,' said Major-General Hamami Nata, Jakarta chief of police. [*South China China Morning Post*, 19 March]

Meanwhile from Cipinang Prison in Jakarta, it is reported that PRD Secretary-General Petrus Haryanto, serving an eight-year sentence for subversion, is suffering from an acute kidney complaint. As his condition worsened, he was taken to a police clinic to be x-rayed but the doctors refused to recommend that he be taken to hospital for treatment.

## MPR member under interrogation

An oil company executive named **Arifin Panigoro** was also detained and is being investigated for remarks allegedly made at a meeting convened by Amien Rais who chairs the Muslim social welfare organisation, *Muhammadiyah* in February. Panigoro was a rather exceptional addition to the 137 political detainees being held at the Jakarta police headquarters in Jakarta for he is a member of the MPR, the body which re-appointed Suharto as president on 10 March. His name has come up in several contexts; according to one report, he is a graduate of the Bandung Institute of Technology and was the lead signatory of a statement issued by ITB alumni critical of the economic and political situation. Though already released, Panigoro is likely to face charges under Article 154 which carries a maximum penalty of seven years in jail.

The meeting convened by Amien Rais may itself be the focus of yet more allegations and arrests. It was held by the Centre for Strategy and Policy Studies (PPSK) on 5 February at Radisson Hotel in Yogyakarta, on the initiative of Amien Rais. Earlier this year, Amien Rais put himself forward as a candidate for the presidency but, being outside the MPR, his candidacy had no chance of being voted on.

Chief of Police, General Dibyso Widodo said that Amien Rais would be interrogated by the police for allegedly discussing efforts to mobilise a million people on the streets of Jakarta on 1 March, the day on which the MPR session began. Widodo said Rais would be investigated for 'involvement in wrongdoing to disrupt stability and order'. [*Jakarta Post*, 21 March]

Another businessman identified in the *Jakarta Post* only as MS, but who has been identified in other reports as **Meiloni Suwondo** is in police custody and is due to face charges under Article 134 for slandering the head of state, the maximum penalty for which is six years. \*

# The 1998 student protest movement

*'Reduce prices!', 'End corruption, collusion and cronyism!', 'Overhaul the political system!', 'Reform, reform, reform!' and 'Get rid of Suharto!' These slogans reverberated in campuses across the country, as tens of thousands of students gave vent to the nation's anger with an economy in ruins and a political system incapable of ridding Indonesia of a military dictatorship that has stifled the country for 32 years.*

The sudden explosion of student protest which spread like wildfire, was the most striking feature of the political turmoil that gripped Indonesia in the days before and during the session of the MPR, the misnamed People's Consultative Assembly - a body remote from the people which is never consulted by the man who hand-picked most of its members.



*Indonesian military in battle gear dropped near the campus of Universitas Indonesia*

Although the armed forces had let it be known that demonstrations on the streets would not be allowed to disrupt Suharto's enthronement as head of state, student protest would be 'tolerated' as long as the demonstrators remained within their campuses. The irony is that for the past twenty years, since the student unrest of 1978, students have been prohibited from carrying out political activities on the campus. Now the rules were turned on their head. By keeping politics off the streets, the regime would be spared a nation-wide revolt. However, the message of protest from the campuses was extensively reported in the press, with many photographs of thousands of banner-waving students confronted at campus gates by heavily armed soldiers and police.

The 1978 student movement rejected Suharto's nomination for president and produced a White Book with a critical analysis of the New Order regime; much of that analysis is still valid today. Thirty student leaders were tried and sentenced for 'spreading hatred' and all student

councils were disbanded. A new regime of control was introduced, the Normalisation of Campus Life, to rid universities of the scourge of politics.

Twenty years on, students have once again gone onto the offensive on a scale never before seen during the 32 years of military rule.

Today, in a country seething with rage, the country's rulers thought they could risk allowing students to let off steam while preventing their movement from spreading the seeds of unrest to the rest of the population.

## The 1998 generation

The 1998 student movement appears to have spread spontaneously from city to city with little or no centralised leadership though contact through the Internet played an important role in spreading the word. Whereas in 1978, student councils provided the backbone, in 1998 students set up ad hoc organisations bearing names like Action of Concern for the People's Suffering.

Senior university staff supported the students in many universities, addressing the crowds from free-speech forums. As government employees at the state universities, they were risking their jobs but today, intellectuals and academics have increasingly joined forces with the opposition.

## Jakarta and Yogyakarta set the pace

The first major demonstration took place on 25 February at Jakarta's University of Indonesia (UI), a state institution. The symbolism of yellow-jacketed students demonstrating against Suharto was lost on no one; yellow jackets were worn in 1965 by students who filled the streets, shouting slogans calling for President Sukarno to go. This was the base used by Brigadier-General Sarwo Edhie, the commander of the red-beret commandos, the RPKAD, to organise students on Suharto's behalf, lending a populist streak to Suharto's seizure of power in 1965. To mark that dark moment in history as Indonesia fell under the military jackboot, there were huge sign-boards at the entrances to the university saying: 'Welcome to the campus which struggled for the New Order'.

Thirty-two years on, UI students came out wearing the traditional yellow jackets to sever their association with the New Order. At the very first demonstration, students blacked over the words, 'The New Order' on one of the

# STUDENT PROTEST

boards and replaced them with, 'The People'. Another signboard was covered over with a white sheet, draped to look like a funeral shroud.

As in many other universities, the alumni, many of whom now occupy senior positions in academia or the civil service, joined the students in protesting against the economic crisis and calling for political reforms. Among those



*The words ORDE BARU being deleted from the board*

addressing the UI students and urging them to press for change were the University Rector, professors, lecturers and senior civil servants. Even a retired general now holding a top post at the forestry ministry joined the protest as chairperson of UI's alumni association.

The next day, UI students demonstrated at their out-of-town Depok campus, marching on the grounds for five hours. Their numbers swelled from two hundred to three thousand during the day.

Also quick off the mark were students at the state Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, where thousands demonstrated for lower prices and condemned attempts to turn the social unrest against rising prices into a racist, anti-Chinese campaign. Three students began a hunger strike which they continued for eight days, until they were advised to stop on medical grounds. Others joined the strike as some were forced to end it.

In Yogyakarta and one or two other cities, the surge of students was so great that they managed to take their action onto the streets without coming to blows with the troops, indicating perhaps a more sympathetic approach by the local commanders.

## Anti-Suharto posters and effigies

Protest actions quickly followed at several universities in Bandung, West Java, in Purwokerto, Central Java and in Ujung Pandang, South Sulawesi.

In Jakarta, the protest movement spread to a number of private universities. On some days, students from several universities held joint protests at one or other of the campuses.

In many cities the protests became a daily event throughout the MPR session, coming to a climax on the day Suharto was sworn in for his seventh term. On 9 March, UI students displayed a huge poster showing Suharto sitting on a throne perched on piles of bank-notes. Two days later, as Suharto was being sworn in, students in Yogyakarta burnt an effigy of the dictator, watched by thousands of students and onlookers outside the campus. Infuriated by this act of open defiance, security forces have been ordered to track down the people responsible. If found, they would face charges punishable by up to six years in prison.

## Tension between students and troops

As the demonstrations grew in size and the day of the dictator's enthronement drew close, tensions increased at campus gates as students tried to break through the blockade of heavily-armed troops and police. One newspaper published a photograph of seven lines of police blocking the exit of the Sunan Ampel Islamic University in Surabaya, with more than a thousand students inside, trying to get out. [*Surya*, 7 March] According to *The Jakarta Post* [7 March], the students were in fact about to disperse and were just wanting to go home. Anger erupted and stones were thrown.

In some places, students tried to negotiate their way out, supported by university staff; wanting to march to the local assembly building. Elsewhere they tried to march out, only to be pushed back violently, by troops using armoured vehicles and in some places tear gas. At one campus in Yogyakarta, troops forced their way into the compound and started ordering the students to take down their banners because they could be seen outside and were therefore 'influencing public opinion'!

It was in Surabaya, East Java, and Surakarta, Central Java, and later in Bandar Lampung, South Sumatra, that clashes occurred.

## Many wounded in Surabaya

On the day Suharto was being sworn in, some ten thousand students from nine universities in Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, gathered at the Sukolilo Surabaya Institute of Technology (ITS) to take part in a mass meeting. They were hoping to march from that campus to the state Airlangga University a short distance away where thousands more were demonstrating. Students and staff from the Airlangga faculties of medicine and dentistry had proclaimed an eleven-point set of demands including overhaul of state structures and the restoration of freedoms of assembly, association and expression.

Dozens of students trying to exit from the ITS were injured, of whom 25 had to be rushed to hospital. The melee is recorded in a photograph showing scores of troops wielding long batons and beating the students back. The troops were backed up by two tactical armoured vehicles equipped with tear-gas canisters, four tanks and a number of police dogs. [*Jawa Pos*, 12 March]



## All the President's (wo)men

*Suharto's new cabinet has exceeded all predictions. For weeks, lists had been circulating, each one worse than the last, but nobody could have predicted a cabinet composed entirely of cronies and family retainers. The previous six cabinets retained a balance between a variety of interests and political wings in the regime. This time the old man decided to stick to people whose interests are directly tied in with his own interests.*

Most commentators predict that this cabinet can only hasten Suharto's fall. In the streets of Jakarta, people greeted the cabinet with disbelief. Some of the worst ministers were kept on while others with a few streaks of honesty have been dumped.

People say that 'a country gets the government it deserve', but in Indonesia, people have no choice in the matter. Indeed, they are the ones who will suffer the bitter consequences.

For three decades, the choice of cabinet ministers has been in the hands of a single man, but this time, it is widely rumoured that his oldest daughter, Tutut Suharto, played a key role in advising daddy. There are twenty-two new faces, a clutch of whom are known to belong to this woman's inner circle. This is the ultimate in cronyism, the only name for it is a *Cabinet of Cronies*.

We will focus below on some of the leading figures, hoping to help the reader gain an impression of what Suharto and his daughter have done.

### Habibie, crony number One

The controversial Rudi Habibie has been appointed vice-president. The mere mention of his name back in January as the likely next vice-president sent the rupiah tumbling. The previous six vice-presidents were given ceremonial duties and played no role in decision-making. The last vice-president, retired General Try Sutrisno, was the most pathetic of them all. When Suharto travelled

abroad, Try Sutrisno was not even trusted to take over as acting president. It is well known that ABRI, the armed forces, imposed Try Sutrisno on Suharto as their candidate and Try was never allowed to forget this.

Habibie will definitely not be a ceremonial VP. Suharto has already given him extraordinary duties to deal with industrialisation and foreign affairs. This will leave very little for Ali Alatas, who has been retained as Foreign Minister. Habibie will represent Indonesia internationally at all the most important events and is almost certain to continue to pursue his hi-tech aims. Habibie heads a whole range of hi-tech companies which are costing the Indonesian taxpayer billions of dollars. His concept of industrial development is diametrically opposed to that of the IMF's concept of promoting export-oriented cheap labour industries [see *TAPOL Bulletin* No. 127, February 1995].

Habibie has always enjoyed a special relationship with Suharto and in the booming seventies and eighties, his hi-tech ventures received unlimited funds from the state coffers. Things are different now but Suharto knows that Habibie's loyalty towards him is rock solid. Being a man with virtually no grass roots base of his own makes him almost entirely dependent on Suharto.

By appointing Habibie, Suharto has given the clearest sign of defiance to Washington, the US administration as well as the IMF. In January, when Habibie's name was first mentioned as Suharto's choice, the world press described him as the IMF's nightmare. Former US vice president Walter Mondale was sent by Clinton specifically to prevent Habibie's appointment. The mission achieved nothing.

Analysts in Jakarta suggest that Habibie's personal position has been boosted but in fact he has less political clout because several of his mates from ICMI, the Muslim Intellectual Association with which he was closely associated, lost their cabinet seats. It is difficult at present to judge whether he has gained or lost influence.

### The finance and economic overhaul

Practically all the ministers in the finance and economic sector have been replaced. The post of Coordinating Minister for Econ-



*Suharto driving his Harley Davidson with Habibie in the side-car*

omy, Industry and Supervision of Development (*EKUIN*), previously held by Saleh Afiff, no longer exists. We now have a Coordinating Minister of Economy and Development Supervision under Air Marshall Ginandjar Kartasamita, a staunch nationalist with strong anti-IMF credentials. Ginandjar is one of the very few left who was in the previous *EKUIN* team. He retains his position as head of the National Planning Board and is not one of the IMF's favourites.

The new Minister of Finance is Fuad Bawazier, previously Director-General of Taxation at the Finance Department. He has been a fixer for quite some time for the Suharto family, making it easy to clear import goods with tax exemptions. He is also treasurer of one of the main foundations of the Suharto family. Here is the family's financial protector elevated to a position where he will be able to play this role even more effectively.

A new post has been created, the Department of State-owned Enterprises (*BUMN*) which has been given to Tanri Abeng. He was previously the chief executive of several leading corporations, including Bintang Beer and Bakrie Bros. It will now fall to him to close down the ailing *BUMN* companies. Most state companies have suffered huge losses because of mismanagement and corruption. It is a public secret that many bureaucrats and retired military have earned plenty by siphoning off wealth from these companies.

Already before the announcement of the new cabinet, all the directors of the central bank, Bank Indonesia, had been sacked. The new governor of the Bank is Safril Sabirin, who is seen as being more willing to serve the wishes of *Cendana* (Suharto's private residence) than his predecessor.

### The Tutut gang

Several of the newcomers are members of the Tutut gang. This includes Professor Muladi, former dean of the state Diponegoro University in Semarang, who has become the Minister of Justice. He was a senior member of *Komnas HAM*, the National Commission of Human Rights. In a study issued by the Legal Aid Institute at the end of 1997 assessing the conduct of prominent Indonesians and their views on the universality of human rights, Muladi was singled out as one of the worst. His statements have repeatedly contradicted the fifty-year-old Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Another Tutut pawn is Theo Sambuaga, the new Minister of Manpower. A student activist in the early seventies, he jumped over the fence and joined the ruling elite. He is a member of parliament and a close collaborator of Tutut in GOLKAR, the government party of which she is deputy chair.

Even the new minister of religion is now within the Suharto fold. The post is occupied by Quraish Shihab whose claim to fame is that he is the First Family's ulama and takes charge of most religious ceremonies held in *Cendana*, Suharto's private residence; he also accompanied Suharto to the Holy Land.

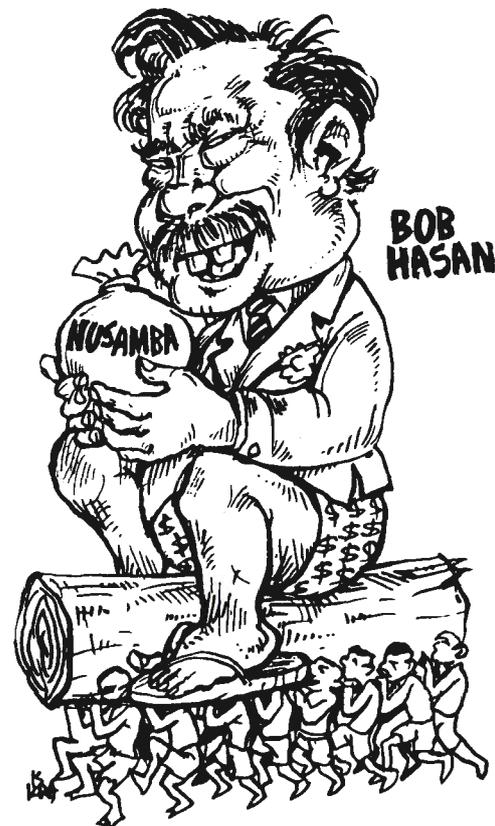
Another GOLKAR MP from the Tutut wing is Agung Laksono, who has been rewarded with the position of Minister of Youth and Sport. He is part owner of the private ANTeve broadcasting company, the daily newspaper, *Media Indonesia*, and a tabloid called *Target*. He frequently interferes in editorial matters of these publications.

Rahmadi Bambang Soemadyo former Director General of Public Works has now taken over as Minister of Public Works. Over the years, the Suharto kids have made pots of money from lucrative infra-structural projects thanks to him.

Sumahadi has been appointed Minister of Forestry and Plantations. He previously held a senior position in the same ministry and was responsible for the (mis)use of the huge Reforestation Fund. He was also a decision-maker in the conversion of forests to commercial use. With Bob Hasan now in control of trade and industry, this post shrivels in significance.

### Bob Hasan, creme de la creme

Bob Hasan aka Thee Kian Seng is the exception to the rule. While political power is strictly out of bounds for Sino-Indonesians, [see separate piece], Bob Hasan has won enormous influence for himself. Nicknamed Tarzan, the king of the jungle, it was widely believed that his powers were much greater than the previous Minister of Forestry. Now Tarzan, Suharto's long time buddy and golfing partner, has been assigned as the new Minister for Trade and Industry.



In the previous cabinet, there was a Coordinating Minister for Industry and Trade filled by Hartarto. This has now been downgraded to Coordinating Minister of Development Supervision with Hartarto in charge. The result is that the role of the Trade and Industry Minister is pivotal. He owns a swathe of corporations, most of which cover assets of the Suharto dynasty. Several of Suharto's offspring were groomed for business in one of this man's many companies. Bob Hasan is said to be one of the few people who can enter the *Cendana* fortress without an appointment.

One of the main companies run by Bob Hasan is *Nusamba*, the financial arm of Suharto's three main foun-

Following the death of Tien Suharto, Suharto's wife, in 1996, Bob Hasan became even more indispensable. The six greedy Suharto offspring often fight each other like cats, each trying to get a piece of the cake in the same sector or arm-twisting private banks for easy credits. It was Tien Suharto's role to make sure that things didn't get out of control. After her death, it fell to Bob Hasan to impose some kind of discipline in the playground where the Suharto children conduct their business.

## The military

The army has been given only six posts in the new cabinet, far fewer than previously. Retired General Feisal Tanjung, the former armed forces commander-in-chief, has been made Coordinating Minister of Politics and Security, an appointment which came as no surprise. The post of Home Affairs Minister which is traditionally a military assignment, went this time to Tutut's soldier boy, retired General Hartono. These two hardly make any secret of their close liaison.

Two 'hardship' posts have gone to army officers. Retired Lt. General Hendro Priyono has been given the post of Transmigration Minister while retired General Ary Mardjono becomes Minister of Land Affairs. Hendro Priyono was marginalised for a while for being too nice to dissidents but has now been taken back into the Suharto fold. Ary Mardjono also holds a key position on the GOLKAR board.



*Tutut Suharto*

The most powerful position goes to four-star General Wiranto who was appointed ABRI commander-in-chief several weeks earlier. He now becomes concurrently Minister of Defence. It is a long time since these two posts have been held by one man. Suharto obviously trusts his former adjutant though some analysts see him not so much as a Suharto loyalist but as a so-called *ABRI Merah-Putih* (red-and-white ABRI) for whom loyalty to the Republic takes precedence over loyalty to the President. Some commentators believe that Wiranto will soon be replaced as

armed forces commander which would leave him in a much weakened position.

## Tutut, the most ambitious of them all

Last but not least, Tutut Suharto was appointed (or probably appointed herself) as Minister of Social Affairs. The Suharto family realises the gravity of the economic situation and the imminent threat to the Suharto regime. Some months back, in an attempt to save the rupiah from plunging still further, Tutut launched a campaign to boost the flagging rupiah by selling a few of her billions of dollars. The effect on the rate of exchange was worthless and she became an object of ridicule.

By contrast, several of the country's richest tycoons decided to distribute food packages to the poor and needy which was well received in the slum areas. Perhaps this gave *Cendana* the idea of putting Suharto's favourite daughter in charge of handing out state largesse, with Tutut Suharto at the helm. The job also casts her in a beneficent, motherly role, which just might make people forget that she is the richest woman in Asia.

Some commentators have called this cabinet a 'war cabinet'. Indonesia is now run by a gang of thieves, under siege, desperately trying to hold their own in a country that is sinking fast. ⊗

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*continued from page 19*

Islam and joined Suharto's pilgrimage to Mecca. Religion is a mere commodity for people like Bob Hasan.

In the present economic crisis, the Chinese have once again become convenient scapegoats. It may be difficult to accuse the government of openly inciting anti-Chinese sentiments, but what is clear is that an anti-Chinese atmosphere was whipped up.

Lt. General Syarwan Hamid, vice-chair of the Parliament, used the term 'rats' to condemn people who speculate with currency and hoard basic foodstuffs. It was more than obvious that he was talking about Chinese traders. ABRI Commander-in-Chief General Feisal Tanjung went one step further, openly criticising those who did not participate in the 'I love the rupiah' campaign and calling them unpatriotic.

## A new wave of migration

With every new wave of riots in which Chinese are directly or indirectly targeted, a new wave of migration occurs. The Australian, US, Canadian, Singapore and Hong Kong embassies have been inundated by scores of Sino-Indonesians wanting to emigrate. In the weeks before the 're-election' of Suharto many well-to-do Sino-Indonesians took holidays in Singapore and Hong Kong. Hotels and rented apartments were fully booked.

Those who can afford to leave are from the more affluent middle class, usually highly-qualified professionals. Their departure is a blow for the Indonesian economy and society in general. Most of those who left in the early years of the *Orde Baru* went to Europe. Today's flow of migrants prefer places like Australia or Canada. Fundamental change in favour of democracy will be needed before the Chinese problem can be resolved. ⊗

# No solution in sight for economic woes

*The economic crisis in Indonesia continues to deteriorate. The appointment of a cabinet packed with cronies has only made things worse. Most analysts agree that there is no hope for the Indonesian economy as long as the 76-year-old despot remains in power. High-level power games are under way to convince Suharto to comply with the IMF bailout programme but for the Indonesian people, living conditions are getting worse by the day. Nothing is being done to alleviate that.*

Adam Schwarz has summed up the situation as follows: 'The economy of Indonesia is no longer on the brink of collapse; it is collapsing.' [*Washington Post*, 22 March]

A quick glance at the so-called fundamentals of the economy provides a bleak picture of current conditions and prospects. The Indonesian currency, the *rupiah*, still stands at around 10,000 to the dollar, little more than twenty per cent of its value last July. This has meant a catastrophic increase in the price of most goods in the shops; even the nine basic commodities including rice, kerosene and cooking oil, have been affected. Price increases vary enormously from region to region, in some places jumping by several hundred per cent. A small demonstration in Jakarta in February by a group of 'concerned mothers' drew attention to the sharp rise in the price of baby food. Newspapers frequently carry reports about the crisis hospitals and patients are facing because of the skyrocketing in the price of medicines. Blood banks are suffering quantity and quality problems and the unavailability of imported chemicals to screen blood supplies has raised the fear of blood-transmitted diseases, including HIV. [*Washington Post*, 22 March]

*Tempe*, a popular, cheap soya bean food has soared in price because of the higher cost of locally-produced and imported soya bean. Chicken and eggs which are widely consumed are now prohibitively expensive or simply not available because of the sharp increase in the price of imported chicken feed which has put 80,000 chicken farms out of business.

The price of the staple food, rice, has risen, in some places by several hundred per cent. Here the problem is partly the 1997 drought, although some experts believe that the harvest failure was caused in part by degradation of the land because of government-sponsored development projects. Indonesia will now have to import a record five million tonnes of rice as compared with 750,000 million tonnes in 1997, eating into its rapidly diminishing foreign currency reserves, and forcing up the price of rice on the world market.

## Massive unemployment

Unemployment has risen sharply. According to the government-sponsored union, the FSPSI, it went up from 2.5 million in 1997 to 8.7 million in February this year and is likely to rise to 13.5 million by the end of the year. Others suggest that the figure is far higher. Account must be taken not only of the millions made redundant but of the more than two and a half million joining the labour market from school. Moreover, Indonesian statistics treat those



Trouw, 16.1.98

working for one hour as week as the 'disguised unemployed'; they number far more than the fully unemployed.

The government has done nothing yet this year to raise the basic minimum wage which would normally be announced in January for implementation in April. The minimum wage in Jakarta (it is lower elsewhere) is Rp5,700 a day which at the current rate of the rupiah is worth about 63 cents. This means that Indonesia probably has the cheapest labour force in the world. But this appalling statistic is not even helping to boost exports as industries producing for export have huge problems purchasing imported raw materials at the current rate of exchange and cannot get bank loans to provide the cash flow they need to keep production moving.

There is no such thing as a safety net for unemployed workers. Some laid-off workers can expect to receive statutory redundancy pay of a month's pay for each year worked but many companies manage to duck their responsibility in collusion with local officials.

The banking system has virtually ground to a halt because of the huge burden of non-performing loans. The central bank is reported to have pumped huge sums of money into the banks in the hope of restoring confidence but this has fuelled inflation. According to the Bureau of Statistics, prices went up by fifteen per cent in the month of February. According to official statistics which certainly understate the real situation, the annualised rate of inflation is 32 per cent and could soon go above 50 per cent, bringing the country to the verge of hyper-inflation.

The cost of newsprint has increased threefold.. Already a number of dailies and periodicals have been forced out of business and the Association of Press Publishers has predicted that seventy per cent of publications will be forced to close. East Timor's only newspaper, *Suara Timor Timur*, has already stopped appearing. Eighty per cent of the supply of newsprint is controlled by PT Aspec, a company owned by Bob Hasan and a South Korean associate. Timber tycoon Hasan has now been elevated to the post of Minister of Trade and Industry; one of his first pronouncements as minister was to declare that he considers monopolies to be good for the economy.

At the other end of the scale, exercise books for school-children are far too expensive for most families to afford. Even at the best of times, school books must be supplied by the children. Analysts predict a ten to twenty per cent call in all levels of school enrolments this year.

## The burden of foreign indebtedness

The true measure of Indonesia's foreign debt is still a matter of controversy. According to official figures, the total foreign debt amounts to \$137.4 billion, of which \$73.9 billion is owed by the private sector, much of it due to mature during 1998. Some sources however believe that corporate indebtedness is far higher, bringing total indebtedness to around \$200 billion. Whether the lower or the higher figure is correct, the debts are simply not repayable at the current rate of exchange. Negotiations between groups of foreign creditors and the scores of indebted Indonesian banks and companies have got nowhere.

Vice-President Habibie's first chore as foreign minister supremo was to fly to Japan to ask Japanese banks for a one-year delay in the repayment of their loans. Nearly a third of the corporate debt (\$23 billion) is owed to Japan. The answer was a resounding No. Although Japan was able throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s to pump huge amounts of capital into the Indonesian economy, it is no longer in a position to bail out the economy.

One real danger hanging over the economy is that massive state resources as well as part of the credit from the IMF will be used to pay off these private debts, meaning that the burden will in the end be borne by the Indonesian people.

## The Suharto-IMF war of attrition

As we reported in our last issue, Suharto's failure to carry through the October 1997 deal with the IMF caused panic among world leaders from Clinton down. The pressure he came under to toe the line apparently led him to believe that he was in a strong bargaining position, that a gesture towards the IMF would win him plaudits. The shot of him signing the newly-drafted Letter of Intent, with the IMF's Executive Director Michel Camdessus towering over him with folded arms did not go down well with many

Indonesians. But the belief that Suharto would now do as he was told turned out to be a pipe dream.

Days after this humiliating climb-down, Suharto made it known that his chosen vice-president was Dr. B.J Habibie who for two decades has been devouring state funds to build a hi-tech industry, much to the dismay of western financial institutions. Habibie's 'zigzag theory' about monetary policy and the control of inflation was the subject of derision last year by technocrats who are most closely attuned to IMF and World Bank concepts. The news that Habibie was likely to be Suharto's next deputy came as a shock to the markets and pushed down the value



Queuing for cooking oil in Jakarta

of the rupiah by about fifteen per cent.

Although pledges had been made - again - that monopolies would now be removed, Tommy Suharto's pet 'national car' project retained its tax exemptions on the sale of thousands of unsold vehicles. Far from being relinquished, Bob Hasan's monopoly hold over the export of plywood was reinforced by his 'recommendation' to all exporters to use his shipping company, enabling him to check documents and control export quotas. Given the power he exerts, it was not expected that any plywood exporters would ignore the 'recommendation'. The clove cartel set up by Tommy Suharto which was officially ordered to disband by June has been reincarnated under a different name. As one cynic has commented, 'the minister in charge of dismantling the clove monopoly is the man in charge of the timber cartel'. [*Los Angeles Times*, 21 March]

## The pegged currency distraction

Far from stabilising the economy and restoring the value of the rupiah, the new deal with the IMF was followed by a further plunge in its value, hitting an all-time low of around 16,000. Enter Professor Steve Hanke from John Hopkins University, a man who has made a name for himself promoting the idea of pegging currencies to the dollar in several countries. He slipped into Jakarta unseen at the behest of several of the Suharto offspring, convinced the president that pegging the rupiah at less than half its current rate was the answer to the crisis, and was promptly appointed a presidential adviser.

The Suharto offspring would have benefited from the scheme by being able to grab dollars at a better rate, pay off their crippling debts and, who knows, cut and run with some of the proceeds. Whether the economy as a whole would reap any benefit was another matter. Under this Currency Board System, the amount of money in circulation would have to expand or contract in strict parallel with the rise and fall in foreign currency reserves. The only means of dealing with a fall which would certainly occur would be to reduce the money supply through a sharp increase in interest rates, forcing the economy into recession with dire consequences for tens of millions of people.

The IMF had its own reasons for disliking the system and soon made it clear that disbursement of the second tranche of \$3 billion due on 15 March would be withheld until Indonesia showed a greater willingness to abide by the Fund's prescriptions.

In the end it was Suharto's newly appointed Finance Minister, Fuad Bawazier, who announced that pegging the rupiah was not an option because foreign exchange reserves were too low and the money in circulation too high, a bleak admission of the severity of the monetary crisis.

## Preserving 'family values'

Suharto has never made any secret of his dislike for and distrust of the IMF. Back in August last year when his technocrat ministers were negotiating with the Fund for a rescue package, Suharto insisted that Indonesia would not accept its money, only its 'advice'. In essence, the conflict centres on the need of western financial institutions, western capital, to rid developing economies of the scourge of monopolies, cronyism and corruption, which stand in the



*Hunger! Hunger!*

way of the deep penetration of foreign capital. Liberalisation of the capital account, free unfettered foreign capital investment is what they want and what the New Order economy, under Suharto's tutelage, is not willing to allow.

For two months, the IMF programme was stalled by persistent pronouncements that the Currency Board System was Suharto's favoured option, the only way as he saw it to bring the rupiah up to a more acceptable level. As the 15 March deadline for the IMF's decision regarding the second tranche approached, senior western government ministers once again beat a path to Jakarta, hoping - again - to knock sense into the despot who was about to secure yet another five-year term to reign over the long-suffering Indonesian people and the badly battered economy.

Former US vice-president Walter Mondale (the man who cleared the way back in 1978 for the US to sell a squadron of A-4 ground-attack bombers at the height of In-

donesia's war against East Timor, see *TAPOL Bulletin* No 28 - incorrectly numbered 27 - June 1978) led the pack, followed by Britain's Minister of State Derek Fatchett. Their message? No CBS, no monopolies, trim your family's business interests, otherwise the IMF bailout is off. When TAPOL asked the Foreign Office whether Fatchett had also protested against the human rights abuses that were happening everywhere, we were told that a ministerial mission could only handle one issue at a time and that solving the economic crisis had to be given priority.

In yet another rebuff, Suharto suddenly complained that the IMF programme is in conflict with Article 33 of the Indonesian Constitution which stipulates that the country's economy must be based on family values. But he didn't say, whose family.

On top of this came the announcement of his new cabinet, packed with cronies and their hangers-on, with not an IMF-friendly technocrat in sight.

## Hanging on

Ranged against a crazed dictator determined to hang on to power, the West decided to beat a retreat, to strike yet another deal, to show 'flexibility'. It would do anything to retain some leverage, to keep the Indonesian economy afloat, primarily to get money repaid to banks in Japan, western Europe and the US, and prevent Indonesia from declaring a moratorium on payment of its foreign debt.

Most commentators in Indonesia see the IMF bailout as a boon for the country because its initial aim is the elimination of monopolies and cartels, inflicting untold damage on the business interests of the Suharto clique and cronies. But the Fund's reach goes much farther than this, deep cuts in government expenditure on fuel and other subsidies, moves to make the labour market even more flexible, to freeze wages, to re-direct the management of resources towards securing the repayment of ever mounting debts and open the economy to unrestricted access to foreign capital.

It many ways, it parallels the style of economic management already being carried out under the New Order, albeit under different management. Such an option is anathema to a country seeking to establish itself as a democracy, serving the interests of the majority of the people. ⊗

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sian boat people fleeing from the economic crisis and are expelling large number of economic refugees. This provided them with an opportunity to get rid of the hundreds of Acehese refugees who face persecution in Indonesia, treating them as if they were just ordinary 'illegal immigrants'.

SUARAM has called on the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UNHCR to intervene in the crisis by ensuring that proper evaluation procedures are undertaken to protect them from forcible repatriation. It also called for an independent investigation into the affair, the results of which should be made public. \*

# US training for Indonesian troops exposed

*Megawati Sukarnoputri has challenged President Clinton about the US army's combat training for Indonesian special forces. The training is taking place despite a decision by US Congress to restrict US training for members of the Indonesian armed forces to class-room courses to improve their human rights conduct. Revelations about the training was made public by a US journalist who was deported after breaking the story at a press conference in the Indonesian capital.*

Following the disclosure that the US army is training Indonesian special forces, Indonesia's most prominent opposition figure, Megawati Sukarnoputri wrote to President Clinton challenging him for an explanation.

*'Who, in the view of the US government is the target or enemy for this specialised training? The US military is providing training in lethal methods of social control at a time when the Indonesian people are trying to build a more democratic society. It is the explicit policy of the Indonesian security forces to meet peaceful, unarmed demonstrators with force - and thus military training from the US directly undermines the democratic movement in Indonesia.'* [New York Times, 25 March]

Megawati Sukarnoputri chairs the mass-based PDI and has retained her position despite being ousted by regime loyalists two years ago. Earlier this year she declared that she would contest the presidency but this was ignored by the MPR whose hand-picked members re-appointed Suharto without a vote.

## Congressional ban ignored

Megawati's angry response followed the disclosure in March that dozens of combat-training courses have been held by the US army and marine corps for Indonesian troops despite a ban on military training by the US Congress. The ban was in response to the Santa Cruz massacre of November 1991 when at least 270 East Timorese were shot dead. In 1992, the US Congress suspended IMET, the International Military Education and Training programme which had been training scores of Indonesian troops every year. Three years later, the programme was re-instated in a much restricted form known as E-IMET, supposedly limited to training in human rights, civilian control and accountability.

Defence Department documents, revealed by the award-winning US journalist, Allan Nairn, show however that training in the so-called 'arts of war' has continued under a different guise, a programme known as Joint Combined Exchange and Training. Pentagon officials argue that the training was 'legal' because it was financed through 'a different pot of money' and hence unaffected by the congressional ban.

Nairn, who has been blacklisted by the Indonesian authorities, was in Dili at the time of the Santa Cruz massacre and was badly injured in head. He managed to enter the country this March and called a press conference to condemn the continued US training for the Indonesian armed forces in violation of congressional strictures. He



*Megawati Sukarnoputri*

made public a list of courses given by the US army and the US marine corps which was released in February by the Department of Defence at the request of Representative Lane Evans (Dem-Illinois).

Soon after the press conference, officials of the immigration department picked him up from his hotel, interrogated him for several hours and warned that he could face charges if he entered the country again. He was later deported.

## Defence Secretary Cohen in Jakarta

Two months earlier, US Defence Secretary William Cohen paid a visit to Indonesia at a time of intense pressure by Washington on Suharto to comply with the terms of the IMF bailout (see separate article). Cohen's visit was aimed at strengthening ties between Washington and Jakarta which have been strained by criticisms of human rights abuses and the situation in East Timor. The relationship hit a new low last year when Suharto announced that a deal to purchase F16s would not go ahead because of mounting criticism of the deal in Congress.

Cohen said that his aim was to reinforce collaboration between the US armed forces and ABRI, the Indonesian armed forces, by undertaking joint exercises and training. ABRI commander, General Feisal Tanjung exuded pleasure when Cohen assured him that he would seek to persuade Congress to re-instate fully-fledged IMET training for Indonesian officers. Stressing that the majority of Indonesian officers had been trained in the US, Tanjung said: 'This helps to create close personal ties between young Indonesian officers and the US armed forces, facilitation coordination.' [*Republika*, 15 January]

Cohen also visited the headquarters of *Kopassus*, the red-beret special forces whose reputation for brutality and intelligence monitoring, especially in East Timor, is legion. Little was it known at the time that many of the men he watched exercising had learned their combat skills from US officers.

Although ABRI plans to prevent pro-democracy protesters from taking to the streets around the time of the March session of the MPR had already evoked protest in Indonesia, Cohen told the press that he would not bring pressure to bear on Suharto not to use the military to put down civil unrest. [*Reuters*, 11 January]

It has since been revealed that a joint exercise between US and Indonesian troops has taken place in West Java amid rumours that the US is eyeing Indonesia for a possible military base or semi-permanent military facilities for its troops, probably also in West Java. US strategists see Indonesia as the linchpin in the regional security system which is coming under increasing strain because of the economic crisis in the region. These same strategists see ABRI as 'one of the few institutions holding Indonesia together ... and are watching senior figures in the armed forces to assess their viability as successors to President Suharto'. [*Financial Times*, 23 March]

## Training for *Kopassus* to the fore

It is clear from Nairn's carefully researched article that much of the US training is focused on *Kopassus*. This has involved at least thirty-six exercises involving fully-armed US combat troops sailing or flying into Indonesia. 'Of the 28 army/air force exercises known to have been conducted since 1992, Pentagon documents indicate that twenty have involved the dreaded *Kopassus* red berets.'

'The training has included Sniper Level II (1993), Demolitions and Air Operations (1993) and Close Quarter Combat (1994)... Ensuing *Kopassus* sessions covered Special Air Operations, Air Assaults and Advanced Sniper Techniques.' While ABRI forces were conducting operations against the Megawati-led PDI in Jakarta in July 1996, *Kopassus* and other units 'were given training in Psy Ops by a US team flown in from Special Operations Command - Pacific.'

From then until late 1997, writes Nairn, there were seven more *Kopassus* exercises, one of which focused on troops under the command of Colonel Slamet Sidabutar, in illegally occupied East Timor. The Jakarta military command which has had the special task of preventing street protests in the run-up to Suharto's re-appointment, 'received twenty-six days of instruction from the US army in Military Operations in Urban Terrain.' This puts Cohen's refusal to call for restraint from the Indonesian military into its proper context. Nairn quotes Major Rick Thomas, a defence official at the US embassy in Jakarta, as estimating that there would be twenty further exercises

during the course of 1998, including smaller scale exchanges of experts. ['Indonesia's Killers' by Allan Nairn, in *The Nation*, 30 March 1998]



*ABRI, the bully of the people*

## Protest in Congress

Within days, the revelations provoked a storm of protest from members of Congress. Representative Lane Evans, an Illinois Democrat, said he wanted to know why 'US taxpayer dollars are being wasted on aiding and abetting a ruthless military organisation'. Representative Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat from California described the training as a 'violation of congressional intent'. [*New York Times*, 17 March] Representative Nita Lowey, a Democrat from New York has announced she will introduce legislation to end this training and ban the Pentagon from 'training an army that has been implicated in cases of torture, murder and disappearances'. [*New York Times*, 25 March]

Nobel Peace Laureate Jose Ramos-Horta has meanwhile called for full congressional hearings on the relationship of the US military with Indonesia and on how the US has contributed to maintaining this despotic and arrogant regime in power for the past 32 years. He said in a statement issued on 20 March that to argue 'that providing military training to Indonesian military personnel exposes them to American democratic values is naïve and dishonest'. ⊗

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In a press release following their meeting the European Solidarity Groups welcomed the idea of sending a Troika ambassadorial mission to East Timor the findings of which must be made public. They would send appeals to the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the European Parliament expressing concern at mounting persecution of human rights, labour and pro-democracy activists in Indonesia and East Timor. European governments should make strong representations to Jakarta and should use the opportunity of ASEM-II, the Asia-Europe Summit due to take place in London on 3 and 4 April, to raise human rights concerns regarding East Timor bilaterally with the Indonesian delegation. \*

# Boat people flooding into Malaysia

*The economic meltdown in Indonesia has resulted in a flood of Indonesians seeking work in neighbouring countries, in Malaysia and to a lesser extent Singapore. The problem of illegal immigrants, as they are called in Malaysia, is having disastrous consequences as desperate Indonesians cross the Straits in leaky boats which dump their passengers out at sea, forcing them to wade ashore. Several boats have capsized with many drowned.*

Since the beginning of the year, more than 17,000 Indonesian economic refugees have been detained by the Malaysian authorities. Jobless Indonesians are paying anything up to £100 to human cargo smugglers for a trip that could land them in jail.

Every month, hundreds of landings have been tracked down by the Malaysian police. Along the entire length of the Malaysian coast, Malaysian patrol boats are on constant guard but tens of thousands have managed to escape the watchful eye of the police.

### Detention centres overflowing

Ten detention centres, or lock-ups as they are known in Malaysia, are now full to overflowing. Immigration officials said recently that 12,000 Indonesian detainees are now being held and the Indonesian authorities have been asked to send transportation to take the illegal immigrants home. In mid March, a senior Malaysian official was quoted as saying that three to four hundred illegal immigrants were arriving daily. [*The Independent*, 24 March]

The Malaysian authorities are pessimistic about the future, with Indonesia suffering its worst economic crisis ever and unemployment soaring. Like the Indonesian rupiah, the Malaysian ringgit has also fallen in value but not so dramatically. Hence the prospects of earning a wage in Malaysia is particularly attractive, if you can survive the journey.

Although the distance from Sumatra to the west coast of Malaysia is only about fifty kilometres, the waters are treacherous. Several boats loaded with Indonesians have capsized but the number of lives lost so far is not known.

### Conflicting signals

Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad has made conflicting statements about the problem. A few months ago, he said everything would be done to track down illegal immigrants and send them straight back home. Immigrant labourers in Malaysia come from Thailand, the Philippines, Burma and Bangladesh, many of them without documents. Illegal immigrants from Indonesia are said to exceed one million. Like other countries in the region, Malaysia has also been hit by economic crisis and is now trying to offload its surplus labour.

After meeting President Suharto earlier this year, Mahathir sounded more conciliatory, promising not to send the immigrants back so speedily as it would exacerbate Indonesia's economic difficulties while Suharto said Indonesia would act to stem the flow of refugees flooding into Malaysia. Nice-sounding promises, but neither of these

men has come up with a solution which is at heart the crumbling of two neighbouring economies. Whatever Mahathir may have said, the Malaysian authorities have intensified their drive against illegal immigrants.



With a population of twenty-one million, there are an estimated two million immigrants, at least half of whom are illegal, and the vast majority of these are Indonesians. Indonesians speak the same language as the host population and mostly hold the same religious faith. Inter-marriage between Indonesians and Malaysians is widespread with many Indonesian communities across the country. In such circumstances, it is easy for Indonesians arriving without documents to merge into the crowd.

Many sectors of the Malaysian economy are almost entirely reliant on migrant labour. Most workers on plantations, construction and road-building sites are foreign. Many Indonesians have found work in the service industry, in restaurants and as domestic servants. A drastic cut in the number of migrant workers could seriously affect the economy.

### Operation Sapu Bersih

In March the Malaysian authorities launched a major operation known as 'Clean Sweep' to get rid of illegal Indonesian immigrants. The road heading north-east from Kuala Lumpur took on the appearance of a war zone when

a thousand troops raided Kampung Perak, a squatters' village. Five hundred police officers, five hundred soldiers and fifty immigration officers took part in the operation which led to the arrest of two hundred illegals.

At 4am, soldiers armed with M16s and Steyer assault rifles formed a cordon around the camp of about 4,000 residents. All the women, men and children were ordered to assembly to have their papers checked by immigration officers. By sunrise, the inhabitants had been divided into two groups, those with papers and those without. The latter group were driven off in police trucks to a detention centre.



Malaysian police checking whether the Acehnese are alive or dead (see page 22)

Similar raids have taken place in many squatter camps, construction sites and open-air markets. Anyone without a red identity card is taken into custody. The operation code named Ops Nyah II (Nyah is Malay for disposal) is being conducted everywhere. The Malaysian press carries daily reports on the operation with special columns devoted to the issue.

In Ipoh, a huge operation took place on 6 March where seventy illegal immigrants were nabbed on the foothills and at the Meru Valley golf link. Earlier, sixty-two Indonesians were found sleeping on a banana plantation.

## Internal Security Act

The Malaysian government has now authorised the police to use the draconian Internal Security Act against people caught helping illegals. This gives the police unlimited powers to detain without trial anyone believed to pose a threat to national security.

Datuk Yusof Said, deputy director of internal security and public order, has called on the public to stage 'citizen's arrests' to deter illegal immigrants. He has also proposed setting up a special court to hear cases involving illegal immigration. This would expedite deportation and cut costs, he said.

Speaking to the press on 11 March, Datuk Yusof Said lamented the lack of detention centres to incarcerate the economic refugees. All the lock-ups were now full, he said, adding that a temporary camp would be built along the west coast to house those awaiting deportation. He claimed that all the illegals would be deported before the end of the year. He said: 'We hope to weed them out and deport them

as quickly as possible because the detention centres can accommodate only about 12,500 illegals at any one time'.

## Let's cane them, say the police

The Malaysian police are now seeking powers to start using caning to punish illegal immigrants, the *tekongs* or middlemen who bring them in, as well as those who harbour them. In Singapore, a special court has been set up to deal with illegal immigrants. In March, 300 jail sentences of up to six weeks as well as up to six strokes of the cane were handed out. [*The Independent*, 24 March]

The problem of illegal immigrants needs to be tackled urgently. The social impact is likely to be enormous. With more and more Indonesians making their way across the waters, an underground economy could take shape, pushing down the level of wages.

## Victims of the economic crisis

It is a fact of life that migrant workers find themselves at the bottom of the pile, worst hit by the economic crisis. The authorities

in Thailand are waging a similarly vicious campaign against illegal migrant workers, notably those from Burma.

The economic meltdown in Indonesia is unprecedented, and millions are set to lose their jobs this year. With zero economic growth predicted for the year, employment prospects are very bleak. The waves of Indonesian economic refugees flooding into Malaysia are bound to continue despite the harsh treatment of the Malaysian authorities.

The Indonesian crisis is set to last for years and it is time to start looking for a comprehensive solution to the problem of economic refugees. International bodies like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the ILO and WHO should step in fast to solve this massive human tragedy. ⊗

*continued from page 22*

guard the Aceh problem as Indonesian's internal problem and not to get involved'. She said even though Malaysia is not a signatory of the Convention, it is under obligation to protect people fleeing from persecution.

Most of the Acehnese being held in camps in Malaysia fled from their country in the early 1990s during intense military operations by the Indonesian army to crush the Free Aceh Movement. According to Elizabeth Wong, a small number have been granted residential status although this does not amount to political asylum.

Their status has always been very shaky and the UN High Commission for Refugee's office in Kuala Lumpur has had difficulty protecting their rights. Indeed, a day before the deportation operation was launched, a spokesman at the office told an inquirer who had been alerted of the impending deportations, that he was not aware that anything was about to happen.

As reported elsewhere in the issue, the Malaysian authorities are engaged in a major drive to stem the flood of Indone-

*continued on page 13*

# How anti-Chinese were the riots?

*The wave of food riots that engulfed the northern coastal towns of Java, Lombok, Flores and some cities in Sulawesi in January and February have been described by many as being anti-Chinese. It is far too simplistic however to describe the mounting social unrest an upsurge of ethnic conflict.*

The economic standstill in Indonesia caused an explosion in the prices of basic commodities. In January and February, as the economic crisis continued to worsen, a wave of violent protests engulfed parts of Indonesia. Following outbreaks along the northern coast of Java, social unrest also erupted in urban centres in Sumatra, Sulawesi, Lombok, Sumbawa and Flores. In practically all cases the rioters complained bitterly about the soaring prices of *Sembako* (*Sembilan bahan pokok*, nine basic commodities) including rice, cooking oil, flour, sugar and soybeans.



*Staggering losses in shops and houses destroyed*

Ethnic Chinese Indonesians account for approximately three per cent of the population, by far the largest non-indigenous group. The majority of the Sino-Indonesians are *peranakan* Chinese, meaning that they have lived for many generations in Indonesia with little knowledge of China. Most *peranakan* Chinese do not speak a word of any Chinese dialect and are fluent in Indonesian and their local Indonesian language. Their role in the economy has been important for several centuries but the economic boom of the past two decades spawned a small layer of phenomenally rich Sino-Indonesians. Statistics indicate that between 60 and 70 per cent of all corporate wealth is in the hands of Sino-Indonesians. The gap between rich and poor, a basic feature of the Suharto economy, has widened social disparities, fuelling jealousies.

President Suharto has always used Sino-Indonesians to promote his economic interests, notably Sudono Salim (aka

Liem Sioe Liong), Muhammad 'Bob' Hasan (aka The Kian Seng) and in the last decade also Prayogo Pangestu (aka Phang Djun Phen). These special relationships have only exacerbated anti-Chinese feelings among the population.

### Social unrest and anti-Chinese attacks

Social unrest in Suharto's Indonesia has always contained a strong anti-Chinese element. From October 1996 until the general elections in May 1997, there were many social explosions across the country [see *TAPOL Bulletins* No. 138, 139, 140 & 141]. The social and material losses were staggering; scores of people lost their lives and hundreds of shopping centres, residences and churches were burned down or destroyed. During 1997 alone at least 55 churches were burned down or destroyed.

The incidents in 1996/1997 had a more distinctive anti-Chinese streak than the recent food riots which seem to be more a spontaneous outburst by the masses demanding a reduction in prices. In several places shopping malls were looted and gutted regardless of whether the owners were Sino-Indonesians or not. Only a few churches were attacked and in some cases local inhabitants tried to prevent churches and private homes from being burnt or looted.

### Master-minded?

Social unrest in Indonesia always contains an element of engineering by the authorities or certain wings in the military. In all cases of social unrest, the role of military intelligence or local army officers in fanning local sentiments need to be assessed. Throughout the *Orde Baru*, manipulating events has become such an integral part of the political tradition that some analysts no longer believe in spontaneous outpourings of anger.

Very often the military misuse the frustrations of certain groups by provoking fundamentalist Muslim groups. There was also a strong anti-Christian element in last year's riots. Given that most Sino-Indonesians are Christians, there was plenty of evidence to show that last year's riots in Situbondo and Banjarmasin were to a considerable degree master-minded by a wing of the military hoping to incite religion intolerance, but the underlying socio-economic tensions between poor Muslims and well-to-do Sino Indonesians were the key factors.

## Structural racist policies

It is an undeniable fact that discrimination against the Chinese minority is structural and endemic in Suharto's Indonesia. The public display of Chinese characters is prohibited, all Chinese schools have been closed and the formation of Chinese cultural or trade associations is prohibited. Preserving one's Chinese identity is regarded as unpatriotic and un-Indonesian. In the seventies and eighties the *Orde Baru* ideology tried hard to create a sole Indonesian identity. Although this kind of corporatist ideology has never really worked in any society, a substantial majority have gone along with the idea that a Chinese identity is alien and therefore unacceptable. The majority of Indonesians have adopted this kind of racism. Belief in a multi-ethnic society - a reality in many parts of the world - is held by only a minority, largely in pro-democracy circles. The attitude has much to do with the birth of Suharto's *Orde Baru*.



*Trouble-spots in January and February 1998*

A clear administrative distinction is made between indigenous people and Sino-Indonesians. The majority of Sino-Indonesians have changed their names into Indonesian names. Despite this, their Chinese background can still be traced and identified.

The initials *WNI* (*Warga Negara Indonesia*, Indonesian citizen) are added on the identity cards for the Sino-Indonesians while no such distinction exists for indigenous citizens. When filling in forms, the names of parents and grandparents must be given and these are still Chinese names, although the person supplying the information has adopted an Indonesian name.

## 'Cina', a derogatory term

At the start of the *Orde Baru* a wave of anti-Chinese sentiments engulfed the entire country which went hand in hand with blaming the Indonesian Communist Party and the People's Republic of China for their alleged involvement in the so-called abortive Untung coup of 30 September 1965. Being Chinese was dangerous at the time of the 1965/66 mass killings in Java and Bali but it is historically inaccurate to describe the killings as being directed against the Sino-Indonesians. Although many Sino-Indonesians, in particular in Kalimantan, fell victim to the killings, the vast majority of those slain were peasants and workers.

It became fashionable to blame the Chinese minority for the political and economic turmoil during the Sukarno era. The term *Orde Baru* suggests a new era rising like a phoenix from the ashes. It was a time when the Chinese were used as scapegoats. The Chinese were stereotyped as greedy, and lacking in nationalist feelings. The ruling military made use of symbolic expressions. The Chinese came to be known as *Cina* (pronounced cheena) instead of

## SOCIAL ISSUES

Tiong Hoa. The People's Republic became known as *Cina*. Although it has become universally accepted, it is nevertheless still a derogatory term.

## Discrimination policies

Discrimination against the Chinese minority goes far deeper. Indonesian china-towns are probably the only china-towns anywhere in the world where Chinese restaurants do not display Chinese characters. The majority of Sino-Indonesians felt compelled to adopt Indonesian names to enable them to enrol in schools or universities.

Before the military takeover in 1965 a growing number of Sino-Indonesians were able to get jobs as civil servants or in the military. This positive development ended in the Suharto era. Although there is no official prohibition for Sino-Indonesians to enter the civil service, it very rarely happens. As a result, Sino-Indonesians have increasingly turned their attention to business and industry. Most of the top twenty tax-payers are Sino-Indonesians; the rest are members of the Suharto dynasty.

## Unsavoury relations

Suharto's *Orde Baru* has also created close connections between ABRI and the Chinese entrepreneurial class. In the early years an *Ali-Baba* relationship was the pattern. A highly-placed army officer would be appointed to the board of directors of a company but did nothing. His name was enough for the corporation to secure deals.

In the so-called boom years of the tiger economy, the position of army officers declined. A different type of corporate manager was needed, preferably one with a business administration diploma from the US. Soldiers became little more than security guards for corporations, but the parasitic character of the relationship was largely the same. Some economists estimate that thirty per cent of production costs is paid to the military and the bureaucracy.

Workers in conflict with the management have bitter experiences because of this close relationship between the bosses and the military. One phone call from the management is enough to bring the troops onto the shop floor. This kind of experience has also fuelled anti-Chinese feelings among the needy and poor.

A casino economy where collusion and corruption are the main ingredients also creates a special breed of businessmen. Almost every month a huge scandal hits the headlines. Most involve collusion between highly-placed officials and businessmen, in most cases, Sino-Indonesians.

## Scapegoating the Chinese

In most countries, economic might translates into political power. While in neighbouring ASEAN countries ethnic Chinese play an important role politically and economically, this is not so in Indonesia where Chinese politicians and top bureaucrats are virtually non-existent.

For the first time in 32 years, Suharto has appointed a Sino-Indonesian as a minister. But Muhammad 'Bob' Hasan, Suharto's buddy and golfing partner, is hardly seen as Sino-Indonesian. Former a Buddhist, he converted to Islam and joined Suharto's pilgrimage to Mecca. Religion

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# The forests are ablaze again

*Indonesia lost two million hectares of forest in the fires of 1997. After a few months respite, the ecological disaster is back again. Forests in Sumatra and Kalimantan are ablaze, tens of thousands of villagers in East Kalimantan are facing serious food shortages as the fires combine with a drought to damage the harvest.*

The airport of Samarinda, the capital of East Kalimantan is once again having to shut down frequently because of poor visibility. The residents of Samarinda are again having to don masks. The fires in East Kalimantan are raging along a 250-kilometre band straddling the Mahakam river.

East Kalimantan is now on 'full alert'. According to Awang Faroek, head of the local Environmental Impact Management Agency, nearly forty per cent of fire-ravaged areas are concession forests controlled by timber estate companies. In February and March alone more than 5,000 people in Samarinda were suffering from smog-related disorders and diseases induced by a lack of clean water. It is estimated that in the first three months of the year, the East Kalimantan fires have already caused US\$220 million in material losses.

The wet monsoon usually starts in December and continues for several months, but this year much of the country has remained dry, with East Kalimantan and Riau, Sumatra being the worst affected areas.

## Main cause is man-made

The El Niño phenomenon has caused the worst drought in decades, creating a stream of warm air across the Pacific affecting weather patterns in many parts of the world. But while this has played a significant role, the forest fires in Indonesia have been caused by a combination of factors, with the man-made element very much to the fore.

The former forestry minister, Djamaudin frankly admitted this, saying: "We should not blame El Niño for the fires. The phenomenon just made the fires worse, but it was we ourselves who started the fires" [*Down to Earth* No. 36, February 1998]. Perhaps it was remarks like this that cost him his job because this was certainly not the view of Bob Hasan, the timber tycoon who now sits in the cabinet where he can protect forestry businesses from such charges.

Bob Hasan calls it 'organised burning. Organised burning means we clean up the shrubs, we clean up the grass because if not..., it might become a fire hazard'. Interviewed by the BBC, he directed his wrath at NGOs for saying that Indonesia was violating environment rules, violating human rights. 'But usually things like that come from communist individuals,' he said. [*BBC Analysis: Who starts the fires?* 25 February]

Don Henry, director of WWF's global forest programme says that 'while the causes are complex, the smoking gun in almost all cases is widespread forest destruction and land clearing for plantations.... By clearing vast areas through destructive logging practices, loggers have made them tinderboxes waiting for someone to strike a match.' According to environmentalist Emmy Hafid, 'without the government controlling the attitude of big business and vested interests, I think the forest fires will not be able to be controlled or prevented.' [*BBC Analysis*, 25 February]

Satellite images and aerial photos of the fires now blazing provide fresh proof that the forest fires may have been started intentionally. Satellite images from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) indicate that the fires are raging in plantation and



*Impossible task for a forest ranger*

logging concessions near the Bukit Suharto forest reserve in the Kutai regency. It is much cheaper to clear land by burning it than by mechanised methods. With the timber empires hard hit by the economic crisis, they are taking the easy way out despite the devastating disaster caused by last year's fires.

Scientists attached to a German-funded fire fighting programme called IFFM (Integrated Forest Fire Management) now operating in Samarinda, the capital of East Kalimantan, believe that by the end of February, the fires had become too big and widespread to contain. Ludwig Schindler, chief of the project, said: "These fires have escalated to the extent that makes it impossible, or economically impossible, to put them out. The only thing that could help now is rain". [*AFP*, 25 February]. By the middle of March.

the Programme had pinpointed one thousand blazes on the island of Kalimantan alone.

## Whopping great bill

The Singapore-based Economy and Environment Programme for Southeast Asia and the Indonesian office of WWF, the World Wide Fund for Nature, conducted a study of the cost of the 1997 fires in terms of ill-health and affected sectors of the economy. Indonesia bore the brunt of the damage with an estimated US\$1 billion mostly because of short-term diseases like respiratory disorders and eye infections. Another US\$90 million was lost in tourism and airport shutdowns.

Neighbouring Malaysia lost about US\$300 million mainly in lost industrial production and a slump in tourism and airport shutdowns. Singapore also lost some US\$60 million mainly in tourism. Both countries spent an additional US\$12 million in health costs. Some 70 million people were affected by the thick smog.

The researchers warn that their figures are conservative. The long-term damage to health, which may persist for decades have not been taken into account and could be incalculable.

A more comprehensive estimate of the damage including damage to the environment concludes that the fires in Indonesia are costing Southeast Asia no less than US\$5-6 billion. The figures come from a study by the Economy and Environment Programme for Southeast Asia and cover total losses during 1997 and estimated losses for 1998, should the fires continue.

The group also concludes that this year's fires, mostly started by farmers and logging firms, have already destroyed vast tracts of priceless virgin forest and agricultural land in East Kalimantan and on Sumatra.

## Incapacitated by crisis

Last December, the ASEAN environmental ministers met to draft a "regional haze action plan". Malaysia was given the task of working out ways to combat the fires, Singapore agreed to find ways of improving the monitoring while Indonesia was supposed to invest in fire-fighting facilities. However, the economic crisis was still in its early stages; it was in the following month that the rupiah fell dramatically to about 70 per cent of its value the previous July.

Sarwono Kusumaatmadja, the environment minister (who has since lost his job too) warned that Indonesia's capacity to combat fires 'would be severely diminished by the current economic crisis'. Indonesia has a well-endowed Reforestation Fund set up to replant and protect the country's tropical forests. Timber companies are required to pay a levy to this fund, but nothing has been taken from the Fund to fight the fires or set up better anti-fire defences.

The IMF's managing director Michel Camdessus told an anti-corruption business forum in Paris: 'When we asked why the money had not been spent, we were told it was because it had been set aside for the project to create a national car.'

## Troops fighting fires or rioters?

The IFFM conducted a programme to train local military to become fire-fighters on the assumption that the army is the only institution with the necessary resources. However in mid February the local army command de-

ecided to cut back on combating fires. According to a spokesman of the Tanjungpura military command: 'It's a matter of priorities.' With a wave of social unrest in many parts of the country, the troops had better things to do than fight fires.

The food situation has been seriously affected and the situation can only get worse. Of the 60,000 hectares of rice fields in East Kalimantan, about 20,000 hectares have failed to yield any harvest because of the drought. Sofyan Alex, head of the East Kalimantan Agricultural Office said that fourteen sub-districts, known as the province's rice producing centres, have been badly hit. He expects rice production to plummet from the normal 460,000 tons to a mere 21,000 tons.

The district of Kutai in East Kalimantan is facing a serious food shortages with 25 of the 38 sub-districts in need of immediate food relief. [*Suara Pembaruan*, 9 March]

There is also a very serious shortage of water. The River Makaham which supplies the provincial capital with water is at such a low level that the water is unfit for human consumption. Lack of fresh water means that salt water from the sea is going up river. Samarinda, the provincial capital, ran out of running water at the end of February, forcing people to travel long distances to find drinkable water or having to buy it at exorbitant prices, which most people can ill afford in a time of economic crisis. [*South China Morning Post*, 28 February]

Beset by multiple problems - the smog, the drought, the forest fires, lack of running water and food shortages - East Kalimantan is now in the grip of a major humanitarian crisis. ⊗

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the OPM, the Free Papua Movement. For some time, TAPOL has been hearing of serious food shortages and killings in the area, but until now has complied with a request to keep the information confidential.

One of the two Protestant churches in the province, the GKI, has been trying for months without success to gain access to the region. In October the Church wrote to the National Human Rights Commission asking their help to persuade the authorities in Jakarta, including the military, to grant them access. As far as we know, a response has not been forthcoming. Villagers in Bella, Alama, Geselama and Mapnduma are believed to be suffering from lack of food and drinking water.

While the local churches many of whose congregants live in the area have been kept out, the International Committee of the Red Cross has been given access and has opened an office in Timika, just south of the gigantic Freeport/Rio Tinto copper-and-gold mine.

A report issued in February by the usually cautious ICRC and the Indonesian Red Cross, makes the point that the area targeted by the ICRC-PMI relief team 'is still under strict security surveillance by the Indonesian army. In fact, the army is the only governmental structure in the area.'

The ICRC report says that its team has so far covered nineteen villages with a population of 18,000. It describes the health and nutritional situation as 'dramatic' and needing immediate attention. The main causes of death are malaria and upper respiratory tract infections, precipitated by severe malnutrition. Villages already visited indicated a malaria-positive prevalence of between 90 and 100 per cent. \*

## Military blamed as thousands die of hunger

*Aid workers believe that thousands of people have died in West Papua because of the prolonged drought, many in remote areas inaccessible to relief providers. Aid workers have blamed the military for contributing to the scale of the disaster. Many have died in the region east of Timika and the Freeport mine where the military presence has prevented church officials from entering the region.*

The people of West Papua are suffering from a calamity that is almost genocidal in scale with thousands dying from starvation and related diseases. Although until now the drought has been blamed for the disaster, it is becoming clear that Indonesian troops have compelled malnourished villagers to move to low-lying districts exposing them to malaria to which they have no resistance.

After many months of confusion about the true cause and extent of the disaster, a number of reports suddenly became available in late March, revealing that foreign aid workers who have visited the territory feel that they can no longer remain silent.

According to one report on 25 March, foreign aid workers said that most of those who died were highland tribespeople who have succumbed to malnutrition or hunger-related diseases. An official of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Ferenc Meyer, said after returning to Jakarta: 'There would be villages of 200 inhabitants, with thirty dead in one month.' He said that the total number of dead will never be known because some areas could only be monitored from the air but there was nowhere nearby to land and check the residents.'

Another aid worker said the official death toll, now standing at around 650, covered only those in major centres and not in the hundreds of remote highland villages where most of the 420,000 of central Irian Jaya (West Papua) live. [AFX-Asia, 25 March]

### Army remove villagers to loot resources

Foreign aid workers who refused to be named told AFP in Jakarta that the army had contributed to the scale of the disastrous drought which has killed thousands. They said that villagers were terrified of soldiers because of years of intimidation and harassment and have been forced to leave their traditional highland homes for malarial lowlands.

'The military wants the gold, the timber and other natural resources up there so they move the villagers to low-lying areas,' said one top-ranking foreign aid official in Jakarta. 'Moving them from these areas also makes it easier to secure the area and to find the OMP (the Free Papua Movement). But apart from losing their traditional land, they have no resistance to malaria so when they go to the low areas they get sick and die.' Other officials said starving villagers who also suffered malaria ... were too scared to venture into the dry and sometimes burning forests in search of food.

'They think the soldiers will mistake them for OPM and shoot them,' another aid worker said. [AFP, Jakarta, 26 March]

One of the areas most severely affected by the famine is the south-east region of Jayawijaya district in the vicinity of Geselama which is where the hostage crisis was played out in the first half of 1996. The area is known to be heavily occupied by Indonesian troops who have been conducting operations in an attempt to capture Kelly Kwalik, commander of

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## Acehnese refugees killed as hundreds are deported

*At least eight Acehnese refugees trying to resist forced deportation were killed in violent clashes with Malaysian police. Following the clashes more than five hundred were put on Indonesian naval vessels and returned to Indonesia.*

The clashes erupted in several refugee camps where the Acehnese were being held. The worst hit camp was Semenyih, 25 miles southeast of Kuala Lumpur where five barracks caught fire as police tried to force the inhabitants out of the camp.

The Aceh/Sumatra National Liberation Front in Malaysia who were in direct contact with camp inmates believe that 24 Acehnese were killed during the clash and more died during deportation or after arriving back in North Sumatra, bringing the death toll to 39.

The police operations began at crack of dawn on 26 March and were focused on Semenyih and three other camps, Lenggeng, Machap Umbo and Juru. Malaysia's national police chief Rahim Noor said some 3,500 policemen were involved in the operation, including 1,200 at Semenyih. The police chief in charge, Ghazali Mohamed Amin told reporters that the operation 'was targeted against Aceh people, because they have been here for too long'. [Reuters, Semenyih, Malaysia, 26 March]

The brutality of the operation was confirmed by witnesses who saw hundreds of riot police with batons, canes and riot shields inside and outside the camp hours after the operation, while nearby residents said they heard gunshots. According to Ghazali, 140 refugees at the Lenggeng camp escaped but 37 were recaptured. Several sources confirm the refugees had been drugged to make it easier to remove them from the camps.

Hundreds of refugees were rounded up and taken to the naval post of Lumut where Indonesian naval vessels were waiting to transport them back to Indonesia the following morning.

### Refugee Convention violated

These deportations are in flagrant violation of the 1961 UN Convention on Refugees according to which refugees in danger for their lives should not be forced to return home. Elizabeth Wong of the Malaysia-based SUARAM, (Voice of the Malaysian People), said Kuala Lumpur's policy is 'to re-

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# Solidarity conferences on East Timor

*In March there were two regional East Timor conferences. APCET-III, the third Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor was held in Bangkok. A week later Brussels was the venue for the Sixteenth European Conference of Solidarity Groups on East Timor. The groups also held a strategy meeting with the European Parliament's Inter-Group on East Timor.*

With international awareness of East Timor continuing to expand, new East Timor committees are emerging in many parts of the world. The 1997 international conference in Mozambique may lead to an African regional conference on East Timor in the not too distant future.

That APCET-III was able to proceed with minor interruptions was something of a miracle, given what happened to the two previous conferences held in Southeast Asia.

## Threatened with arrest

Two East Timor conferences had been planned in Bangkok: Peace-Set and APCET III. The Peace-Set conference, an international symposium for a peaceful settlement in East Timor, was scheduled to take place at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, but under pressure from the Thai government, the venue had to be changed. Although the university withdrew, other groups on the organising committee were determined to go ahead. The Thai government had come under heavy pressure from Jakarta because the Thai Prime Minister was due to make a state visit to Jakarta.

Things turned nasty when the Thai authorities alleged that foreigners participating in a seminar need work permits and warned that foreign delegates would be arrested if they addressed the meeting. The Thai organisers of Peace-Set spent many hours negotiating with the authorities, defending freedom of speech, association and academic freedom.

When the seminar opened, more than fifty foreign participants had arrived in Bangkok, including participants from East Timor and Indonesia. The police demanded an undertaking from the organisers that no foreigners would speak. When this was refused, the police threatened to arrest all the foreign participants on the following day.

In the event, no one was arrested but the Thai authorities did their utmost to disrupt the proceedings. Dozens of officials from Special Branch, Military Intelligence, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour and the Prime Minister's Office insisted on being present. Participants were filmed and photographed. An Indonesian government official flew to Bangkok from Jakarta to keep an eye on things, together with several diplomats from the Indonesian embassy, making it difficult for Indonesian passport holders including East Timorese to participate without endangering themselves.

Despite all this, the symposium ended in high spirits after adopting a strong resolution in support of self-determination and a referendum for East Timor.



*Panel discussion with East Timorese and Indonesians at the opening of APCET III*

## Rumblings at APCET-III

The solidarity conference on East Timor took place on 5 and 6 March at a different venue. On finding the place seething with uniformed policemen, it was decided to redirect the delegates to a safe place.

After protracted negotiations, the APCET-III organisers struck a deal with the officials. They would not be allowed to sit in the conference hall but would confine themselves to the hotel lobby. Despite this small victory, the presence of Special Branch, so close at hand, was very irritating. It was not easy to persuade the five Timorese and three Indonesians to attend. Finally, late on the first day, after wasting many hours negotiating, APCET-III proceeded without further trouble. Difficult as things were, APCET-III was quite an improvement on its predecessors in Manila and Kuala Lumpur. The Thai press devoted a lot of coverage to both meetings and to the attempts at disruption from officialdom.

APCET-III was devoted to information sharing and discussing strategy. A panel discussion on the impact of the Indonesian crisis on the East Timor issue was followed by workshops. It was unanimously decided to hold APCET-IV in Jakarta in the year 2000, reflecting optimism over the future of self-determination in East Timor and for democracy in Indonesia.

East Timor is now well established as a political issue for the people in the Asia-Pacific region. There were also delegates from non-Pacific countries like Nepal, India and Sri Lanka. TAPOL was represented by Liem Soei Liong.

# EAST TIMOR

It was also agreed that Great Turtle Island (USA and Canada) should be accepted as a full member.

## APCET faces a tradition of interference

While conferences in Europe occur without interruption, conferences in the Asia-Pacific have been marred by incidents. It has become a tradition for the Jakarta dictatorship to bully the leaders of neighbouring countries to prevent meetings about East Timor from taking place.

APCET-I in Manila in June 1994 was a typical example of Jakarta arm-twisting an ASEAN country. Business deals were suspended by Indonesia; President Fidei Ramos caved in to the threats from Jakarta and blacklisted many delegates. Several people were turned back at Manila airport. A legal restraining order was issued to stop APCET-I but the Filipino organisers, with strong public support, managed to go ahead. The conference was a resounding success with huge press coverage around the world.

APCET-II in November 1996 in Kuala Lumpur was much worse, with the Malaysian authorities using violence. Hooligans were unleashed during the opening ceremony, all the participants were arrested and the foreign delegates deported. Several of the Malaysian organisers spent a week in detention but were released without charge.

All in all, APCET-III had a better time of it. Is this a sign that ASEAN politics are improving?

## European NGOs meet in Brussels

The two-day meeting of East Timor solidarity groups in Brussels took place on the initiative of the European Parliament's Inter-Group on East Timor. The Group, co-chaired by Heidi Hautala of Finland, Tony Cunningham of the UK and Carlos Costa Neves from Portugal, was keen to have consultations with solidarity groups so as to map out a strategy for more effective activity within the European Union with regard to East Timor. Over the years, the European Parliament has adopted sixteen resolutions relating to Indonesia, most of them about East Timor. All the resolutions have called for an end to arms sales to Indonesia. However, implementation rests in the hands of the Council of Ministers and the European Commission.

Twenty solidarity groups and NGOs from ten European countries along with delegates from the Indonesian Network for Democracy JODI-E, Parliamentarians for East Timor, and the International Platform of Jurists for East Timor were present.

## The democratic deficit

The meeting was addressed by Eilis Ward of the Department of Politics, Trinity College, Dublin who analysed the decision-making processes at the EU and the problems faced in securing effective implementation of the Common Position on East Timor which was adopted by the Council of Ministers in June 1996. Most EU countries focused on their economic ties with Indonesia to the detriment of concerns for East Timor. Since foreign affairs was an issue on which consensus was required, it meant that decisions tended to keep to the lowest common denominator.

The Parliament itself has very limited powers to influence the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the Commission, which highlights the democratic deficit at the heart of the EU.

In the lively discussion which followed, the role of public opinion was stressed. A decision several years ago

to send a mission to East Timor had failed because of Indonesian obstructions. A draft Code of Conduct for the arms trade, prepared by France and the UK, was criticised for failing to prevent sales to repressive regimes. A strategy discussion held behind closed doors considered ways for MEPs to bring greater pressure to bear on the decision-making mechanisms of the EU.

## East Timor suffers from the crisis

Addressing the solidarity organisations, Jose Ramos-Horta described the economic situation in East Timor as extremely grave, under the impact of Indonesia's economic crisis. The territory had gained nothing in terms of investment but had been heavily colonised with some 200,000 Indonesians now living there. Resources had been extracted but nothing given in return. The cost of living is always far higher and had soared recently. Now, the burden of Indonesia's private debt would have to be borne by the East Timorese as well as the Indonesian people.

He warned that in crises of this sort, people are inclined to vent their anger on scapegoats, the Chinese in Indonesia and most likely the Indonesian migrants in East Timor. Moreover the Timorese could suffer the consequences of falling morale among the forces of occupation as their own economic circumstances deteriorate.

He also stressed that East Timor should not be allowed to suffer if agencies like the World Bank and the IMF refused to provide credit to Jakarta for failing to comply with necessary reforms. It was important for the World Bank to design a separate aid package for East Timor and not treat it as if it was part of Indonesia.

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