

Stumbling block

Indonesia-EC agreement ditched by Timor issue

By Shada Islam in Brussels, Adam Schwarz and Suhaini Aznam in Jakarta

Portugal has blocked EC plans for an ambitious new cooperation agreement with Asean because of what Portuguese Foreign Minister Joao de Deus Pinheiro denounced on July 20 as Indonesia's "unacceptable violation of human rights" in East Timor.

Portugal's action came eight months after troops fired on demonstrators in East Timor, a former Portuguese colony annexed by Indonesia in 1976. The consequences now include a Europe-wide sanction that will be felt throughout Asia.

Portugal's decision to hold up the long-awaited EC-Asean pact has embarrassed both the EC Commission — which has spearheaded the drive to upgrade the Community's relations with Asean — and the British Government which has promised to start paying more attention to Asean and South Asian countries during its six month stint as EC president.

The EC already has a trade cooperation agreement with Asean but the Commission wants to negotiate a new agreement covering a wider range of topics. European Commissioner Abel Matutes has argued that the EC must draw up a new enhanced cooperation agreement with Asean in order to boost the Community's political and economic presence in the region.

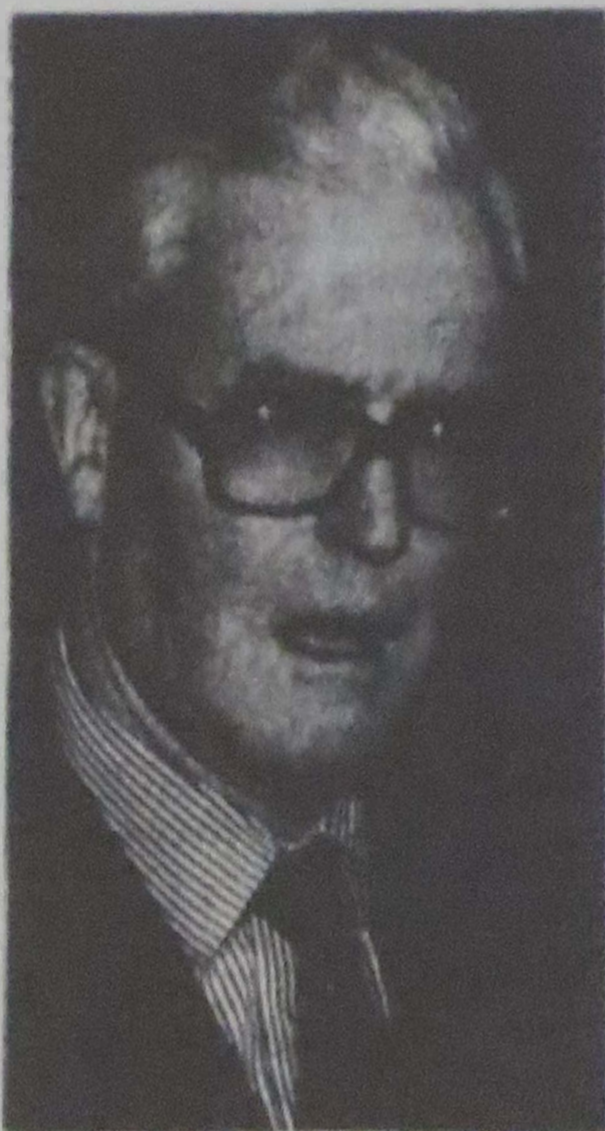
The new deal, he insisted in Brussels, would encourage increased European investments in Southeast Asia, allow the EC to push for better protection of intellectual property rights in the region and increase EC influence over how Asean runs its environment policy.

Commissioner Matutes — who was to accompany British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd to Asean's dialogue with its main trading partners following the Asean ministerial conference in Manila — quickly criticised Portugal's action in blocking the agreement as regrettable. The commissioner, who favours a more subtle approach to human-rights issues, pointed out that by refusing to sign up to the new ac-

cord, Portugal was in fact undermining the EC's political clout in the region.

Portugal's decision to block the start of negotiations on an EC-Asean agreement followed Lisbon's unsuccessful attempt to have Indonesia's human-rights record formally raised by the EC at a meeting of a new international aid consortium for Indonesia which met in Paris on 16-17 July. The consortium, which met under the chairmanship of the World Bank pledged US\$4.94 billion in development aid to Indonesia, slightly more than the US\$4.75 allocated by its predecessor, the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia.

With this fresh funding, the new aid consortium indicated that it was not tying aid to human rights. The donors comprise 18 countries and 13 multilateral agencies, including all members of the disbanded grouping save the Netherlands, plus four new ones. Dutch aid to Indonesia was suspended in March after Indonesia accused the Netherlands of using its aid as "a tool of pressure" on human rights.



Hurd: critical of Portugal.

The outcome of the aid-consortium meeting showed a clear gap between Portugal's stance on the East Timor issue and that of other Western countries, but comments by Portuguese officials suggest that Lisbon is in no mood to be conciliatory. Foreign Minister Pinheiro told the REVIEW that he would "never accept" any plans for a reinforced cooperation deal with Asean unless Jakarta "showed clearly" that it would start respecting human rights.

Portugal wants Indonesia to agree to direct UN-sponsored talks on the future of East Timor. Pinheiro said again in Brussels that the people of the territory should be allowed to decide their own future. He said representatives from East Timor should be included in any negotiations.

Indonesia says it wants to restart stalled talks with Portugal under UN auspices but it accuses Portugal of shifting its ground on the issue of Timorese participation in the talks. "The Portuguese agreed to discussions with no pre-conditions and then turned around and said they wanted Timorese representatives at the talks," said

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NO PROGRESS ON BODY SEARCH

Reliable sources in East Timor say that the Indonesian armed forces have failed to carry out any search for the bodies of East Timorese killed by Indonesian troops in Dili on 12 November last year, despite an order by President Suharto to do so.

Over a hundred people remain unaccounted for. According to a report by BBC correspondent Adam Brooks, following a five day visit to Dili, not one body has been returned to its family for burial. A government report on the incident said fifty people had died and ninety were missing.

East Timorese say they are

buried in mass graves outside Dili but the army does not want to account for them because the numbers are much higher than officially made public.

BBC 7 June 1992, http://www.bbc.com/news/1992/06/02jun92_easttimor

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Wirvono Sastrohandoyo, an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Officials in Jakarta are hoping the dialogue process will get a nudge in September when a European Parliament delegation — including three Portuguese delegates — is due to visit Jakarta. But there is little optimism in Jakarta about an early end to the Timor problem. "I think it will take at least another 2-3 years before East Timor will drop out of the spotlight again," said one Asian ambassador in Jakarta.

Privately, senior Indonesian officials worry that persistent criticism of Indonesia's handling of East Timor may not only damage relations with the EC. A more serious worry is that the issue could mar the upcoming summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, which Jakarta will host in September. The East Timor case is also likely to surface at the UN General Assembly session in September.

In response, Indonesia will soon take a more aggressive line in defending its East Timor policies, officials say. "There will be a change from a passive posture to a more forceful, sophisticated approach [on East Timor]," says parliamentarian Marzuki Darusman. The Foreign Ministry has retained US public-relations firms Smith McCabe and Burson Marsteller to produce an English-language brochure explaining its East Timor policy.

Despite these efforts, criticism from abroad seems unlikely to ease in the foreseeable future. Since early May, four Timorese have been convicted on subversion charges for organising anti-integration activities, receiving sentences from nine years to life. By contrast sentences of 18 months or less were given to 10 soldiers court-martialled for their involvement in the 12 November killings, in Dili the East Timor capital.

Human-rights groups criticised the trials for not delving into the actions of the so-called vigilante armed groups in Timor. On 23 June, the US-based group Asia Watch issued a blistering assessment of the army's performance in East Timor, saying the trial testimonies "paint a picture of a sloppy, ill-prepared, ill-informed, poorly disciplined and poorly led army."



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or justice and self-determination."
a peace plan advocated by a for-
ations envoy, Jose Ramos-Horta,
orese resistance leaders was the
his country's future. Both the New
Australian governments have re-
the proposal.

of self-determination for East Ti-
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ed to UN Secretary-General Bou-
ghali by his personal envoy, Amos

visited East Timor in February and
to have written a "blistering cri-
ndonesian government.

at months Indonesian judges have
sentences on five Timorese pro-
ere fired on, while handing out
punishments to Indonesian sol-
over the shootings.

ld student leader, Gregorio da
na, was jailed for life for having
protest which led to the massacre.

Military tribunals have sentenced nine soldiers
and one policeman to jail terms ranging from
eight to 20 months for "violating military regu-
lations" during the demonstration.

Although an official Indonesian report put the
death toll at 50, independent sources, human
rights agencies and eyewitness journalists have
estimated that at least 150 died.

"We believe the actual figure is 198 killed,
based on hospital records, mothers' testimony
and the number of disappearances", claims
Pereira. "Seven victims were actually buried
under an asphalt road. New Zealand should ask
questions about the dead and missing."

The New York-based international rights group
Asia Watch has condemned the light punish-
ments imposed on soldiers, saying the courts
martial were "stage managed" to appease inter-
national criticism.

The trials revealed a "sloppy, ill-prepared, ill-
informed, poorly disciplined and poorly led
army", says the Asia Watch report, adding that
they did nothing to "pierce the secrecy surround-
ing how the shooting started or what happened
to the bodies of those killed". ■

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of Inquiry and the Honorary
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'The necessity to resort to
torture and killings belies the
frequent assertion by the In-
donesian authorities that the
Indonesian people accept au-
thoritarianism as a part of
their culture', Helmi told the
Australian MPs.'

He called on Australia to
link aid to Indonesia with gov-
ernment and business respect
for human rights, to play a
positive role in resolving the
conflict in East Timor and to
suspend defence cooperation
with Indonesia.

WHAT YOU CAN DO :

1. Write a letter of protest to Burson Marsteller (see over) for their action in support of Indonesia's East Timor policy: BURSON MARSTELLER INC. NY, 230 Park Ave. S, New York, NY, USA.
2. Write to the UN for the release of Amos Wako's report re. his recent visit to East Timor: Secretary General, UN Headquarters, New York, NY, USA.

If you're interested in listening to a tape of Helmi Fauzi's recent talks in Perth contact Denis 3416731 or Beth 3374808.