

Compromise presidential statement approved

US manages to head off UNSC resolution condemning Israel

UNITED NATIONS, July 14: The United States managed to head off a Security Council resolution that would have condemned Israel for trying to expand Jerusalem's boundaries, reports AP.

The 15-member council instead approved a compromise presidential statement that calls Israel's June 21 decision "a serious and damaging development." It also calls on Israel not to proceed with the expansion of Jerusalem's boundaries.

Heading into the late-night council meeting Monday, US Ambassador Bill Richardson called the statement appropriate.

"We had a choice: A presidential statement that was consensus, that is moderate, or vetoing a resolution condemning Israel, which would have exacerbated tensions," he said. "The outcome... sends the message of support for the Middle East peace process."

An Arab-sponsored resolu-

tion would have condemned Israel for the move and demanded that the expansion decision be rescinded. The measure was softened to a presidential statement after repeated US objections and intense, high-level negotiations between Washington and Arab capitals, said the US official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Such a statement doesn't carry the weight of international law that a resolution does and is adopted by consensus.

The Palestinians' UN representative, Nasser al-Kidwa, said he was pleased to have a document that took Israel to task for the move — even if he didn't get the resolution Arab states had wanted.

"I think it's a good step forward," Al-Kidwa said. "The council qualified the Israeli action as serious and damaging. It calls upon the Israeli government not to proceed with its de-

cision."

Richardson has said the United States regretted Israel's decision to extend Jerusalem's boundaries to include several towns and expand some municipal services from Jerusalem to West Bank settlements. However, a UN resolution condemning the move would inflame passions and hinder US diplomatic efforts to revive the stalled Middle East peace process, he has said.

Washington could have vetoed a resolution, but doing so is considered a diplomatic setback because it would have implied that Washington couldn't negotiate a compromise.

The draft statement said it supported US efforts at breaking the deadlock.

It noted that both the Palestinians and Israel agreed in previous peace accords that permanent status negotiations would cover the issue of Jerusalem, which the Pales-

tinians want as the capital of a future state.

"The council therefore calls upon the parties to avoid actions which might prejudice the outcome of these negotiations," the draft said.

Israeli's UN ambassador Dore Gold, said the council should never have taken up the issue, which he has called a municipal one that had no place before the council.

"From 1948 to 1967, the UN Security Council never met once to consider the destruction of 58 synagogues in the Old City of Jerusalem, the expulsion of its Jewish inhabitants and the denial of Jewish access to the Western Wall," he said in a telephone interview.

He said the statement actually "contravenes the Oslo peace agreements, which provide that Jerusalem remains under exclusive Israeli jurisdiction while being an issue for permanent status negotiations."

'India fails to examine its mistakes in defence policy'

BEIJING, July 14: India had failed to "examine its mistakes in its defence policy and was using China as an excuse to become a regional political power", an official newspaper said today, reports AFP.

A recent report by the Indian Defence Ministry "played the old trick of spreading the China menace theory to hide India's ambitions of building regional hegemony and becoming a major political power," the China Daily said.

All-Party Defence Committee of the Indian Parliament said last week that India should increase its defence budget and go "full steam ahead" with plans to build long-range missiles to counter threats from Pakistan and China.

"China has... developed a large number of missile systems which can target any part of our country, against which we have no credible missile deterrent," it said in a report issued July 9.

Accusations by some Indian politicians that China threatened India's security were untenable and groundless, the China Daily quoted a Chinese international studies researcher, Ouyang Liping, as saying.



US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl F Inderfurth, left, talks with Sen Charles Robb, D-Va, centre, and Sen Sam Brownback, R-Kan, prior to testifying on Capitol Hill Monday before a Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee hearing on the impact of sanctions on India and Pakistan imposed because of their recent nuclear tests. — AP/UNB photo

India will be on firing line over N-tests at ARF meet in Manila

SINGAPORE, July 14: India will be on the firing line over its nuclear weapons tests when Southeast Asian nations and their key global partners meet in Manila this month for an annual security forum, diplomats say, reports AFP.

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the high point of the annual foreign ministers' meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is also expected to take up fresh tensions in the Korean peninsula and the upcoming Cambodian elections.

A senior ASEAN official told AFP that the widely condemned Indian tests in May, followed by a similar exercise by Pakistan, will be a major focus of the July 27 forum.

"It'd been quiet in the South China Sea," the official said, referring to the dispute involving

China and five ASEAN members over the Spratly Islands, which had dominated past ARF discussions.

The ARF, which has evolved into Asia's foremost diplomatic forum on security, comprises nine ASEAN members and their "dialogue partners" — the United States, European Union, Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, New Zealand, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Pakistan is also expected to come under criticism in Manila, but India has blocked a proposal by some countries including Japan for Pakistan's inclusion as an observer, leav-

ing the Indians' alone to face the blast.

The last time nuclear issues dominated ARF discussions at the 1995 ASEAN meeting held in Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan, where France was heavily criticised for nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean at the time.

"The difference is that France was already a nuclear power to begin with. This one is a question of proliferation," the ASEAN official said.

"ARF members would like India to accede to the NPT and the CTBT," he said, referring to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

In Manila, Indian Embassy spokesman S N Srinivasan said the Indian delegation to the ARF had not been finalised.

Brazil ratifies nuclear arms ban treaty

BRASILIA, Brazil, July 14: Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso signed Monday a treaty banning nuclear tests and proliferation of nuclear weapons, reports AP.

US President Bill Clinton, in a campaign to halt nuclear proliferation, praised the move and called on the US senate to "expeditiously" approve the same treaty.

"We do not want nuclear bombs," Cardoso said during a ceremony attended by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who is on an official visit in Brazil. "Brazil will not spare efforts so that the world be freed of nuclear weapons."

The ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty came weeks after a series of nuclear tests conducted by neighbouring rivals India and Pakistan. Brazil is among the few countries with technological capacity to build atomic bombs.



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, left, being received by Mushahid Hussain Syed, Information Minister of Pakistan at a Airforce base in Islamabad Monday. Arafat was on his way to China. — AP/UNB photo

Opposition stops Taliban advance

KABUL, July 14: In north-western Afghanistan, opposition soldiers ambushed Taliban troops, cut their supply lines and stopped their advance toward the headquarters of a key enemy commander, opposition officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

The anti-Taliban alliance launched its counter-offensive following a weekend of heavy fighting in which the Taliban took control of the key north-eastern province of Faryab.

The Taliban militia, which rules about 85 per cent of the country, said its soldiers were marching toward neighboring Jozjan province and the headquarters of opposition leader Rashid Dostum.

"We've stopped them and we have cut the roads from Maimana to Jozjan," said an

opposition spokesman who identified himself as Abdullah.

There was no immediate comment from Taliban officials in Kabul.

Reached by satellite telephone, Abdullah blasted neighboring Pakistan, accusing the Pakistani government of encouraging the Taliban to press ahead with a military solution, rather than a negotiated end to the protracted conflict.

Pakistan, which was the first country to give official recognition to the Taliban army, routinely denies supporting the religious militia. Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates also recognised the Taliban.

The United Nations has accused countries neighbouring Afghanistan of providing help to both sides in the conflict.

'20 women died after rape during riots in Indonesia'

JAKARTA, July 14: A human rights group has alleged that 20 women died after they were raped along with more than 100 others during recent riots, a news report said Tuesday, according to AP.

The Jakarta Post newspaper quoted activists from the Volunteers for Humanity group as saying they had documented evidence that 168 girls and women were raped when rioting broke out in mid-May and as sporadic unrest continued through to July 3 in Jakarta and four other cities.

Details of the attacks were presented to Indonesia's National Rights Commission.

'DPRK executes 50 top officials publicly'

SEOUL, July 14: North Korea has publicly executed more than 50 high-ranking officials, including a military general, in a sweeping Stalinist-style purge, South Korea's top intelligence official said, reports AFP.

North Korea has been stemming any resentment at its source through recent purges and a tight thought control, Lee Jong-chun, head of the National Intelligence Service, told the National Assembly late Monday.

"North Korean authorities, following a sweeping thought-control inspection, put more than 50 high-ranking officials, including a party secretary and a military general, to death in open executions to set examples," Lee said.

He confirmed earlier press reports that Ri Bong-won, a key

four-star general in charge of personnel movements in the Korean People's Army, was executed for allegedly spying for South Korea.

So Kwan-hi, agriculture secretary of the North's omnipotent Korean Workers Party (KWP), was eliminated on charges of sabotaging the North's agriculture, Lee said.

Ri and So were said to have been executed last September along with seven members of a key umbrella youth organisation, the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League.

Jang Song-thaek, one of nine first vice-directors of the party's powerful central committee who married the North's supreme leader Kim Jong-il's sister, was put through a "revolutionary education" course for corruption.

Malaysian party to host confce on Kashmir, Palestine

KUALA LUMPUR, July 14: Malaysia's opposition Islamic party plans an international conference on Kashmir and Palestine, a newspaper said Tuesday, reports AP.

The two-day conference will begin in the northeastern town of Kota Baru on July 24. Mustafa Ali, vice president of Parti Islam SeMalaysia, or PAS, was quoted as saying by the New Straits Times daily.

Kota Baru is in the Muslim-dominated state of Kelantan that PAS controls.

"Our objective is to expose the realities and developments of the Muslim struggle in Kashmir and Palestine," said Mustafa.

Representatives from the Pakistan-based Islamic Movement for Kashmir, the Palestinian radical group Hamas, and Indonesian opposition leader Amien Rais, are among those likely to attend, the daily said.

Pak surgeon wins Magsaysay Award for govt service

MANILA, July 14: A Pakistani surgeon who provides modern medical service to poor people for free was named winner Tuesday of the 1998 Ramon Magsaysay Award for government service, reports AP.

Adbul Hasan Rizvi, director of Karachi's Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation, is the first of five winners to be named this year.

The awards board cited Rizvi for "transcending the limits of a public service hospital to make kidney dialysis, renal transplants, and other life-saving medical services available free to thousands of Pakistani citizens."

Rizvi began the institute in 1972 as an eight-bed extension of the burns ward of the Civil Hospital in Karachi.

BRIEFLY

Azeri cargo jet crashes: An Azerbaijani cargo aircraft burst into flames shortly after take off and crashed into the sea, the Emirates News Agency reported Tuesday. AP says from Ras Al-Khaimah, UAE.

Scuba divers recovered the bodies of four of the eight crew members aboard the Ilyushin-76, said a coast guard official speaking on condition of anonymity. Divers found the bodies early Tuesday morning. The plane took off from the airport at the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah at 23:30 pm (1930 GMT) Monday. Eyewitnesses said they saw it catch fire before crashing into the sea 500 meters from shore, the agency said.

Kabila names new army chief: Democratic Republic of Congo President Laurent Kabila has named a general from the ousted Mobutu regime to head the country's army, according to a decree issued Monday. AFP reports from Kinshasa.

Celestin Kifua was named acting chief of the general staff in succession to James Kabarebe, who was appointed special military adviser to the armed forces command.

4 die as ferry capsizes in Yangtze: Four people died and 30 were missing after an overloaded passenger ferry capsized in the Yangtze River in southwestern China, it was reported Tuesday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

The accident happened in Jiangjin district in Chongqing on July 9, local newspapers said quoting the semi-official China News Service. The owner of the privately-run ferry, identified only as Zhao, has been arrested.

Japanese arrested in Manila: Officials have arrested a Japanese tourist after finding two small packs of suspected illegal drugs in his possessions shortly before he was board a flight to Tokyo, police said Tuesday. AP reports from Manila.

National police chief Roberto Lastimoso said the tourist, Yoshiaki Iwasawa of Tokyo, offered arresting officers a 3,000 dollars bribe to be allowed to board a Japan Airlines flight home Sunday after the suspected methamphetamine hydrochloride, or *shabu*, was discovered in his possession. Iwasawa was booked on bribery charges and will also be charged with possession of illegal drugs if laboratory tests confirm their identity, Lastimoso said.



French artillery parade down the Champs Elysees in Paris yesterday during the traditional Bastille Day parade. — AP/UNB photo

Search for new leader on in Japan

TOKYO, July 14: Japan's political chiefs today began the difficult search for a new leader for the world's second largest economy after the resignation of Ryutaro Hashimoto as premier, reports AFP.

Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi, the "grey man" of Japanese politics, was the newspapers' favourite, ahead of a string of veteran lawmakers. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will formally appoint its new leader next today.

Obuchi, who made no secret of his ambitions before Sunday's upper house elections, said Tuesday he had not decided whether to announce his candidacy.

"I'm aware that my name has been suggested by the media," he told a news conference.

Asked whether he would run for premier if nominated Obuchi said: "I cannot think of it right now. I just want to con-

centrate on my job as foreign minister."

Hashimoto will stay on as a caretaker leader until July 30 when he steps down, along with his entire Cabinet.

At a regular Cabinet meeting, Hashimoto apologised for events leading to his resignation following his party's major setback in Sunday's elections.

"I apologise for my lack of ability. I'm sorry," Hashimoto was quoted as telling ministers. "I hope all of you will try to do your best until the end of our work."

The LDP held its first meeting on Tuesday to discuss procedures in choosing its new leader, party officials said.

"We really don't know what is going to be," former construction minister Sizuoka Kamel, an outspoken LDP politician, said before attending the meeting at the party headquarters in Tokyo.

Obuchi's faction, the largest in the party, held a meeting late Monday and agreed to back the 61-year-old to be premier, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said.

But he is regarded as a moderate who would follow Hashimoto's line, and would bring no charisma or leadership qualities to the job.

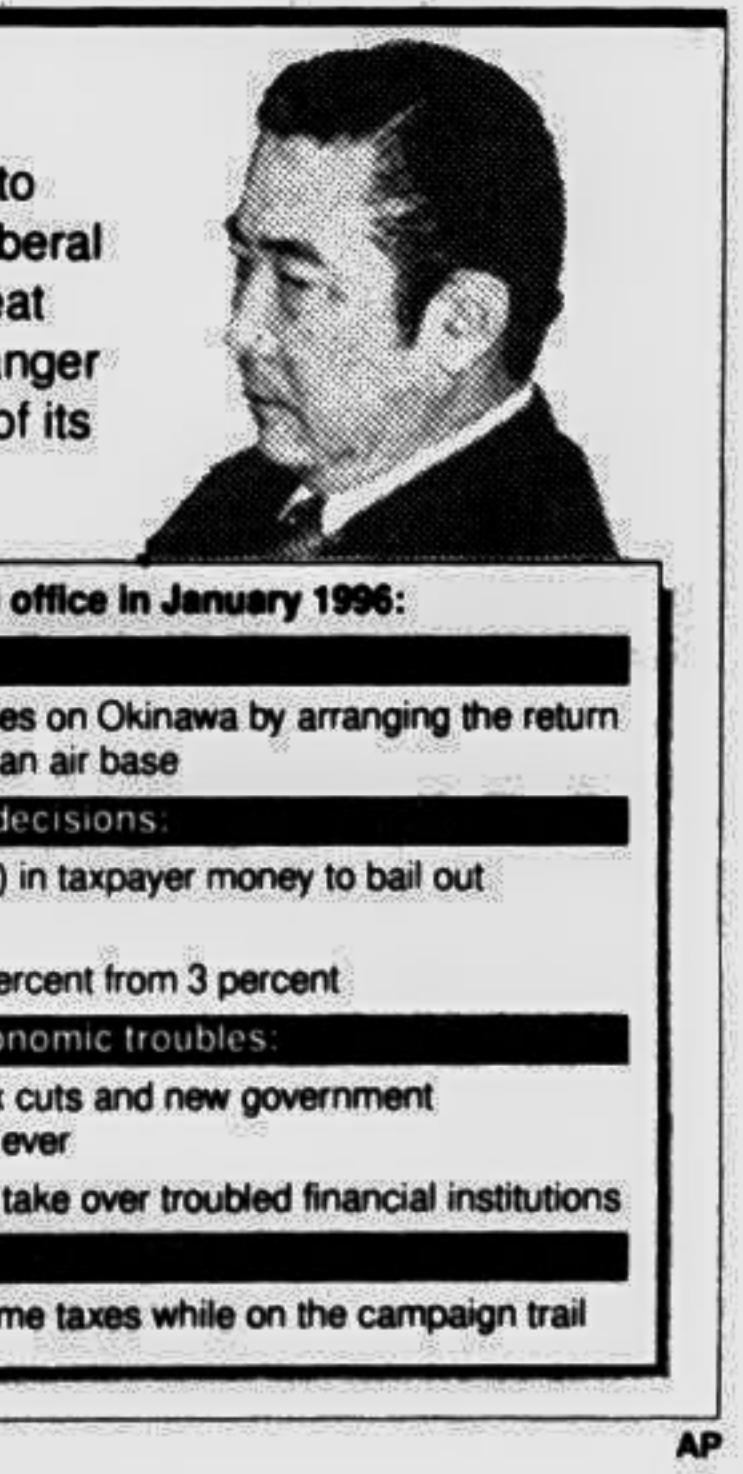
Most dailies turned to former trade minister and Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama, 72, as Obuchi's main rival.

But some analysts regard Kajiyama as a liability after his suggestions that raising interest rates would bring Japan out of recession.

Health and Welfare Minister Junichiro Koizumi, a relative youngster in Japanese politics at the age of 56, is seen as a dark horse, backed by a group of younger LDP lawmakers seeking a fresh voice.

Hashimoto resigns

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto resigned Monday for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party's stunning defeat in elections dominated by voter anger over his failure to pull Japan out of its worst recession in decades.



Hashimoto's scorecard since taking office in January 1996:	
■	Diplomatic successes
■	Quelled opposition to US military bases on Okinawa by arranging the return of land leased to the United States for an air base
■	Controversial and unpopular fiscal decisions
■	Marked \$6.3 billion (685 billion yen) in taxpayer money to bail out failed housing lenders
■	Increased the national sales tax to 5 percent from 3 percent
■	Response to Japan's deepening economic troubles
■	Proposed a \$127 billion package of tax cuts and new government spending — Japan's largest such plan ever
■	Announced setting-up bridge banks to take over troubled financial institutions
■	Last straw tactic
■	Repeatedly flip-flopped on cutting income taxes while on the campaign trail

Tamils fight Tamils on sidelines of ethnic war

COLOMBO, July 14: The office of Douglas Devananda hunkers behind sandbags and reinforced steel doors, the iron gate guarded by a barefoot doorman with an assault rifle. Being a Tamil politician is a risky business in Sri Lanka, reports AP.

Once a commander of a Tamil separatist militia, Devananda is now a member of Sri Lanka's Parliament. That makes him a target of Tamil extremists who accuse him of selling out to the Sinhalese majority.

On June 30, Devananda was beaten into a coma with steel bars by jail inmates belonging to a rival Tamil group whom he had gone to help. He regained consciousness a few days later and doctors said he is out of danger, but it was unclear if he would fully recover.

From the start 25 years ago, the Tamil movement for equal rights has been weakened by factionalism and rivalries. At times, Tamils have killed each

other with a ferocity equalling their struggle against the Sinhalese.

If Devananda is incapacitated, it would be a setback to the government's attempt to marginalise the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the last Tamil group left in the battlefield in the 15-year civil war.

"Douglas could have been built up as an alternative to the LTTE," said Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, of the Centre for Policy Research and Analysis at the University of Colombo. "He projected himself as a new, young, dynamic Tamil Leader."

Devananda was visiting the prison in the role of the claims as leader of all Tamils. The prison in Kalutara, a popular tourist beach destination 40-km south of Colombo, is used largely to house Tamil rebels or suspected militants.

Tamils, an ethnic group that began migrating from southern India about 1,000 years ago, comprise 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 18.5 million people.

Sinhalese say they are a race unique to this island off India's southeastern coast, and trace their origin back 2,600 years.

Tamil discontent over discrimination embedded in Sri Lanka erupted into war in 1983, when the Tigers were just one of many armed groups in the north where the Tamils are concentrated. Since then, about 54,000 people have been killed in fighting and in terrorist attacks.

Devananda's Eelam People's Democratic Party surrendered in 1987 as part of a peace agreement brokered by India. Many former militants and outlaws became politicians, while the Tigers kept fighting.

By the early 1990s, the Tigers controlled nearly a third of Sri Lanka, and had a civil administration based in the ancient Tamil city of Jaffna governing one million people. In 1995, Jaffna fell to the army in a bloody 50-day campaign that broke the rebels' hold on

the north.

Now, the Tigers are locked in a decisive battle with the army. An estimated 5,000 fighters, virtually surrounded at a crucial road junction, are holding off a 14-month army drive to seize the north-south highway through rebel territory. Army commanders say if they capture the road, it would split the rebel forces, disrupt their communications and supply lines, and confine them to the jungles of one corner of this island nation.

Western diplomats estimate the battle for the highway has cost 2,500 lives, about half from each side.

Inside the barricaded headquarters in a swank residential section of Colombo, Devananda's followers criticise the government's military campaign. But they're not sure how to proceed.

"The burden of the war is on the Tamil people," said legislator Sangarapillai Sivathasan. "We are thinking of boycotting

Parliament for some time. But unfortunately this incident with Douglas happened, so we are unable to decide."

Even as they struggle to keep the war alive, the Tigers brook no dissent from Tamils whom they consider collaborators.

On July 17, a hit squad burst into home of the newly-elected mayor of the Tamil city of Jaffna and killed her.

Mayor Sirojini Yogeswaran was one of the few officials elected in January — the first for local councils elections in the war-stricken north since 1983 — to ignore warnings from the Tigers and take the oath of office. Her replacement based himself in Colombo and planned periodic visits to his city 300 km away.

Devananda's credentials as a Tamil patriot were established during his years in the underground leading attack on military bases and police stations. Now 40, he trained with Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon in

the 1970s. His men still carry guns — now with government permission, to protect themselves from other Tamils.

His party is the largest Tamil group in Parliament, holding nine of its 225 seats. But his real popularity is uncertain — out of 600,000 potential voters in the Jaffna Peninsula, only 8,000 cast ballots. Devananda won his seat with 2,091 votes, and another candidate was elected with just 398.

His escape from previous assassination attempts further boosted his image. Two years ago, he jumped from a second story window to evade gunmen. Four of his party workers were killed in the assault.

Today, his party supports the government's plan for greater autonomy in Tamil-dominated areas, short of independence. The plan, which is rejected by the Tigers as too little, has failed to muster the essential support of the Sinhalese opposition which says it goes too far.

Governor of E Timor calls for calm as thousands leave

JAKARTA, July 14: The Indonesian-appointed governor of East Timor has reportedly called for calm as thousands continue to leave the troubled territory amid fears of a new outbreak of violent protests, reports AP.

The exodus comes ahead of a planned visit to Indonesia later this week by Jamsheed Marker, the United Nations' special envoy for the former Portuguese colony.

Fearing attack by indigenous Timorese, at least 20,000 non-Timorese Indonesian settlers have fled since late last month. Some have driven across the land border into West Timor. Many have returned by boat to homes on other islands.

Officials and some immigrants said they were scared by possible mass protests during Marker's visit and the 22nd anniversary on Friday of Indonesia's annexation of the half-island territory.

"I am appealing to all people

from other provinces... to wisely assess the situation," Gov. Abilio Soares was quoted as saying by the Jakarta Post on Tuesday.

"I ask you to report to the authorities whoever is spreading rumors or riots and demonstrations," he said.

Several protesters have been shot to death by Indonesian troops recently during pro-independence demonstrations. There have also been clashes between rival groups who either want East Timor to break away from Indonesia or to remain part of it.

Because of security concerns, it was unclear Tuesday whether Marker will visit East Timor or conduct meetings elsewhere in Indonesia.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975, and annexed it a year later. The United Nations, Portugal and many other governments refused to recognise Indonesian sovereignty there.