

## IN BRIEF: POLITICAL

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had a *keris*, or Javanese knife, as soul protection. “The last scenario was to poison him,” Anwar told police.

This testimony was never offered to prosecutors in earlier trials, indicating what many rights activists had been saying all along—that police were too afraid to pursue the case against the powerful and secretive agency.

“If only the police had disclosed all of the evidence in the first place, we should not have had to embark on this long and winding road to justice,” one said on condition of anonymity.

Usman Hamid, the coordinator for the National Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence, agrees.

“With the weight of this new evidence, the State Intelligence Agency can no longer protest its innocence,” Hamid said.

Despite this, Hamid still has doubts that the masterminds of Munir’s murder will be brought to justice. Forcing high-ranking BIN operatives to testify would only occur if the move received the highest political support, he said. Otherwise these agents would continue to be immune from legal proceedings.

“The President must move quickly to clean up this institution from officers who undertake unacceptable intelligence operations, instead of providing them with legal privileges,” he said.

With almost all the legal avenues against Munir’s killers used up, this is likely to be the last chance for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. If the government is to wipe the black stain of Munir’s murder from its record and salvage its damaged international reputation, it must act now.

### **Liberalism under fire?**

While people across the archipelago celebrated Independence Day with fun activities and games, media pundits turned to their traditional sport of questioning the true extent of the nation’s freedom. This year, the customary reflection on the direction of Indonesia’s development was complemented by two very different conferences.

The first occurred on August 12, in central Jakarta and was attended by close to 100,000 people. Sponsored by the international Islamic movement Hizbut Tahrir, the conference was called to promote an international caliphate: a transnational Islamic state, which recognises only the Prophet Muhammad’s words as the basis of law. The Islamic caliphate is a political system with a caliph or imam as the head of government aided by non-elected deputies and functionaries.

The spokesman for Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, Muhammad Ismail Yusanto, told the conference that “the Western approach” of democracy had not brought benefits to Indonesia. However, despite this he believed that the country could use democracy to develop into an Islamic state.

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The conference was also attended by more moderate Muslim luminaries, including Muhammadiyah chairman Din Syamsuddin and popular preacher Abudullah Gymnastiar. Addressing the crowd, Syamsuddin welcomed the notion of a more religious government, but told the gathering that Indonesia should only embrace a caliphate if it was in line with the “state ideology of Pancasila.”

Later in the same week, another smaller but equally significant meeting also called into question Indonesia’s embrace of liberalism, but this time from an economic perspective. In a symbolic move, this gathering was held inside the compound of the Tugu Proklamasi, where Indonesia’s first president Soekarno proclaimed independence in 1945.

Organised by the youth wings of Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama and the Golkar-linked Youth Force for Indonesian Reform (AMPI), the meeting attracted some 3000 people. Many of Indonesia’s “old guard” attended including former army chief Gen. Ryamizard Ryacudu and former military intelligence chief (BAIS) Vice Marshall Ian Santoso. Also present was Indra Bambang Utoyo, the former chairman of the Golkar-affiliated Communication Forum of Indonesian Servicemen’s Children (FKPPI).

The main message of this meeting was to “return Indonesia to Indonesians,” and limit foreign investment in the country.

Both the Hizbut Tahrir and economic nationalist causes are minority concerns, which represent little threat to Indonesia’s future development. Although each call the tenets of liberalism into question, they are in many ways polar opposites, with one representing religious thinking and the other a conservative form of national secularism.

What they do share, however, is the presence of ambitious and vocal political players keen to establish their place in the country’s political hierarchy. Because of the consensus style of Indonesian politics these two sides are being courted by more mainstream candidates in the run up to the 2009 elections.

In the case of the Hizbut Tahrir conference, it was notable that Din Syamsuddin spoke. In recent weeks, Syamsuddin’s name has been touted as a potential vice-presidential running mate in 2009 for Jusuf Kalla.

The suspicion that Syamsuddin used the event for self-promotion was strengthened when the Hizbut Tahrir spokesman announced at a press conference the movement was considering establishing a new political party “to promote the genuine values of Islamic politics.”

At present, all presidential and vice-presidential candidates are required by law to have the backing of a political party before they can stand for election.

Meanwhile, speakers at the economic nationalist forum did not pull any punches when talking about the current administration. Ian Santoso, for example, accused the president of selling Indonesia’s sovereignty to foreign

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countries. “They are allowed to run lucrative businesses in Indonesia, and in return they provide political support to the President,” he said.

According to *Report* sources, those present at the conference were supporters of Kalla to run for president in 2009. As a business leader, the current vice president has gone on record before to say he favours a form of Indonesia-centric economic policy. He has also talked about the benefits of less-democratic forms of government in neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Singapore.

With the presidential elections still more than two years away, it is still far too early to talk about a Kalla-Din Syam pairing. Despite this, political insiders are speculating about the beginning of a new broad-based conservative movement. Could these meetings be the start of an anti-liberal dream team? Watch this space.

### Trouble in paradise

The recent human bird flu casualties in Bali come at a time when visitor numbers were just starting to creep up after the 2002 and 2005 bombs. Now there are concerns that tourism, the lifeblood of the Island’s economy, could be the next victim of the disease.

The announcement of the first human deaths from bird flu on Bali is the third blow to the island’s tourist industry in the past two months. In early July, the European Commission warned its citizens against flying to Bali on Indonesian airlines because they were unsafe. Shortly afterward, the Australian government issued a new travel advisory to its citizens, informing them the island was again being targeted by terrorists.

Now, rather than terror concerns, it is health fears that are threatening to put people off the resort. Since the two deaths from bird flu were announced, travel agents have fielded a spate of concerned calls from would-be visitors worried about the dangers of infection. With two cases of H5N1 confirmed and another looking likely, officials are understandably concerned the flu will put the brakes on Bali’s nascent recovery.

In the calm since the last suicide bombings in 2005, Bali’s visitors have steadily increased, rising by 35 percent in the first half of 2007 from the same period last year, from 530,000 to 780,000 people. Before bird flu, arrivals were expected to top a million visitors by December.

However, that rosy projection is being threatened by the latest developments. The island’s first human fatality, a 29-year-old woman from western Jembrana regency, was announced in mid-August. Her daughter, who died a month before, is also thought to have been infected. Since then, another woman from the area has died from the illness and a 57-year-old man is the third suspected case.

Meanwhile, the outbreak in poultry has also reportedly “spread” from Jembrana to the more-populous south. According to the logic of some local media, the farther south the flu gets, the higher the chance that a tourist may be infected, a fact not lost on the international press.