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Big oil firms win new exploration rights

Ika Krismantari
The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

Global oil giants, including ExxonMobil of the United States, Total E&P of France, Britain's Premier Oil and Norway's Statoil ASA, have won the right to drill in Indonesian oil and gas blocks that are believed to hold potential reserves of between 20 million and 200 million barrels of oil equivalent.

A total of nine companies won exploration rights during the regular tender held in August last year.

Total and its partner, Japan's largest oil company, Inpex, won the right to explore an area of 2,004 square kilometers in Southeast Mahakam, East Kalimantan, while a consortium made up of Premier and Japan's

No.	Block	Location	Winner
1.	Southeast Mahakam	Off-shore, Kalimantan	Consortium of Total E&P and Inpex Corp.
2.	West Air Komerling	South Sumatra	PT Tiara Bumi Petroleum
3.	Tuna	Natuna	Consortium of Premium Oil Ltd. and Mitsui Oil Exploration
4.	Karama	Offshore, West Sulawesi	Consortium of Pertamina and Statoil ASA
5.	Mandar	Offshore, West Sulawesi	Esso Exploration International
6.	Sageri	Offshore, South Sulawesi	Talisman Ltd
7.	Lampung 1	Offshore, Lampung	PT ANP Energy
8.	Ujung Kulon	Offshore, Onshore Banten	MEnergy Berhad
9.	Enrekang	Onshore South Sulawesi	PT Sigma Energy Petrogas

Source: Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry

Mitsui Exploration won the Tuna block off Natuna island.

The Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry's director general of oil and gas, Luluk Sumiarso, said here that of the 20 blocks on offer, only 12 had attracted bidders.

However, he said only nine blocks could be awarded as the bidders for the other three failed to meet the requirements.

Luluk said that the nine winners would spend a total

of US\$411 million on drilling and seismic surveys over the next three years, while the government would earn total signature bonuses amounting to about \$31.45 million.

"We hope that the contracts will be signed in mid March at the latest," Luluk said.

Under the production-sharing contracts to be signed with the winners, the government's share of the split will range between 65 and 85 percent, depending on the loca-

tion of the blocks.

The ministry's director for the upstream oil and gas industry, R. Priyono, said that the government would offer another 40 oil and gas blocks in April or August, either through a regular tender or a direct offer.

He said that the blocks that had not been taken up could also be offered during the upcoming tender, including the Cucut, Cakalang and Baronang blocks in Natuna.

The government has signed 104 production-sharing contracts since 2001, 18 of which were awarded last year.

Indonesia, the second-smallest member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, is intensifying exploration to meet its target of increasing output by 30 percent to 1.3 million barrels per day by 2009.

Refugees plead for help as aid trickles in

The Jakarta Post
Yogyakarta/Klaten/Jakarta

Aid has begun trickling into the earthquake disaster area, but it was rain which poured on thousands of refugee tents across Yogyakarta on Sunday night.

These makeshift canvas and plastic shelters have become temporary homes for over 100,000 displaced people in the province.

Some huddled beneath the tents because they had nothing left, many braved the rain and cold because they were too afraid to return to their homes for fear of being trapped in another earthquake.

It was the "dark ages" in many parts of the province as small oil lamps became the only source of light in areas cut off from electricity.

The terror of Saturday morning's devastating temblor remained fresh in everyone's minds.

"Most houses around here are damaged and fractured, the slightest quiver could bring them down," Sunaryo, 65, a resident of Bokoharjo village in Sleman regency, said as he pointed out the cracks in his house to *The Jakarta Post*.

Packed under a small plastic covering as water dripped down the sides, Sunaryo, his family and friends gathered together with their cooking utensils, mats and what valuables they had managed to salvage.

Not far away in Prambanan village a group of about 60 people had been seen earlier in the afternoon huddling together in the middle of a rice field. They had a few mattresses, some household materials and nothing to put over their heads. It is difficult to imagine where they went when the rain came down later that evening.

Clean water was scarce. "It tastes bitter," 60-year-old Suwagiyo told the *Post*. "Maybe its because of the rubble that collapsed into the well."

Though pledges of aid poured in, these declarations meant little to the thousands of people left with nothing in hamlets and villages dotting the province.

For the second night they were left to fend for themselves with whatever they could salvage from their homes.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono may have opened office in Yogyakarta and dozens of relief groups are said

to be in the field, but it was clear Sunday afternoon that aid work was haphazard and largely uncoordinated.

Those living nearer to population centers, understandably, were the first to receive assistance. The irony is that the worst hit areas are the small villages far from the Yogyakarta city center, such as those in Bantul regency where two-thirds of the earthquake deaths occurred.

The experience of Juni, a villager from Srigading, Bantul, exemplifies the confusion of the aid operation.

"At dawn I went to the regency aid post but they told me to go to the district office," he recalled. "When I finally arrived at the district office no one knew what to do."

Along the main road through Bantul people were lined up begging for food and money.

Carrying small pouches and old boxes on which the words "Quake Donations" could barely be made out, the old and young, women and children sought handouts from passersby.

They were unaware of the newly formed Special Disaster Task Force for Bantul regency.

In these first hours after the earthquake it was not a task force or aid agencies that offered hope to those displaced by the tragedy, but the kindness of traveling strangers.

"We have not received any (official) assistance at all," said Warno of Gadungan village in Bantul. His remark was a common one in the area.

Some were taking matters into their own hands, calling relatives and friends in less affected areas to secure food and other emergency needs.

At one such warehouse, owned by the Bantul regency administration, donated goods were beginning to pile up. Officials said the assistance would be distributed through district chiefs.

Though desperate, many people continue to display the Javanese spirit of accepting fate and seeking the positive.

With his *sarong* tied between tree branches to provide some cover, 75-year-old Paryo remained defiant in spirit.

"We should be ashamed of begging, even to the government. We must bear our fate," the old man insisted.

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Brazil tries to clean up corrupt system

Raymond Colitt
Reuters/Brasilia

Election authorities have banned about 1,500 candidates charged with fraud from running in Brazil's general election next month, officials said on Monday.

The suspensions are part of a renewed effort to clean up Brazil's corruption-plagued political system following scandals over vote-buying and campaign financing that rocked the government for several months last year and brought calls for President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's

impeachment.

"Authorities are more proactive because pressure from society to deal with this huge corruption quagmire is bigger than ever before," Joao Paulo Peixoto, professor of politics at the University of Brasilia, told *Reuters*.

Brazilians go to the polls on Oct. 1 to elect a president, 27 state governors and assemblies, 513 seats in the lower house of Congress and one-third of the Senate's 81 seats.

The Supreme Election Tribunal said on Monday that 1,535 of 20,705 candidates had been suspended because of accusations of wrongdoing.

Lula is expected to win reelection by a wide margin, despite the scandals that kept the public transfixed for months with stories about monthly payments to public officials, slush funds and thousands of reais in bribe money being stuffed into bagmen's underwear.

In the latest scandal, dubbed "Sanguessugas," or bloodsuckers, 86 congressmen allegedly took kickbacks to pay for overpriced ambulances in their municipalities.

The news disappointed supporters of Lula and his Workers' Party, who had promised a new era of clean politics when

they took office.

But the opposition's leading presidential candidate, Geraldo Alckmin, who lags Lula in pre-election polls, has been unable to capitalize on public disgust with corruption, in part because members of his own Brazilian Social Democracy Party are accused of having pioneered illegal schemes years before.

With the public perception that politicians across the spectrum are corrupt, the economy and crime are more decisive election issues, analysts said. One recent poll showed that only 0.3 percent of the people trust Congress.

Top envoys head to Beijing for talks on N Korea

Agence France-Presse
Seoul

Envoys from South Korea, the United States, North Korea and Japan are headed for Beijing this week with the resumption of Six-Party talks on the North's nuclear program on their agendas, reports said Sunday.

Yonhap news agency, quoting an unidentified government official, reported South Korea's nuclear envoy planned to visit Beijing this week to discuss the resumption of talks.

Chun Yung-Woo was considering going to Beijing Monday for talks with Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei, *Yonhap* quoted the official as saying.

"As of now, no arrangements are being made for multilateral talks in Beijing this week, be it three-way, four-way, five-way or six-way. Chun is planning to meet only with Wu there," the official was

quoted as saying.

Kenichiro Sasae, Japan's top negotiator for the Six-Party talks, would arrive in Beijing later Sunday, and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-Gwan was likely to fly there Tuesday, *Yonhap* said.

In Tokyo, the *Asahi* newspaper said Kim and U.S. envoy Christopher Hill would meet in Beijing this week under an agreement reached by UN delegates of the two nations in New York.

Washington said earlier Hill was travelling to Beijing Sunday.

The North staged its first nuclear test on Oct. 9, sparking international condemnation and United Nations sanctions, but it agreed later to return to the talks grouping it with South Korea, the United States, China, Japan and Russia.

No date has been set for the next round but it is expected to be held next month.

Japan to pour millions into South Sulawesi development

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), through its

The Jakarta Post
Jakarta

community empowerment program (CEP), is preparing a number of development projects valued at US\$15 million in South Sulawesi.

"The South Sulawesi administration and the Japanese government have signed an agreement to carry out development projects in the province," JICA's deputy resident representative Hanazato Nobuhiko said Friday in Jakarta.

Nobuhiko said that the projects would begin next year with human resource and infrastructure development as the main focus.

Currently, he said, the team — consisting of JICA, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the provincial administration — was still formulating the plans for the projects that would be completed in 10 years.

JICA's senior program officer Dinur Krismasari said that the projects were still in the initial stage including a feasibility study on the construction of transportation infrastructure, such as artery roads.

The projects to be developed in South Sulawesi are part of the larger scale development program to be carried out by JICA in the eastern part of Indonesia.

Dinur said South Sulawesi was chosen as the first recipient because the province was considered the hub and driving force of the development in the eastern Indonesia.

Currently, JICA is still conducting 11 projects worth about Rp 7 billion (US\$767,000), two of which are expected to be completed by the end of this month.

One of the projects is being conducted in cooperation with local non-governmental organization Setia Kawan Raharja foundation (SEKAR) in Jakarta.

It aims to help street children to break out of the cycle of poverty by teaching them to make handicrafts from recycled paper.

Every year, JICA, a nonprofit governmental organization that is committed to development work in poor nations, assists at least 10 projects in cooperation with NGOs under its CEP program.

Each project could cost up to \$100,000 a year. (06)

Sharia laws could hurt investment, EU MPs say^{30 16}

Avian E. Tumengkol
The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

The implementation of sharia-style laws in several regions in the country could negatively affect foreign investment and hurt Indonesia's international relations, a European parliamentary delegation visiting the country says.

The head of the eight-member group, Hartmut Nassauer, said in Jakarta on Friday the delegation was concerned religious laws could discriminate against non-Muslims.

While Europe had strong Christian traditions, it was not a Christian continent but a secular collection of states, Nassauer said. There were 30 million Muslims living in Europe, he said.

Despite claims to the con-

trary, Nassauer said if a religious law became a state law, followers of other faiths and non-believers could be obliged to live under that law.

"You cannot force a citizen to hold a certain religion, which is against his or her will," he said. Implementing religious laws could also isolate Indonesia from other nations and create frictions.

If sharia-style laws forbade a woman to leave her house after dark, they would not only be a major concern to followers of other faiths, Nassauer said.

Aceh is the only province that has so far applied sharia-influenced precepts in its local bylaws, while several regions in other provinces have issued regulations on public conduct, which have been criticized for being discriminatory to women.

"The final decision to insti-

tute sharia law is in the hands of the Indonesian people and government, and will involve other international organizations who intend to assist the country in its elections. And I am here to share my recommendations to Indonesia," Nassauer said.

The eight-member delegation, which visited Indonesia to attend the third European-Indonesia Inter-parliamentary Meeting, ended its visit to the country Friday.

During their five-day stay, the members of the European Parliament met House of Representatives Speaker Agung Laksono and other legislators.

They also met with members of the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation, trade ministry officials, representatives from the country's two-largest Muslim orga-

nizations Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, human rights activists and Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda.

In Yogyakarta, they observed the progress of EU assistance programs for the victims of May's earthquake.

Robert Goebbels, of the parliament's economic and monetary affairs division, said the European Union and other ASEAN nations were working closely with Indonesia. "Indonesia is an important trade and investment partner for the EU," he said.

Goebbels, Luxembourg's former minister for the economy and finance, recommended Indonesian companies involved in foreign trade consider using the euro more often because it would reduce their vulnerability to the instability of the U.S. dollar.

Chaka Khan:

Big hair, big voice ... big heart

During my interview with Sheila Majid, she expressed her amazement toward today's music.

"Today's artists... They are so creative, they put old songs as samples in their new songs, and this helps bring the attention back to those wonderful old melodies," said the Malaysian diva.

"My daughter, she happily listened to that rap song (*Through the Wire*) by Kanye West, and she did not believe when I told her that the song was a cover version of an old song. Later, I showed her my old Chaka Khan album, I played the original song (*Through the Fire*), and she was amazed! She looked at me with a greater respect!"

The rap song, indeed, helped revive our attention for "one of the greatest pop voices in music", as Bette Midler once praised her affectionately, and undoubtedly a music legend: Chaka Khan.

The legendary status, of course, was partially owed to the resurrection of her old songs that has happened not once — as in the case of West's cover song — but at least a couple of times in different decades.

Recent multiple Grammy-winner Mary J. Blige has covered *Sweet Thing*.

Most notably, the then-still-sober Whitney Houston gave her rendition of Khan's ode to women, *I'm Every Woman*, as part of Whitney's award-winning *The Bodyguard* soundtrack in 1992. The massive success of the single and the album, along with a brief appearance of Khan in its music video, only enhanced her timeless influence on aspiring artists, which still continues today.

But the larger part of Khan's cemented popularity should be credited to her enduring career as a singer, a performer and a humanitarian for more than three decades.

Or longer, if we go back to

Nov. 3, 1953, when a girl named Yvette Marie Stevens was born in Great Lakes, Illinois, and later raised in south Chicago.

If the name does not ring a bell, it's simply because some twist of fate brought the girl to adopt an African name, Chaka Khan, for herself. As we all know, her life has never been the same since.

Especially when a band called Rufus paved her way to stardom.

Founded in 1970, the multi-racial Rufus comprised of Kevin Murphy, Andre Fisher and Khan as its lead vocalist. Despite a public rivalry that

song years in the early 1980s, the band had an amazing repertoire of achievement. Until their break-up in 1983, the band released 19 albums that included one platinum album, five gold albums, five gold singles, five No. 1 hits, and two Grammys.

Songs like the aforementioned *Sweet Thing* and *Tell Me Something Good*, which won the group their first Grammy in 1974, were only a few of their distinctive works, although their success culminated in the song *Ain't Nobody*.

One of the most popular anthems of R&B/dance music that is still played at sporadic clubs, *Ain't Nobody* was featured on the band's final album, *Live: Stompin' at the Savoy* in 1983, and won them their second and last Grammy the same year.

Despite the band's splitting up, Khan's own Grammy and musical journey continued.

In a classic tale of a lead vocalist buoyed to fame on her own as a soloist, Khan stepped on to this path by releasing the single *I'm Every Woman*, quickly followed by her first album *Chaka* in 1978.

The music-loving public went wild, with the album peaking at No. 12 on Billboard's Pop Albums chart, and the future looked bright for her. At least for that moment.

It took quite some time for her to be boxed in the black, pop, or jazz albums on Billboard with her follow-up albums, *Naughty* (1980), *What Cha' Gonna Do For Me* (1981), standard jazz repertoire *Echoes of an Era* (1982), and the self-titled *Chaka Khan* (1982).

The latter album won her two Grammys for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance and Best Vocal Arrangement for one of the album's tracks, *Be Bop Medley* — despite mediocre sales.

And then came her life saver, 1984's *I Feel For You*. A cover version of a song by Prince, the album is often noted by many as the definitive album of Khan's career.

It won her another Grammy, and the title single crossed over to the elite Billboard Top 100 and peaked at No. 3. Another single, the David Foster-produced ballad *Through the Fire*, became the first single to spend the greatest number of consecutive weeks on Billboard's R&B chart.

Wherever Khan has performed since, these songs are the ones during which she could rest her voice, as her audiences would surely know the lyrics by heart.

Her vocal prowess continues with 10 albums to date fol-

lowing the massive success of *I Feel For You*, although none of them achieved a similar critical and commercial success.

Wanting to stretch and expand her ability as a performer, she had a brief fling with theater when she took the lead role in London's West End production of *Mama, I Want to Sing*. She was also featured on the most popular TV children's show, *Sesame Street*, performing with Elmo and Telly.

Meanwhile, her eclectic appearances on several soundtrack albums, such as those for *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*, remind us that her longstanding presence in the music industry is something worth praising.

Realized that her stature was a great asset to do more, Khan ventured into the food business by launching her own gourmet chocolates, Chakalates. She penned an autobiography, *Chaka! Through the Fire*, which won rave reviews upon its release in 2003.

But the singer reinforced her famous name for a much better cause when she founded The Chaka Khan Foundation in 1999. The foundation assists at-risk women and children and helped raise over US\$1.4 million in 2004 alone for autism research, awareness and.

In her message as the foundation's chairman of the board, Khan noted with a great emotion: "If I leave this world knowing that I've helped one woman break the cycle of addiction and abuse; that one child has believed enough to get the education he/she deserves, then I can rest in peace."

For us and for the world, we have been lucky enough to see this talented woman with her big hair, who has entertained us with her big, soulful voice through the years, and who has shared with us her big, kind heart.

Chaka Khan will perform live at the Java Jazz Festival on March 3. For schedules and detailed information, visit www.javajazzfestival.com

Adianto P. Simamora
The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

Most small lakes in Greater Jakarta are getting shallower as local authorities are not prioritizing their protection, an official said last week.

Even worse, the water in some lakes is no longer fit to be used even for agricultural activities.

"About 60 percent of the roughly 200 lakes in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi were damaged in 2002. It might have now soared to 80 percent," Antung Deddy, assistant deputy for river and lake protection at the ministry told *The Jakarta Post*.

He said that several factors were damaging the lakes, which serve as catchment zones in the wet season and water reserves during the dry season.

"The heavy sedimentation make the lakes get shallower, thus degrading their ability to contain rainwater," he said.

"The rising population of Greater Jakarta is the main cause (as it) converts the lakes

into residential areas. Many residents often claim them their own property," he said.

He said that the residents also used the lakes as dumps for both domestic and industrial waste.

"People remain unaware about the importance of the lakes. They can contain rainwater and prevent flooding," he said.

Antung said that the administrations of Jakarta, West Java and Banten signed a memorandum of understanding to restore the lakes in 2004.

"But there has been no real action yet to implement the agreement," he said.

The agreement, outlining 21 actions to take place between 2004 and 2010, was signed by three governors, three

regents and four mayors in Greater Jakarta.

Data from the ministry shows the average area of the lakes is six hectares, with a depth of about five meters.

The largest lake is Garukgak in Tangerang, at 130 hectares.

As of 2003, there were only 1.4 million ha of lakes in the region, a sharp decrease

the capital would be free of flooding

Jakarta alone currently has 42 lakes, but five of them have been converted into business areas.

"Another 16 lakes with a total of 168.4 ha, Rawa Kendal and Rorotan lake in North Jakarta, Penggilingan Lake and Segaran and Dirgantara lakes in East Jakarta have been receding due to land conversion," the ministry said

In Bogor, 93 lakes with a total area of 500,130 ha have shrunk by 29 percent.

"The local people converted the lakes for agricultural areas," the ministry said.

Of the 93 lakes, locally known as *situ*, 15 are in poor condition, while two other have been transformed into part of the West Java turnpike, in Babakan Madang, and a school, in Gunung Putri.

Sukiswanto of the Bogor Road and Water Agency said that most of the remaining lakes were experiencing sedimentation, usually caused by poor maintenance.

Bogor's lakes, Jasinga, Lewiliang, Parung, Jonggol,

from the previous year's 2.3 million ha.

The Public Works Ministry has calculated that if the government could return the lakes' area to 2.3 millions ha, they could contain about 116.8 million cubic meters of rainwater.

Thus, if the volume of rain falling in Jakarta reached 15,000 cubic meter per second,

Ciawi and Cibinong, range from one to 35 hectares in size.

Sukiswanto said it was hard to prevent lakes being converted into land.

"To restore the lakes we will need a huge amount of money, but as some of the lakes are under the authority of the provincial government, we must wait for their initiative," he said.

The lakes in Depok are an indispensable source of groundwater to Jakarta and are now also in a poor state because residences have been built along them.

"At least 23.4 hectares of the lakes have been affected due to

severe sedimentation and illegal occupancy," he said.

The lakes of Tangerang are in the worst condition, however. The 38 lakes originally had a combined area of 1,065 ha — now they cover only 686.7 ha.

The government has allocated Rp 250 billion to restore the lakes, either through leaning or dredging, as part of efforts to avert future floods in the capital.

"We are still mapping the lakes. The Public Works Ministry will lead the restoration job this year as part of the government's master plan to cope with floods in the coming years," he said.

Floods put dwindling lakes under the spotlight

The city administration said it had not received any orders from the government to restore Jakarta's lakes.

"It is a new program. We are not yet ready to restore the lakes because we don't have a budget allocated for them" said Daniel Abbas, who oversees environmental damage control at the Jakarta Environmental Management Agency.

Jakarta has repeatedly asked neighboring administrations to preserve their water catchment areas in order to reduce the risk of flooding in the capital.

— Theresia Sufa in Bogor contributed to the story

Banten council seeks review of Jakarta administrative law

Multa Fidrus

The Jakarta Post/Tangerang

Banten councilors have urged the provincial administration to file for a judicial review of the newly endorsed Jakarta administrative law, saying it fails to consider the interests of Jakarta's neighbors.

Bambang Sudarmadi, a member of the Banten legislative council's Commission I for government affairs, said the law did not specify the geographical borders between the two provinces.

"Filing for a judicial review with the Constitutional Court is the only way to get a revision of the Jakarta administrative law," he said Saturday.

The law, he said, should also explicitly state the legal status of 22 islands in Thousand Islands regency that have been

claimed by the Jakarta administration since 2002.

"The Banten administration began to retrieve the 22 islands claimed by the Jakarta administration in 2002 and has so far spent more than Rp 3 billion from our budget trying to clarify borders," he said.

The House of Representatives endorsed the long-awaited Jakarta administrative law on Tuesday. It replaces a 1999 law.

The new law says Jakarta must set up integrated cooperation in spatial planning with the neighboring cities of Tangerang, Bogor, Depok, Bekasi, Puncak and Cianjur.

The incorporated areas will be known collectively as Jabodetabekpunjur.

Tangerang is part of Banten province, while the others cities are in West Java province.

The House special commission that deliberated the new

law invited the administrations of Banten, West Java and Jakarta provinces to provide input during the process.

Banten administration said it would arrange a meeting Monday to decide its stance and response to the new law.

The law passed by the House and the central government "only benefits the Jakarta administration, without considering Banten", said Syafrudin Ismail, head of the Banten administration bureau and secretary of a special team dealing with border issues with Jakarta.

"Therefore, we will also file Banten's sea borders with the Home Ministry," he said.

He said Banten's islands, which are currently under the control of Jakarta, were specifically mentioned in the 2001 government regulation on the formation of Thousand Islands regency.

India's first woman president savors victory

Elizabeth Roche
Agence France-Presse/New Delhi

India's first female president, Pratibha Patil, savored her election win Sunday as supporters hailed the victory as a significant step forward for women in the South Asian nation.

The 72-year-old lawyer defeated Vice President Bha-iron Singh Shekhawat by a landslide Saturday for the largely ceremonial post of head of state of the world's largest democracy.

Supporters and workers of the ruling Congress party that backed Patil thronged her house in New Delhi Sunday. Many wore bright turbans and

carried flowers to celebrate the occasion.

After the results were announced Saturday, supporters danced and burst firecrackers in the streets of the capital, as a beaming Patil thanked federal and state legislators who formed the electorate.

"I am grateful to the voters... I am grateful to the people of India, the men and women of India," said Patil who officially takes over on July 25.

Analysts and supporters described her win as a significant step forward for women in a nation where millions face violence, discrimination and poverty.

"Patil's election win is of huge symbolic value" for



PRATIBHA PATIL

women, said political analyst Rasheed Kidwai. "Though Patil does not wield much

power, she is the first woman head of the state."

Patil, governor of the northwestern state of Rajasthan, was plucked from relative political obscurity by Sonia Gandhi, the powerful president of the ruling Congress party.

"In the 60th year of our independence, for the first time, we have a woman president and I want to thank our alliance partners and all those who voted for her," Gandhi said Saturday.

Her party's Communist allies agreed, adding that she would hopefully help dispel a widespread belief that a woman's place was in the home.

"We are living in a society where still a large body of

opinion believes that the place of the woman is in the home," said Brinda Karat, a politburo member of Communist Party of India (Marxist).

"Here you are trying to bring more women into public life and the fact you have a woman as the president of this country is symbolic of that ... and the aspirations of women for equality," Karat said.

Patil, a native of western Maharashtra state, secured 66 per cent of the votes cast, said returning officer P.D.T. Achary.

The new president, who cuts a conservative figure with her sari pulled over her hair, survived a bruising campaign by the Hindu nationalist opposition to emerge victorious.

Airbus to axe

10,000 jobs

in

four years

under

crisis plan

Agence France-Presse Toulouse

European aircraft maker Airbus announced 10,000 job cuts and a timetable for slashing its factory network Wednesday, in a bid to solve the growing crisis with its A380 super-jumbo jet.

Airbus said it planned to axe jobs across Europe in the next four years, with 4,300 cuts in France, 3,700 in Germany, 1,600 in Britain and 400 in Spain.

Almost immediately after unveiling its strategy, workers in three factories in Germany downed tools, foreshadowing what is expected to be a bitter struggle between the company and labor organizations.

One of Spain's main unions, the CCOO, also denounced the planned cuts there, calling for a European-wide mobilization.

"The core objective of Power8 is to make Airbus more efficient and competitive," said the co-chief executives of Airbus parent company EADS, Tom Enders and Louis Gallois in a statement.

Shares in EADS closed up 1.81 percent on the Paris stock exchange at 25.91 euros in a broadly lower market.

The rescue plan, known as Power8, had caused serious political tensions between the French and German governments. That is now expected to give way

to a fierce battle between trade unions and company management.

Political wrangling over sharing both future opportunities and the burden of job losses has held up implementation of the scheme since October when the broad outlines of Power8 were first revealed.

The cutbacks are intended to save Airbus 5.0 billion euros (US\$6.6 billion) by 2010 and 2.1 billion euros per year thereafter.

Problems at Airbus, a subsidiary of European group EADS, date back to May 2005 when the company first announced production problems with its A380 superjumbo.

Deliveries of the giant plane, the world's biggest airliner, are now two years behind schedule, putting a severe strain on Airbus's finances and damaging the company's reputation among clients and investors.

Airbus is expected to report an operating loss for 2006, a sharp turnaround in its fortunes after years of bumper profits.

Under the major reorganization announced on Wednesday, Airbus is to sell off several factories and make greater use of sub-contractors.

Analysts say the plan brings the strategy of Airbus into line with that of its competitor Boeing, which since 2000 has been selling off non-core activities and outsourcing work to so-called industrial partners.

Airbus said it would sell two production sites in Germany and one in France, and set up industrial partnerships for a factory in Germany, another in France and in Britain.

The future A350 mid-size long-haul airliner, a 10-billion-euro project to serve a vital segment of the airliner market, is to be built at a French factory in Toulouse, southern France.

Fifty percent of the manufacturing of the main structures of the aircraft is to be done by sub-contractors.

In return, Germany is to benefit from increased production of the small A320 family of Airbus planes, the most popular jet and consistent earner for Airbus.

Employees at three Airbus factories in Germany in the towns of Varel, Nordenham and Laupheim stopped work on Wednesday.

"We want to show the management that it can't do whatever it likes with us and make us pay for their mistakes," said Martin Schindler, a spokesman for the IG Metall union at Nordenham.

Airbus said that no direct redundancies were envisaged "at the moment," meaning the company plans to rely on early retirement, voluntary departures and job transfers.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she regretted the loss of jobs but that "the principle of fair distribution appears to have been respected."

After 61 years, House's image still tarnished

M. Taufiqurrahman

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

As the House of Representatives celebrated its 61st anniversary on Thursday, some House members themselves said its performance left a lot to be desired.

The country's highest lawmaking institution is still mired in longstanding problems such as absenteeism, unethical conduct, and sluggish deliberation of legislation.

In his speech during a plenary session held to celebrate the 61st anniversary, House Speaker Agung Laksono called on House members to embark on a soul-searching campaign to consider how far they have strayed from their constituents' aspirations.

Agung said the House had stumbled in its primary task, producing laws, as it passed only 13 new laws out of its target of 33 for 2006.

"The legislation function

must be improved in terms of quality and quantity," he said.

Agung said the House had set up an internal team to improve its performance.

Aside from sluggish lawmaking, the behavior of some House members has been less than admirable.

The House disciplinary council is currently discussing sanctions against lawmakers who committed such infractions as having their own signatures faked so they could skip sessions, engaging in a fistfight and insulting people based on their race.

The deputy chairman of the disciplinary council, Gayus Lumbuun, said the council had in the past reprimanded 15 lawmakers who had their signatures forged and warned 30 others who skipped session too many times.

"We are also looking into a case involving a lawmaker on Commission I who has a penchant for making racial

slurs," Gayus told reporters.

The council recently recommended the dismissal of Democrat Party lawmaker Aziddin for his role as a middleman in securing a government contract for a private company.

It remained silent, however, on similar cases that involved a number of lawmakers, including a chairman and deputy chairman of the House budgetary committee who allegedly improperly sought to claim disaster funds for their electoral districts.

Joining the chorus of criticism against fellow lawmakers, the chairman of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Tjahjo Kumolo, said the House appeared powerless in the face of government pressure and was putting its supervisory role at risk.

"We are still weak in the oversight function, as all the political factions have taken a pro-government stance," Tjahjo told reporters.

Babies, toddlers given best shot at good health

The Jakarta Post
Jakarta

More than 200 children, accompanied by their mothers, turned up at the neighborhood health services post in Cideng, Central Jakarta, on Tuesday for their measles shots.

Amid the crowd, Runi hugged her four-year-old Maya, who was agitated and cried during the injection.

"She hasn't been immunized against measles — that's why we're here," said the resident of Tomang, West Jakarta.

Like Runi, the other mothers were enthusiastic about the free service.

But some of them were turned away because their children were sick.

"The doctor told me to come back when he's made a full recovery," said Ratna, whose two-year-old son had a high fever.

"Children getting immunized need to be in good health, otherwise they might experience nasty side effects," Jakarta Health Agency deputy head Salimar Salim said.

She said the agency had ordered health workers to

follow the standard operational procedures to ensure that no sick children received the vaccine.

The measles vaccination campaign at integrated health services posts (Posyandu) was launched Tuesday by Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari and Governor Sutiyoso. It is

"... otherwise they might experience nasty side effects."

part of a monthlong national campaign to vaccinate children between the ages of six months and five years, who are particularly prone to the viral disease.

The campaign has been running at hospitals, health clinics, private practices and community health posts throughout the city since last week.

It was not launched at Posyandu until Feb. 27 to coincide with the Jakarta Health Agency's monthly program Go Posyandu!, which is aimed at encouraging residents to take their children to a health post at least once a month.

According to Salimar, there are 4,023 Posyandu throughout the city.

The city is aiming to vaccinate 903,000 children against measles before the campaign ends.

Measles is considered a dangerous disease since it can reduce children's resistance to other illnesses and increases the fatality rate from complications of the disease, including blindness, pneumonia and encephalitis.

Data from the Health Ministry reveals that around 30,000 children die of complications from measles every year.

Last year, Jakarta reported a total of 3,615 cases of measles, a decrease from the 5,770 reported in 2005. It has no data on fatalities due to the disease.

After their measles shot, the children are also vaccinated against polio and given vitamin A capsules. (04)

Beach resort starts to breathe again

The Jakarta Post
Ciamis

Along the popular beach resort of Pangandaran, hotels and tourism businesses have begun to show signs of life.

Many have taken the initiative to rebuild their damaged premises following the July 17 tsunami last year, which destroyed the resort area. Others, however, have not been able to follow suit.

Instead, they have placed "for sale" signs on their plots — uncertain the once-busy tourist area will be able to bounce back.

The tsunami damaged more than 60 hotels at the beach resort in Ciamis regency, West Java, and swept away 1,419 kiosks along beaches in six districts.

Local tourist operators, whose businesses rely on tourism to Pangandaran Beach,

have complained about the slow pace of reconstruction.

Thijs de Fretes, a member of the Indonesian Tourist Guides Association in West Java, said recovery efforts at popular beaches in Ciamis should be sped up to restore tourism.

"Tourism helps the local economy and residents who live along the coast," he said.

He said Pangandaran Beach has a strong appeal to tourists, just like Kuta Beach in Bali.

"Restoring infrastructure as well as repairing and adding tourist facilities, such as restaurants or discotheques, might enliven the nightlife here ... make this beach resort become a destination for middle to upper-class tourists."

This year's school holiday, which ended Sunday, helped filled rooms, but it was not enough to help residents get back on their feet.

Apart from fishing, tourism is the main economic wheel

in the regency, contributing around Rp 4 billion (US\$444,444) in annual revenue, or a quarter of the regency's budget.

The regency collects income from ticket sales at the 22 tourist sites along Pangandaran Beach; popular for its beautiful sunsets and sunrises.

The administration also collects revenue from fish auctions, hotels and restaurants and through land taxes.

Head of the Ciamis Tourism Office's program supervision division, Apip Winayadi, said the administration lowered its target for tourism revenue to Rp 1.2 billion in 2006 following the tsunami, but a figure of only Rp 750 million was achieved.

Weak tourist numbers saw the regency lower the reve-

nue target to Rp 200 million for 2007.

"We hope 750,000 tourists will visit this year, but only 10 percent of this target has been reached so far," Apip said.

The decline in tourism prompted the State Ministry for Culture and Tourism to work with the province and the regency administrations to boost tourism and lure more visitors by holding a tourism promotional event called Pangandaran Smiling.

The event, which was kicked off by a kite festival on July 7, includes musical performances by popular bands like /rif and Naif, and swimming and surfing contests.

A prayer ritual will also be held to observe the one-year anniversary of the disaster. The event ends July 18.

Fresh faces for China's Congress

You Nuo

*China Daily/Asia News Network
Beijing*

With the present crop of National People's Congress (NPC) deputies currently in their last year of duty, hopefully some of their less worthy opinions won't be echoed by their heirs next year.

Some of the opinions from this year's "two meetings" the NPC and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) were disappointing.

Compared with the huge amount of work still facing this rapidly changing country, and many of the well-researched policy papers furnished by other participants, they were personal, petty and marginal.

Proposals for changing the date or name of a hallmark day, or for assigning an honorary title to a mountain or flower, are the stuff of backpage columns in newspa-

pers' weekend editions. It may be fun to read them, but I really can't see why they need bringing up at the national political forum when there are more serious matters to be dealt with.

Consultation and communication are important for clarifying issues and solving problems. But if a consultative forum is not used for issue-oriented debate, but to parade individual's interests, the forum is not doing its work.

Is there any likelihood, I am wondering, for "the two meetings" to release to the public, following the closure of each session, a record of what all participants did how many opinions they raised and what they were about. This may be a useful way of helping them focus.

Hopefully the new group due to join the more than 2,000 deputies next year will encourage other members to get their priorities in order.

According to a proposal from the NPC Standing Com-

mittee, the committee's leading group, new deputies representing the nation's migrant workers will take part in next year's session.

Frequently, these menial workers are victims of urban prejudice. Many also face bureaucratic problems in both their hometowns and adopted cities.

Employers often fail to pay them on time and some are laid off without ever receiving their wages.

But despite the difficulties they face, the migrants have contributed an enormous amount to the country. From Shenzhen to Shanghai to Beijing, all China's big cities owe their rising skylines to migrant workers.

They are also playing a crucial role in all the new manufacturing zones, like those clustered in the Pearl and Yangtze river deltas, or around Beijing and Tianjin.

Having migrant workers' voices heard in the national policy-making forum reflects

the nation's gratitude to this hard-working section of society.

Many important reforms will begin in the coming years, designed to build a social security umbrella, reform medical insurance, improve the quality of education, strengthen the rule of law and reform the urban real estate market.

Having experienced so much hardship, migrant workers can offer the NPC a fresh perspective on society's problems, helping make these reforms more effective.

It will be interesting to see where the new delegates are drawn from — the electronic factory towns of the Pearl River Delta? Shanghai's Pudong? Or Beijing's Olympic construction sites?

Even more interesting will be the issues they raise — labor rights? The inconvenience caused by the separate administration of urban and rural household registration? Or migrants' children's access to education?

Trade Ministry enters

new world of electronic licensing

Andi Haswidi

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

With a view to improving the business climate and competitiveness, the Trade Ministry launched a new trade facilitation unit Friday that should lead to more transparent, fast and efficient licensing procedures.

The ministry says the launch of the new unit is a step toward the establishment of a fully fledged computerized system for the issuance of trade-related permits. This would reduce

dependency on manual and redundant procedures that only served to impair the country's global competitiveness.

Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu said that all licensing procedures would be capable of being carried out more quickly through the computerized system to be established by the unit.

"The issuance of a trading permit (SIUP) used to take 10 days. But we will now be able to do it in between three and five days," Mari said, implying that the issuance of other types of permits would be

similarly accelerated.

"The bottom line is that we need to reduce the high cost of doing business here," she stressed.

Indonesia is trying to keep up with other developing countries in improving its business climate and increasing its global competitiveness through providing quicker licensing procedures.

The World Economic Forum's global competitiveness index reveals that of the 107 countries surveyed in 2006, Indonesia ranked 50th, an improvement from 60th

place in 2005, but still far behind Malaysia in 26th place, and Singapore in 5th place.

The Trade Facilitation Unit, which is located on the first floor of the Trade Ministry's headquarters, is designed to serve as a one-stop shop where the public can access information and services related to all trade-related licenses, including export and import permits. The unit will provide its services free of charge, and similar units are also to be established at the regency/municipality level.

The unit will conduct trials

on its computerized licensing system, which will be accessible through the Internet, up until the end of May. There are now 50 license applicants waiting to take part in the trials.

The end of the trials will be followed by a second stage involving tryouts on the e-licensing system. These tryouts will be held from June until the end of August, after which a fully fledged e-licensing system will be introduced in December.

The new initiative also involves the simplification of Trade Ministry regulations.

"We have reduced the number of trade-related regulations from 77 to about 60," Mari said.

She also said that the streamlining process, which has been underway since 2005, would continue so as to further fine tune the licensing regime.

Early in 2006, the Trade Ministry abolished two regulations requiring licenses for the establishment of trade associations, transferred responsibility for the licensing of appraisal firms to the Finance Ministry, and relaxed two regulations on forestry-related export commodities.

No end in sight to China floods

Reuters
Beijing

Storms are expected to batter large swathes of China again on Monday after floods, landslides and lightning killed more than 150 people last week alone, state media said.

Storms are likely to hit the already swollen Yangtze and Huai river valleys, bringing strong wind or hail.

"Meteorologists warned people in southwestern Chongqing, central Hubei and Henan and eastern Shandong to be on the alert for floods and landslides in the coming three days," the *China Daily* said.

The provinces of Sichuan,

Yunnan, Guizhou, Hunan, Anhui, Jiangsu and Shanxi and the Guangxi autonomous region would suffer heavy rainfall, meteorologists said.

In normally dry Shanxi in the country's north, 11 coal miners were trapped underground after mountain torrents flooded their pit on Sunday, *Xinhua* news agency said.

The water level at Wangjiaba, a key hydrological station in the middle reaches of the swollen Huai, was rising again, *Xinhua* said.

Dykes along the Huai, China's third-longest river, were at "an increased risk of breaching in the near future" after being soaked in high water for three weeks.

By July 16, China's death toll from natural disasters so far this year was 715 with 129 missing, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

Since the start of the annual rainy season in May, floods have hit nearly half of China and killed at least 400 people, *Xinhua* news agency said.

State television on Sunday showed President Hu Jintao slogging through Chongqing's flooded streets in black galoshes and visiting residents whose homes had been inundated.

During a speech in the city's flooded Shapingba district, Hu told residents that the Communist Party and government would do every-

thing possible to help.

Power had been restored to most of Chongqing after days without electricity. The worst rainstorm in more than a century in the municipality, home to 30 million people, killed at least 42, state media said.

Summer is peak rainy season in China, where millions of people in the central and southern part of the country live on farmland in the flood plains of rivers.

Flooding and typhoons killed 2,704 people last year, according to the China Meteorological Administration. That was the second-deadliest year on record after 1998, when summer floods killed 4,150.