



Jam : Tim, did you read the newspaper today? It said that the United Nations is almost **in the red**. How can that be?

Tim : Well, one of the problems is that the US owes about \$2 billion because it hasn't paid its regular membership dues since the early 1970`s. Every member country is supposed to **draw up** and pay a percentage of their GDP in order to finance UN operations, I think they **drove a hard bargain** on that.

Jam : But I thought the US was one of the countries that gave the most foreign aid? I know Japan, Canada and some Scandinavian countries give more. But why not the U.S.A ?

Tim: Well, the UN is an "extra-national" organization, which means it works beyond the laws or policies of individual countries. The US says they are willing to pay their debt after all the UN's expenditures have been accounted for but the US also wants Japan and other countries to help shoulder the responsibility of peacekeeping , as well as paying expenses. Well, the **ball was in member's court** now for the final decision.

Jam: Yeah, you're right. Japan is not able to send the Self-Defense Force to fight. I hope this wouldn't cause them to **back out**. What other things does the US support?

Tim : Things like the World Bank or the Red Cross. But in many ways, congress keeps a tight hold on the national purse strings.

Idiom	Meaning
in the red	losing money
draw up	straighten oneself
drove a hard bargain	An agreement establishing the terms of a sale or exchange of goods or services
ball was in court	your turn to act and you must do something
back out	a retreat from an earlier commitment or activity