

### Human rights abuse in Tibet UN commission fails to criticize China

GENEVA, Mar 5: The UN Human Rights Commission yesterday handed China a diplomatic victory by shelving a resolution that would have criticized Beijing for human rights abuses in China and Tibet, reports AFP.

After a long debate, the commission opted 27-15 with 10 abstentions not to vote on the resolution, which was sponsored by the West and Japan.

The sponsors, after several days of discussions, had accepted a revised resolution proposed by the United States on the situation in China and Tibet.

It mentioned not only the human rights violations in

Tibet but those reported in China as well.

However, most third world countries considered that the resolution could have cast doubt on Tibet's attachment to China, and thus China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Despite assurances from the sponsors that this was not the case, the majority voted for a Pakistani motion that the resolution not be put to a vote.

US delegate Kenneth Blackwell said the resolution reflected "our concern over the persistent, serious violations of human rights throughout China, including Tibet."

"In no way questions the Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. The US accepts that Tibet is part of China," he said.

But Chinese delegate Fan Quoxiang said the resolution was aimed, under the guise of human rights, at supporting a small group of separatist Tibetan exiles who wanted to separate Tibet from China's and "undermine Chinese sovereignty."

The delegate of Portugal, which holds the rotating European community presidency, noted that China had been criticized last August by the UN human rights sub-commission for its repression of Tibet.

The situation has worsened, and Beijing has been regularly accused by UN rapporteurs of torture, summary executions and forced disappearances, said the Portuguese delegate, who said he was speaking for the EC.

### Satyajit develops breathing problems

CALCUTTA, Mar 5: The conditions of film maker, Satyajit Ray, was causing concern Wednesday after he developed breathing problems, according to a medical bulletin issued by his personal physician, Dr K B Bakshi, reports PTI.

Dr Bakshi and a team of doctors were attending on Ray and all avenues in latest modes of treatment were being explored in consultation with experts at both home and abroad, it said.

Seventy-year-old Ray has been in a city nursing home since the end of January after he developed cardiac problems and resultant complications.

## BRIEFLY

**Fire claims 22 in Bangkok:** Fire swept through a small cardboard box factory in Bangkok early yesterday killing 22 workers, Reuters reports from Bangkok.

Witnesses said the fire started on the ground floor of the three-storey "shophouse," trapping 19 male and three female workers sleeping on the upper floors.

Shophouses small factories combined with residential buildings are common through Bangkok.

Police said seven workers escaped death because they were out eating when the fire started.

**Quake hits Iran:** At least six people were killed and 50 injured in an earthquake which hit two cities and mountain villages in southwest Iran, the Iranian News Agency IRNA reported yesterday, Reuters says from Teheran.

Rescuers were working non-stop to try to reach victims buried under rubble and debris caused by Wednesday afternoon's quake which measured 4.9 on the open-ended Richter scale, IRNA said.

The agency said at least 291 houses were destroyed by the tremor which struck the cities of Ardal and Lordegan, 459 km (280 miles) South West of Teheran.

IRNA, received in Cyprus, said the full extent of casualties and damage was not yet known because some villages in the quake area were cut off by landslides.

**Kuan for peace in South Asia:** Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister and architect of modern Singapore, called on Wednesday for peace in South Asia to spur economic growth, reports Reuters from Islamabad.

Lee said in a speech to senior Pakistan government officials that "deep-seated" conflicts had dampened growth in South Asia while East Asia and Southeast Asia made progress.

He urged South Asian countries to adopt "a policy of live and let live. That will be beneficial and will expedite growth".

Lee is visiting Pakistan. He said the South Asian countries must create conditions to attract foreign investment.

**UN commission slates Iran:** The United Nations' human rights watchdog condemned Iran on Wednesday for grave human rights violations, especially the excessive use of the death penalty, reports Reuters from Geneva.

The UN Human Rights Commission adopted a western-sponsored censure motion by 22 votes to 12, with 15 abstentions. Iran's neighbour, Iraq, was among those who supported the motion.

The resolution expressed "deep concern" at continuing reports of human rights violations in Iran, and at discrimination of religious minorities, including Bahai'ists.

According to an official UN report last month, there were 884 reported executions in Iran between January 1 and December 7 last year, most of them for drug trafficking but many for offences of a political nature.

**Six killed in Bombay clash:** Hundreds of policemen wearing bullet-proof jackets exchanged gunfire Thursday with suspected Sikh militants in a shantytown after overnight firing left six people dead, police said, reports AP from Bombay.

Sikh militants, fighting for an independent nation in Punjab state, have often staged attacks in nearby states, but they have rarely operated in places as far away as Bombay.

The city, India's largest and the capital of the western state of Maharashtra, is 1,250 kilometers (775 miles) southwest of Punjab.

A Bombay police control room spokesman said four militants, one police constable and one resident of the Bhandup slum in eastern Bombay were killed in the gun battle. He said four residents and four police officers were injured.

**FIS banned** ALGIERS, Mar 5: Algeria's army-backed authorities Wednesday outlawed the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), poised two months ago to win general elections and turn the country into an Islamic republic, reports AFP.

FIS lawyers said they would appeal a court decision dissolving the movement as three influential Islamic leaders announced the creation of an association of Algerian Islamic Solidarity.

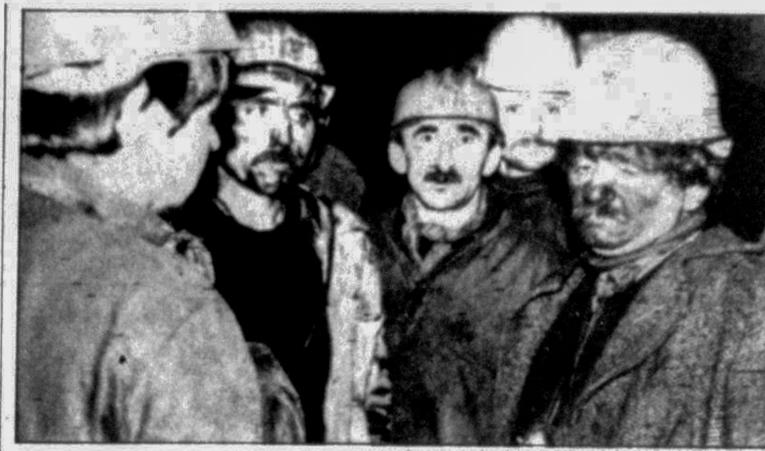
In a statement, the three senior Islamic leaders called on the authorities to "free all political detainees on the eve of the sacred month of Ramadan" and to lift the state of emergency imposed on February 9.

Miami Mar 5: President George Bush tried to put a brave face on his continuing embarrassment at the hands of challenger Patrick Buchanan as presidential candidates in both parties took their campaigns to the south today, reports Reuters.

Senator Bob Kerry was the exception. He returned to Washington from Arizona for a today press conference at which he is expected to drop out of the race after weak showings in Tuesday's voting.

Bush, though, refused to be discouraged by the strong showing of Buchanan, his conservative challenger.

"We had a good day yesterday," Bush told a fund-raiser



KOZLU, Turkey: Survivors of the fire-damp explosion in the Kozlu mine in the Black Sea province of Zonguldak look concerned. At least 340 miners are still reported trapped underground after the explosion which has killed at least 102 men and injured 87 others. — AFP/UNB Photo

## Mideast peace talks end in disagreement

WASHINGTON, Mar 5: Mideast peace talks are over—at least for now—with Arabs and Israelis in wide disagreement over Palestinian self-rule and all other key issues. There is still no agreement even on where or when to meet next, reports AP.

Still, the State Department, which hosted the latest round and two earlier ones, tried to put a positive spin on the situation.

"There are no instant fixes or quick breakthroughs," spokeswoman Margaret D. Tutwiler said late Wednesday.

"The key point, in our opinion, is that Arabs and Israelis remain engaged."

The final move was Israel's rejection of a Palestinian plan for elections on the West Bank,

in Gaza and in East Jerusalem. Chief Israeli negotiator Elyakim Rubinstein said the plan would endanger Israel's security and prejudice the final status of the disputed territories.

"We explained in detail why we could not accept it," he told reporters.

"This round was useful," Rubinstein said. "We would have liked to achieve more. We are ready, in fact eager, to continue negotiations on the road to peace."

His counterpart, chief Palestinian negotiator Haidar Abdel Shafi, said, "We shall be assessing this whole process and we are hoping for the best."

Earlier, Hanan Ashrawi, the Palestinian spokeswoman, said

the Palestinians would take preliminary steps to implement their plan.

"Unfortunately, we cannot stop settlement activity, since we're not settling in Israel, and we cannot stop human rights violations, since we're not violating Israeli human rights," she said.

"But the matters that pertain to Palestinians we shall be able to begin."

The plan, denounced by Israeli negotiators as a thinly veiled prescription for statehood, was the Palestinians' answer to an Israeli offer to give them control over most day-to-day functions in the disputed territories.

Rubinstein said that the Palestinians refused to negotiate over the limited self-rule

proposal and that no Arab delegation had responded to a US request for suggestions on where and when to hold the next round of talks.

He reported bright spots in separate talks with Jordan, but said the Lebanese delegation refused to consider a peace treaty with Israel or the security situation.

On another front, Israel and Syria made little apparent headway on two other key issues: Israel's absorption of the Golan Heights after the 1967 Six-Day War and Israel's bid for recognition by its Arab neighbors.

Meanwhile, AFP reports from Washington: There is no reason to change until there is a result, said Syria's chief negotiator Mousfak Alhaj.

## US to keep close military ties with Philippines

MANILA, Mar 5: The United States will keep close military ties with the Philippines after the last American base closes this year, the US Ambassador said today, reports Reuters.

"There's going to be military assistance, there's going to be military training, there are going to be exercises to assure not only the safety and security of the Philippines, but the forward defenses of the United States and, I'd like to suggest, the stability of the western rim of the Pacific," Frank Wisner said in a radio interview.

The United States will withdraw its remaining 5,000 defence personnel and close Subic Bay naval base by the end of the year after the Philippine

senate rejected a treaty allowing American forces continued use of it for more years.

It will end almost a century of American military presence in the former US colony.

Wisner's comments followed remarks by Vice-President Salvador Laurel this week that the impending withdrawal of American forces would leave the country "strategically naked."

Wisner said that even after the pullout, the armed forces of the United States and the Philippines would work closely together to ensure the stability of the Western Pacific area.

"This area of the world is on the move. It's tremendously exciting area of the world. It will continue to be prosperous

if it's secure. And by working together the United States and the Philippines can help assure that stability."

The Philippines plans to turn the base into an industrial estate and commercial shipyard.

Meanwhile, AFP reports from New Jersey: The Philippine government reached an out-of-court settlement yesterday with Westinghouse Electric Corp and New Jersey firm accused of bribing the late president Ferdinand Marcos to win a 2.3-billion-dollar contract.

The plant, on the Bataan peninsula, was built at a cost of 2.3 billion dollar but never used.

## Resignation of Azerbaijan president demanded

BAKU, Azerbaijan, Mar 5: Azerbaijan's parliament opened today in emergency session, with the nationalist opposition demanding the resignation of the president over his conduct of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, reports Reuters.

President Ayaz Mutalibov, a hold over from the era of Soviet power in the Transcaucasian Republic, was under increasing pressure to wipe out the threat of Armenian guerrilla attacks in and around the disputed enclave or step down.

Armenian officials, meanwhile, put the latest death toll in the downing of open of their helicopters by what they said was an Azeri heat-seeking missile at 14.

## Pravda to run out of money soon

MOSCOW, Mar 5: The former Communist Party daily Pravda may close soon and the one-mighty state broadcasting network is fighting for its future, victims of market reforms and nationalism unleashed by the Soviet collapse, reports AP.

Pravda and other newspapers face soaring paper costs that have forced them to reduce the number of issues they publish weekly, editors said Wednesday. Pravda chief editor Gennady Seleznev said the paper founded by Vladimir Lenin in 1912 will run out of money at the end of March.

The problems facing the former state broadcasting monopoly, once the most powerful organ in the Communist propaganda machine, are not so much economic as ethnic.

Radio and TV stations in the 15 former Soviet republics are pulling centrally transmitted programmes off the air in

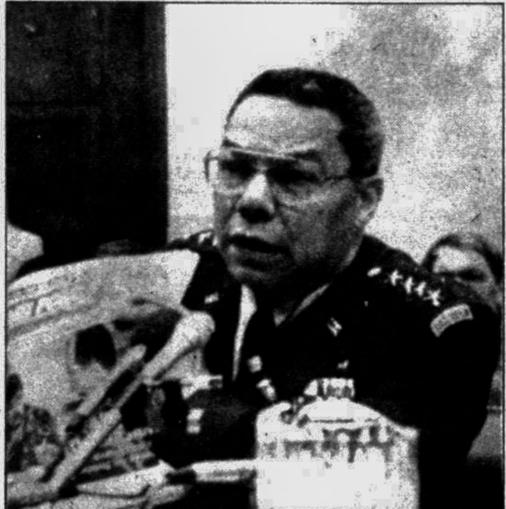
favour of locally made shows.

"The question is whether a unified broadcast system will be preserved on the territory of the former Soviet Union," said Yegor Yakovlev, chief of the broadcast company that took over Soviet facilities.

Yakovlev, a pioneering reform journalist, released a letter to the heads of the Commonwealth republics, asking them to preserve a broadcasting network throughout the former Soviet Union.

The old broadcast monopoly "no longer exists." But a new child is not yet born," Yakovlev said in the letter.

Similar problems face news agencies, Russian President Boris Yeltsin recently asserted control over the former Soviet Tass news agency, threatening to meld it with the Russian Information Agency and the Novosti news agency, which were themselves united after August's failed coup.



WASHINGTON: Gen Colin Powell, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, testifies before the House Foreign Affairs Committee about the planned downsizing of the armed forces. The reduction of troops comes in the wake of the break-up of the Soviet Union and aftermath of the Gulf War. — AFP/UNB Photo

## Kerrey to drop out of the race for weak performance

In Tampa yesterday, the day after Buchanan took nearly one third of the votes in Republican primaries in three states.

"You may have trouble reading that, but we had a very good day yesterday," Bush added, referring sarcastically to media reports which interpreted the results as a strong expression of discontent with the status quo.

The two presumed front-runners for the Democratic presidential nomination, Bill Clinton and Paul Tsongas, joined Bush and Buchanan in focusing on the south. Eight southern and border states

hold primaries and caucuses in the next week.

Bush, launching a six-day campaign trip through 11 states, spent yesterday trying to look presidential and optimistic while his aides insisted that it was voter unhappiness with the recession, not the president himself, that helps Buchanan.

Bush got an enthusiastic reception from a rally in an Hispanic neighbourhood when he said he intended to be the first president to set foot on the free soil of post-Castro Cuba.

"Four more years" the crowd chanted in reply. About 200 demonstrators protesting Bush's forced repa-

triation of Haitian refugees heckled the president's motorcade as he arrived at the rally in Miami's Little Haiti neighbourhood.

Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton preceded Bush to Miami carrying his message to the mostly black liberty city, scene of racial unrest in the 1980s.

Clinton said he would have called for a six-month moratorium on repatriation of the Haitians while using US "muscle and effort to bring back the legitimate government of Haiti," toppled in a bloody coup last September 30.

Clinton won the Georgia primary on Tuesday while

Tsongas won democratic preference votes in Maryland, Utah and Washington state. The voting left neither man with a clear lead in the race for the democratic presidential nomination.

Tsongas, a former Massachusetts Senator, stumped at a steel plant in Columbia, south Carolina, which holds its primary Saturday.

He acknowledged Clinton would probably win the South Carolina primary but said he hoped to duplicate his own Georgia vote of nearly a quarter of democratic ballots.

"The advantage I have here (in South Carolina) is I don't have the entire political establishment beating my brains out

## Protest against censorship 82 newsmen held in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Mar 5: Indian police arrested 82 Kashmiri journalists today as they tried to march in protest against government curbs on reporting a Muslim separatist revolt, witnesses said, reports Reuters.

They said the journalists were arrested as taken to a police station as they made a second attempt to march on the office of the government official who ordered the curbs.

The first attempt was halted after only 200 yards (metres) by paramilitary police sent into the Kashmir valley to fight the two-year-old insurgency.

Backed by Kashmiri police wielding long bamboo canes, the paramilitary troopers waded into the marchers, using their rifles as clubs, to snatch banner demanding press freedom. Four journalists were injured.

Journalists on the march reported that Parvez Mohammed Sultan, a reporter for a local Urdu-language newspaper, was struck on the head by a rifle butt and taken to hospital in serious condition.

The journalists, including three who refused hospital treatment for their injuries, then staged a sit-in on the road to the government officials' office. Later they tried again to march and police arrested them, the witnesses said.

Among those arrested was Yusuf Jameel, who reports for Reuters and The British

Broadcasting Corporation. He told a friend by telephone that police had registered complaints against all 82 detained reporters. The first stage in opening an investigation that could lead to formal charges.

The journalists were protesting against a government order banning the publication of news which might "incite violence or promote sedition or hatred against the security forces."

The order was pasted up outside the offices and homes of reporters in Srinagar, Kashmir's main city. It is to be enforced for two months and applies only to publications in Srinagar.

Police say more than 6,000 people have died in the uprising that erupted two years ago and is widely supported in the Kashmir valley the only Muslim-majority region in mainly Hindu India.

Srinagar-based newspapers and magazines frequently carry militant statements and reports of alleged violence by the tens of thousands of security-men fighting the insurgency.

Western Human Rights Organisations have backed charges by Kashmiri Muslims that security forces have tortured, raped and murdered in their fight against the rebels.

India admits some abuses have occurred and says some members of the security forces have been punished. But it says the great majority of the charges are simply militant propaganda.

## Off the Record

### Old polio vaccines carry AIDS

HOUSTON: A researcher has found evidence that old polio vaccines used in the 1950's carried a virus that causes AIDS in monkeys, a discovery that could explain how the disease entered the human population, reports Reuters.

Robert Bohanon, a molecular virologist and resident of a company developing AIDS test kits, told Reuters on Wednesday that some stocks of polio vaccines used in Chicago in the mid-1950's have tested positive for the monkey virus.

It might explain why and how the virus has gotten to humans, he said.

The possible link between polio vaccines and AIDS is investigated in a story in the current issue of Rolling Stone Magazine. It says that early polio vaccines were nurtured in a culture consisting of the kidneys from monkeys in Africa, where the AIDS epidemic has reached devastating proportions.

### "A Thousand Clowns" dead

WESTPORT (Connecticut): Sandy Dennis, a Broadway star and film actress who won an Oscar for her portrayal of a whimpering faculty wife in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," has died, a friend said. She was 54, reports AFP.

Dennis had been suffering from ovarian cancer, said an associate of the agent, Bill Kreusch.

She died Monday and was cremated Tuesday in line with her wishes not to have a fuss made about her death. A private family memorial service will be held.

Dennis made her screen debut in 1961 in Elia Kazan's "Splendor in the Grass," but had her greatest early successes on Broadway, where she won Tony awards for "A Thousand Clowns" and "Any Wednesday."

In 1966, she won The Academy Award for best supporting actress for her part in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," also starring Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor and George Segal.

Born in Hastings, Nebraska, she trained at the actors studio in New York. She separated in 1976 from jazz musician Gerry Mulligan, with whom she lived for many years, and she was linked romantically with actor Eric Roberts.

### Hunter shot dead by his dog

MOSCOW, Police investigating the mystery killing of a hunter, whose body was found in snowy woods outside the Russian town of Noggod, say he was shot dead by his dog, reports Reuters.

Gennady Danilov, 33 died of a stomach wound made by a bullet from his left hand. His car, money and documents had not been stolen and there were no human footprints in the snow.

But next to his corpse was a dog with its hind legs caught in a trap. ITAR-TASS news agency said.

Investigators said scratches on the led them to conclude that the struggling animal had released the safety catch and pulled the trigger as the hunter tried to free him.

### 50 million rats for 13 million people

CAIRO: Cairo is home to more than 50 million rats, nearly four times the number of people in the Egyptian capital, a newspaper said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Al-Gomhouriya said Cairo, with a population of 13 million, also has three million stray cats and two million dogs roaming the streets.

Up to a quarter of fires that have no apparent cause are started when rats gnaw off insulating layers on cables and wires and short circuits result, it said.

## US to improve ties with Iran

WASHINGTON, Mar 5: The United States should use its post-Gulf War influence to improve relations with Iran and press for democracy in Iraq after President Saddam Hussein is no longer in power, a Washington thinktank has recommended, reports AFP.

In the aftermath of the war and the decline of Soviet influence, the United States has acquired "deeper responsibilities in the Persian Gulf," and countries in the region have come to expect more of US policy, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said in a report released Wednesday.