

## Atrocities by Yangon junta condemned

HONG KONG, Mar 18: Some 100 human rights protesters staged a rally outside a hotel here today where an investment conference on Myanmar was going on to voice concern on the political situation in that country, reports AFP.

Protesters from 16 human rights groups led by Amnesty International staged the noisy protests as delegates to the convention on business opportunities in Myanmar began their one-day meeting. Delegates to the conference were given leaflets calling for them not to support the 'repressive' Myanmar regime as protesters shouting slogans condemning the 'atrocities committed by the junta in Yangon.

In a statement, the groups called on investors or potential investors to be concerned over the political situation in Myanmar, saying 'your investment helps to perpetrate the brutalisation of the Myanmar people' by the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

The statement also urged delegates to support the Myanmar people by urging the SLORC to immediately release all political prisoners unconditionally and hand over power to the representatives democratically elected in the 1990 polls.

Robin Kilpatrick, spokesman for Amnesty International here, said: 'It was a very successful demonstration, adding that delegates accepted the leaflets of condemnation. She said the human rights violations perpetrated by the ruling SLORC are numerous and well documented.'

The statement cited the alleged deaths of more than 8,000 unarmed, peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators, including children, at the hands of the army and police in 1988 and the continued house arrest of 1991 Nobel peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

The protests ended peacefully although some reporters were not allowed into the conference, organised by the locally based Institute for International Research.

## Israeli embassy in Argentina bombed: 10 killed, 95 injured

BUNEOS AIRES, Mar 18: The Israeli embassy was bombed on Tuesday in a 'terrorist attack' that killed 10 people and wounded 95, Argentine President Carlos Menem said, reports Reuter.

The blast shortly before 3 pm (1800 GMT) shattered the three-story embassy in the elegant Barrio Norte neighbourhood. Scores of rescue workers and police dug for other victims buried under the rubble.

'As far as we are concerned it was a terrorist attack. Until now everything points to it being a terrorist attack,' Menem told a news conference, adding that the victims included children and two policemen.

He said 10 people were killed and 95 wounded in the blast, which damaged nearby buildings and shattered windows for blocks around. Menem said so far there were no prime suspects in the

bombing. He said it had been carried out by an international terrorist group with the help of Argentine terrorists.

He added that security had been stepped up at airports and that the hydrofoil service across the river plate estuary to Uruguay had been suspended.

Radio stations said they had received several telephone calls attributing the blast to various groups.

Argentina is home to more than 300,000 Jews, the largest Jewish community in Latin America.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli Foreign Ministry reported Argentine Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella had said four of those killed were Argentine electric company employees working in the building. Many of the more than 70 people injured were inside a churruch shelter for the elderly across the street. 'All over the place there

were people injured from shattered glass — women, children pregnant women, old people. I could never imagine a scene like this,' said photographer Roberto Decounnax who arrived at the scene within minutes of the blast.

'We were getting on with our work when everything seemed to fall in on top of us. We couldn't see anything for the dust,' one embassy employee told reporters.

It was not immediately clear whether the blast was caused by a car bomb or explosives placed within the embassy.

Telam news agency reported an unidentified man as saying he saw a car parked outside burst into flames and then explode. However, local radio quoted embassy security officials as being certain the blast came from inside the building.

Israeli army radio said it was unknown whether the blasts

stemmed from an explosive alone or from munitions stored in the embassy.

In Jerusalem, Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said the blast was part of a war against Israel.

'This is another attempt to strike at us, to continue the war of terror against us, despite the fact that we all know this will not change the course of history,' Shamir told reporters. 'Israel will go on moving toward progress on peace.'

Another report adds: Israel linking Syria and Iraq to recent attacks on Israel, vowed Tuesday to punish those responsible for a bomb that destroyed its embassy in Buenos Aires.

'Israel will know the way, or ways, to punish those responsible with all severity,' Foreign Minister David Levy told reporters early on Wednesday morning.

## 26 Lankan soldiers killed in fresh clash

COLOMBO, Mar 18: Government troops overran two Tamil Tiger rebel camps in northeastern Sri Lanka, but suffered heavy casualties, military officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

At least 26 soldiers were killed and over 80 wounded when troops destroyed the rebel camps in northeastern Mullaitivu district Tuesday, said the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Over 100 rebels were also believed killed in the fighting when 3,000 soldiers, some in armored personnel carriers, carried out the operation. The area is about 265 kilometers (164 miles) northeast of Colombo.

Troops on Wednesday continued their advance north, where the rebels have a several camps.

The operation was launched after troops noticed a rebel buildup in the area, said a senior military official.

Shortly before the ongoing operation began, an indefinite

curfew was imposed in Mullaitivu district and three other regions in northern Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, three Tamil civilians were killed and 11 injured when an unidentified man threw a grenade into a passenger bus at Rattakalota district on Wednesday.

The attacker had stopped the bus on the pretext of boarding the vehicle in the Muslim dominated town. When the vehicle stopped, he threw the grenade and ran away, officials said.

More than 17,000 people have been killed since 1983 when the Tigers began their violent campaign for an independent homeland in the north and the east.

Tamils, mostly Hindus, are 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 17 million people. Many of them complain of economic and cultural discrimination by the Buddhist-majority Sinhalese who are three quarters of the population and control the government and the military.

## BRIEFLY

**Independence visits Subic:** US aircraft carrier USS Independence Wednesday arrived at the Subic naval base for its last visit to the Philippines before the US completes its military withdrawal from the country by the end of this year. Xinhua reports from Manila.

The aircraft of the carrier, with its escorts, are scheduled to perform a formation of fly-past and other demonstrations during the last visit to Subic, some 80 kilometres northwest of Manila.

In December 1991, the Philippine government ordered the United States to withdraw its forces from Subic, the last US military base in the country, by the end of this year, after the Philippine Senate rejected a 10-year military bases treaty last September.

**Quake kills 479 in Turkey:** The number of confirmed dead in last week's devastating earthquake in this eastern Turkish city rose to 479, local authorities said early Wednesday, AFP reports from Erzurum.

Erzurum Governor Recep Yazicioglu said the figure did not include people missing and thought to be buried in the rubble. Three hundred and thirty of the victims were killed in the city itself, while 149 died in 19 villages surrounding Erzurum.

Some 1,000 people were injured in the quake, and 686 of them were being treated in the city's central hospital.

**General alert in Croatian town:** Warning sirens sounded a general alert in the eastern Croatian town of Osijek late Tuesday, while one person died and seven were injured in federal army attacks on another town, Zagreb radio said, AFP reports from Zagreb.

The report said the casualties occurred in Vinkovci, which like eastern Croatia.

The radio said two of those injured in Vinkovci were children.

It said the Serbian-led Federal Yugoslav forces had opened up on Croatian positions around Osijek with its heavy guns several times during the day, and had lobbed shells into the city centre in the evening.

**Assad meets Mubarak:** Syrian President Hafez Assad met President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday to discuss the Middle East peace process and other regional issues, AP says from Cairo.

The two leaders held their first round of talks after a celebration hosted by Mubarak to break the day-long fast observed by Muslims during the current holy month of Ramadan.

Later, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa told reporters the talks focused on the Mideast peace process. He said they would continue Wednesday.

'It became evident during the talks that there was a clear trend for the continuation of the peace process on the basis of the principle of exchanging land for peace,' Moussa said.

Assad's visit comes shortly after he made a bitterly critical speech in his parliament against the United States. He accused Washington of trying to weaken Arabs through an arms blockade to push them into settlement with Israel.

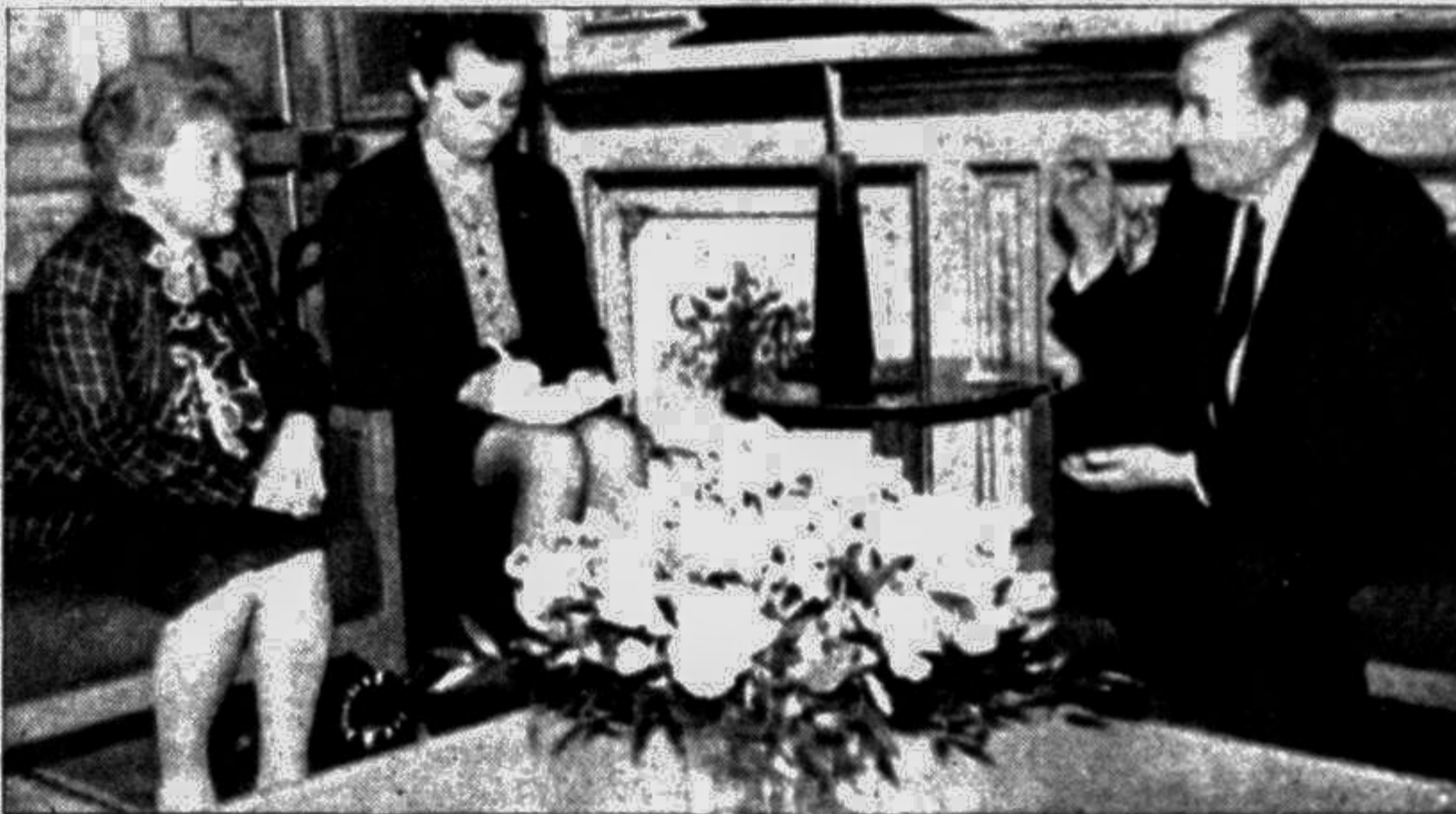
**Iran fails to exchange POWs:** Iraq said Tuesday that some of its Iranian prisoners of war from the 1980-88 Iraq war don't want to go home, and it accused Tehran of failing to hand over Iraqi prisoners, AP reports from Nicosia.

Those Iranian POWs who announced this desire in front of representatives of the International Red Cross were taken out of the POW camps and became refugees in Iraq,' the official Iraqi News Agency quoted a Foreign Ministry figure as saying.

The Red Cross, which arranged the exchange of 37,000 POWs in August and September 1990, says both sides are still holding about 5,000 prisoners.

The Iraqi News Agency, quoting the Defence Ministry newspaper, a Al-Gadisiyah said, 'the Iranian side brought in instead Iranian families claiming that their sons are POWs held in Iraq and no Iraqi POWs,' the news agency reported. It added, 'Iran knows well that Iraq is not holding any Iranian POWs.'

Iran said Sunday that a POW exchange had been blocked by 'impediments made by Baghdad.' It did not elaborate.



PARIS: UN Refugees High Commissioner Sadako Ogato from Japan (L) meets with French President Francois Mitterrand at the Elysee Palace Tuesday. Talks focused on the situation of refugees and the aid that industrialized countries can provide. — AFP/UNB photo

## Labours ahead of Conservatives in opinion polls

LONDON, Mar 18: Two opinion polls to be published today gave the opposition Labour Party a five-point lead, sufficient to give it a working majority in parliament after elections scheduled for April 9, reports AFP.

In both polls, by Mori for the Times newspaper and by ICM for the Guardian, Labour was backed by 43 per cent of those questioned compared with 38 per cent for the outgoing Conservatives.

They were the first polls for several weeks to give either party a sufficient margin to secure an outright majority in parliament.

The result, if translated into seats, would give Labour a slim, nine-seat majority in the 650-seat House of Commons.

## China helped Pindi develop N-arms

WASHINGTON, Mar 18: The United States knew about Pakistan's nuclear arms development efforts in 1983, and of China's cooperation with that weapons programme, according to a government document released by a research group Tuesday, reports AFP.

The private national security archive obtained a State Department document through the Freedom of Information Act which said there was 'unambiguous evidence' Pakistan was 'actively pursuing a nuclear test capability.'

The six-page paper entitled 'The Pakistani Nuclear Programme' detailed the country's nuclear fuel cycle facilities, reprocessing and uranium

enrichment capacities and cooperation with China.

Initially, China provided assistance for operating a power reactor at Karachi, but extended its role to other projects and possibly helped design nuclear devices, the paper said.

Pakistan was key to US strategy for supporting Afghan rebels against Soviet troops in the mid-1980s, and the administration of then-president Ronald Reagan played down reports Pakistan was developing nuclear weapons.

Three months after the document was written, a state department official said publicly that good relations between Washington and Islam-

abad were reducing Pakistan's push to acquire nuclear arms.

But the department knew that argument clearly was invalid, according to Leonard Spector, an expert on Pakistan's nuclear programme with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Spector said the US diplomat made the statement 'to deflect criticism' of Washington's support for Pakistan.

**Irfanullah Marwat**

Meanwhile Reuter reports from Karachi, a controversial relative of Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan retained his job in a new cabinet named on Tuesday for the troubled southern province of Sind.

Irfanullah Marwat, son-in-law of Ishaq Khan, was one of 13 advisers named by new provincial Chief Minister Muzaffar Hussain Shah in addition to 16 ministers.

Marwat is widely accused of directing a crackdown against Opposition Leader Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) as a close adviser to provincial strongman Jam Sadiq Ali, who died earlier this month.

Political sources said Marwat would continue to wield considerable influence in the provincial administration as a relative of the president.

Bhutto accuses Ishaq Khan of ruling Sind through his son-in-law.

## Presidential election

## Michigan, Illinois assure Bush

WASHINGTON, Mar 18: President George Bush said on Tuesday night that voters in Michigan and Illinois had 'virtually assured' he will be the Republican nominee for a second term, reports Reuter.

Sticking to his policy of remaining presidential and above the fray, Bush never mentioned challenger Pat Buchanan but it was obvious the Bush campaign felt Buchanan's candidacy had reached a dead end.

'The voters of Michigan and Illinois have endorsed my approach to change in America,' Bush said in a statement.

'They have pushed the delegate count to a level where my nomination is virtually assured.'

Bush appeared to have dealt

a knock-out blow to Buchanan, the right-wing Republican who had unnerved the President with a strong showing in the New Hampshire primary on February 18 and rang up a 30 per cent protest vote in subsequent primaries.

Buchanan's showing in Michigan and Illinois, however, was not nearly as strong and White House Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said: 'Tonight's two states sent a pretty clear picture that Buchanan is not catching fire.'

'The writing on the wall is clear that George Bush is the nominee. Pat Buchanan has made his point but he's been soundly rejected in one state after the other,' Fitzwater added.

Bush was turning his attention to the Democrats who control Congress and trying to portray himself as a candidate



for change in hopes of riding a tide of anti-incumbent fever sweeping the country. 'As the nominee of the

Republican party, I will seek the support of everyone who believes that we can change America as we changed the world.'

He called on Congress to pass his proposals for economic growth by a March 20 deadline — Friday — that he had imposed in his January 27 state of the union message.

'To the democrats on Capitol Hill, I say it again — pass my plan to get the economy growing and Americans working. Do something good for the American people,' he said.

He said Illinois and Michigan voters 'have added their voices to the nation's call for congressional action on our plan to get this economy moving.'

## India will amend law to protect women

NEW DELHI, Mar 18: The Indian government said on Tuesday it would soon amend laws in order to give more protection to women against crimes such as bride burning which kill thousands of women every year, reports Reuter.

Human Resources Minister Arjun Singh told parliament that the government intended to amend the Dowry Prohibition Act and the Suttee Prevention Act during the current session of house.

Figures released in parliament by the government last week showed 15,891 young brides were killed or committed suicide between 1988 and 1991 because their in-laws accused them of not bringing in enough dowry in cash, jewellery and consumer goods.

Dowry demands were outlawed in India in 1961 but have increased in recent years with the growth of a consumer culture, sociologists have said.

Although dowries are banned, the social stigma still falls on those who fail to pay up, not those who levy the demands.

Suttee, the ancient practice of widows leaping — or being thrown — onto the funeral pyres of their husbands was outlawed by the British colonial rulers in 1887. It rarely happens any more and only then in remote areas.

Hundreds, probably thousands of women and girls are molested daily in public transport in urban India in a practice euphemistically known as 'eve-teasing'.

## Gulf states still rely on US arms

WASHINGTON, Mar 18: A year after the Gulf war, the Gulf countries still have not established a collective security arrangement and are relying for their defence on arms purchases and the United States, a Democratic-foreign policy leader complained in Congress Tuesday, reports AP.

Several attempts to set up a defence alliance have been rejected or ignored by the small, oil-rich states in the region, said Rep. Lee Hamilton, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Middle East subcommittee.

'I have the impression that the Gulf states are relying for their security on individual purchases of arms,' Hamilton told Edward Djerejian, assistant secretary of state for the region.

'What they are really doing

is relying on the United States as their security guarantor. And if they get into trouble again, they are going to blow the whistle.'

Since early 1991, including the period of the Gulf war, some \$15 billion in US weaponry has been shipped into the region, Hamilton said.

'I don't see any restraint. Arms just keep flowing into the region.'

Djerejian countered that the administration is 'not just willy-nilly selling arms to whoever asks for them.' Rather, any sales are subjected to a test of whether they will contribute to stability and peace, and will not infringe on Israel's security, he said.

'Carefully selected military sales are vital,' he said. Djerejian said the Gulf

states — including Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates — have recognized their need for collective security arrangements.

'The security regime is not moving forward as rapidly as we would like, but there is progress,' he said.

Rep. Mel Levine, another opposition Democrat, charged that officials of President Bush's Republican administration were making the same statements as before the Gulf war. 'Nothing's changed,' he said. 'There's no arms control here. It's rhetoric.'

And Democrat Howard Berman argued that selling US weapons to the small states, which have relatively weak military forces, amounted to 'pre-positioning for the Iraqis,' who could march in and seize the weapons.

One proposed weapons sale, involving 72 F-15 fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia, is being reviewed in light of whether it would destabilize conditions in the Middle East, Djerejian said.

'At this time, a decision is not imminent on this subject,' he said.

On another topic, he said Jordan's King Hussein promised during a recent visit to Washington to comply with the international trade embargo against Iraq. 'There have been items that have flowed through Jordan to Iraq,' he said, adding that Iraqi front companies in Amman, Jordan, have been used to thwart the embargo.

If the flow continues, Hamilton warned, 'this Congress is not going to be very receptive to aid to Jordan.'

## UN embargo on Libya likely

NEW YORK, United Nations, Mar 18: A proposed UN embargo against Libya is nothing less than a declaration of war, Libya's Ambassador to the United Nations, Ali El-Houderi, said Tuesday, reports AP.

The UN Security Council is considering a draft resolution that would slap an air traffic and arms embargo on Libya. The resolution demands that Libya extradite 'without any further delay' its nationals suspected in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 that killed 270 people and a 1989 UTA bombing in Niger that killed 170 people.

'To us, this kind of resolution is getting close to (declaring) war against Libya for no reason,' the Ambassador said at a press conference.

'Such a resolution will endanger the whole area. It will affect the future of the region, because it introduces an element of destabilization in this area.'

'The embargo would go into effect 24 hours after the Security Council adopts the resolution and unless the Council decides otherwise, member countries are required to impose an embargo on all air traffic to Libya and stop all shipments of maintenance equipment and spare parts for civilian aircraft. A similar embargo would be slapped on military supplies.'

The resolution requires UN member countries to reduce the number of Libyan officials in their country and limit their movements within the host countries.