

## India's SC lifts ban on Jamaat-e-Islami Hind

NEW DELHI, Mar 19: India's Supreme Court (SC) has struck down a ban on the nation's biggest Islamic group which was outlawed after Hindu-Muslim riots in 1992, newspapers reported Saturday, says AP.

The government had failed to justify the ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Justices P B Sawant and S Mohan said in their order Friday.

The ban violated constitutional guarantees to political action. The Times of India newspaper quoted the judges as saying.

Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's government outlawed the Muslim group along with three Hindu radical organisations on December 10, 1992, four days after Hindu militants destroyed an ancient mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya.

The destruction enraged Muslims nationwide and Hindus and Muslims belonging to many of the radical groups rioted for more than two months leaving about 2,000 people dead.

The ban on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Bajrang Dal, two extremist Hindu organisations, was rescinded on June 4 1993 by a government-appointed review commission. Hindu group, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, is still outlawed. Activists of the three groups were suspected to have incited communal hatred or participated in destroying the mosque.

Muslims, who form 12 per

cent of India's 880 million people, are the largest religious minority in the predominantly Hindu nation.

### US policy towards Haiti racist: Aristide

MIAMI, Mar 19: Two days before President Clinton was to arrive in south Florida, deposed Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide denounced US policy toward Haiti as criminal and racist, reports AP.

Aristide criticized the Clinton administration's policy of repatriating Haitians caught on the high seas fleeing their troubled Caribbean island.

"Because we are black, when we are refugees fleeing political repression, they may send us back to the killers," he told a panel at a Congressional Black Caucus Foundation meeting Friday. "The US is just using a policy that is a racist policy against Haiti."

He also called on Clinton to expand the US trade embargo against Haiti to a "total embargo."

Clinton is scheduled to arrive in Miami on Sunday and attend a rally Monday in Deerfield Beach on his health-care reform proposals.

State Department spokeswoman Josie Shumake said she couldn't comment on Aristide's remarks without knowing the entire context of his speech.

## DPRK developing new long range ballistic missiles



US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright votes March 18 in favour of a UN resolution condemning the massacre of 53 Palestinians on the West Bank.

— AFP photo

WASHINGTON, Mar 19: The CIA believes North Korea is developing two new, longer-range ballistic missiles that, if exported to the Middle East, could threaten Europe, reports AP.

"These new missiles have yet to be flown, and we will monitor their development, including any attempts to export them," CIA Director R James Woolsey told an intelligence conference at agency headquarters Thursday night.

Meanwhile, Rep Lee Hamilton, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, urged a resumption of US military maneuvers in South Korea on Friday to "ratchet that pressure up" on North Korea. President Clinton said he's considering the option, along with sending Patriot missiles to South Korea.

The South Korean government in Seoul, in a turnaround, said it was ready to accept the missiles if Washington wants to send them.

Clinton told reporters he still hopes that North Korea will permit international inspectors to finish a check on nuclear facilities, resume talks with the South on nuclear issues, and end its isolation from the world community.

"If North Koreans decide that they do not wish to pursue that goal, then we'll have to consider what our other options are," Clinton said in an interview. "The ball is in their

court."

Asked about resuming joint military maneuvers with South Korea and sending Patriot missiles to Seoul, Clinton said: "Both of those options are under consideration."

Clinton's top national security aides were to meet on Saturday to discuss the situation in North Korea, where international inspectors this week were blocked from completing their work, and South Korea should go ahead with this year's Team Spirit joint military maneuvers.

The South Koreans earlier had balked at accepting Patriots out of concern that it would upset the nuclear talks with North Korea. But Friday, Seoul officials said they were ready to propose going ahead both with the Patriot deployment and reinstating the Team Spirit exercise.

In his remarks Thursday night to a CIA-sponsored conference on the origins of the agency, Woolsey said the chief concern regarding North Korea is its suspected nuclear programme.

A second worry is that it will build ballistic missiles capable of threatening Japan and other nations in East Asia. He noted also that while North Korea has not yet exported the Nodong ballistic missile with a range of 1,000 kilometres (620 miles), Iran and perhaps other Middle Eastern nations want to buy it.

## Judge publishes charges of police attempts to destabilise SA polls

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 19: An independent judge has published charges of high-level police attempts to destabilise South Africa just six weeks before the country votes in its first all-race election, reports Reuter.

Appeals court judge Richard Goldstone, who began investigating political violence 2-1/2 years ago, said on Friday he had prima facie evidence that the deputy police commissioner, General Basie Smit, was among those involved in dirty tricks.

Most of the actions listed by Goldstone, including the supply of weapons and the fuelling of violence on trains and in migrant worker hostels, were directed at helping the Inkatha Freedom Party — main black rivals of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress.

Goldstone was appointed by the government in July 1991 to investigate the causes of political violence in which about 15,000 people have been killed in the last four years of apartheid reforms.

The judge told a news conference action was urgently needed to avoid further destabilisation ahead of the voting on April 26 to 28.

His report appeared largely to vindicate Mandela's often repeated charge that members of the security forces were involved in fomenting township violence.

Much of the violence is concentrated in Natal province, where the eight million strong Zulu tribe is divided between support for the ANC and Inkatha, led by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Zulu king Goodwill Swelithini, a close ally of Buthe-

lezi's said on Friday he was ready to declare Natal a sovereign Zulu territory. "We here today proclaim before the world our freedom and sovereignty and our unwavering will to defend it at all costs, the king told a rally attended by thousands of followers.

Swelithini and Buthelezi plan to boycott the election unless they get guarantees that Natal will be a virtually autonomous Zulu state under South Africa's new dispensation.

President F W de Klerk, at the news conference where Goldstone's report was presented, said action had to be taken immediately to avoid disruption ahead of the poll. "We dare not allow this dark cloud to hang over the elections," he said.



Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa (front L) accompanied by his wife Kayoko (front R) and Chinese State Planning Commission Minister Chen Jinhua (back C) tours the Forbidden city after his arrival March 19 for a three-day China visit. Hosokawa's visit is expected to focus on the North Korean nuclear crisis and bilateral economic ties.

— AFP photo

## AI criticises Britain

LONDON, Mar 19: The human rights group Amnesty International (AI) criticised Britain on Friday for its policy on detaining asylum-seekers, saying a hunger strike by several dozen showed a "blatant disregard for their rights," reports Reuter.

About 180 people from Asia, Africa and South America are on hunger strike in detention centres and prisons across the country in protest at being "treated like prisoners."

Richard Dunstan of the refugee office of Amnesty International said asylum-seekers are detained on the basis of a " cursory examination" and without benefit of a court hearing.

"Such practice is in violation of international human rights standards, such as article five of the European convention of human rights..." he wrote in a letter to the Independent newspaper.

## Russia differs with US over Iraq issue

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 19: Russia differs with the United States openly yesterday over the Iraq issue saying that Iraq has made some progress on arms destruction and Russia is considering lifting oil embargo against it, reports Xinhua.

Russian UN Ambassador Vorontsov July said in a statement, Russia "noted that there had lately been certain positive elements in the actions of Baghdad."

Addressing a regular 60-day review meeting of the Security Council over the sanctions against Iraq, the Ambassador said that the position of Iraq should be encouraged.

He added that if a thorough and comprehensive compliance of Iraq with its obligations is confirmed, Russian would be ready to consider lifting the oil embargo in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

## Off the Record

### Fergie has no plans of divorcing Andrew

LONDON: Sarah Ferguson, the lively duchess who fell out with Britain's royal family, has hinted she has no plans to divorce her estranged husband Prince Andrew despite being legally free to do so from Saturday, reports Reuter.

Buckingham Palace tersely announced two years ago on Saturday that the red-headed Duchess of York's marriage to the second son of Queen Elizabeth had failed and the couple were separating.

But "Fergie" still wearing her ruby engagement ring and gold wedding band, was shown on television on Friday scolding an interviewer who addressed her as Sarah Ferguson and said firmly: "I'm married — I'm the Duchess of York."

Under British law, a spouse can get a no-fuss divorce after two years of separation but friends say the duke and duchess are still on good terms despite the collapse of their 1986 marriage, which had followed a romance that captivated British royalists.

They said the couple were keen to stay together for the sake of their daughters Beatrice, now five, and Eugenie, who will be four on March 23 — but reconciliation was not on the cards.

He has kept his silence since the separation while his wife, a few months his elder, has admitted to making "huge mistakes" and said she had felt stifled in the rule-bound royal court.

The prince was said to be devastated by the departure of his wife who has described him as a loveable man who was just unable to understand her unhappiness.

### Three people survive for 5 days by eating only snow

BEIJING: Three people survived for five days by eating snow after their minibus was swept off the road and buried by an avalanche in China's far western province of Xinjiang, the People's Daily said Saturday, reports Reuter.

The survivors, and 14 passengers who died in the crash, were found on March 15 after rescue workers cleared the 15-metre (50-foot) snowdrift that buried the mountain road at Guozikou, near the border with Kazakhstan.

"They were dug out and three people had depended entirely on eating snow to survive," the official newspaper said.

The avalanche occurred on March 10. Some 50 police and local herdsmen were brought in to clear the snowbank, which stretched for about 60 metres (197 feet). On the morning of March 15 they uncovered the minibus, the corpses and finally the survivors.

The People's Daily did not give any more details of the episode.

"According to our understanding, this was the largest avalanche ever to hit this section of the highway," the newspaper said.

### New variety tulip to be named after Hillary

WASHINGTON: Ah, the little extras that come with life in the White House. The embassy of the Netherlands announced Friday that it would name a new tulip variety after first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, reports AP.

Mrs Clinton will "christen the new 'Hillary Clinton' tulip at a special ceremony at the Netherlands Residence" on Tuesday, the embassy said in a statement.

"It sounds like a lot of fun and an honour," said Neel

Lattimore, a spokesman for the first lady.

The ceremony is part of festivities marking the 400th anniversary of the first flowering tulips in the Netherlands. More than 11,000 tulips will be on display at the residence.

### French champagne surprisingly well after 141 yrs in shipwreck

MELBOURNE: It was a little salty and the bubbles were long gone, but the French champagne survived 141 years in a shipwreck surprisingly well, reports AP.

Four top Australian and French palates tried to discover last week the origins of antique wines that spent almost a century and a half at the bottom of Port Phillip Bay and another dozen years on shore.

The Victoria Archaeological Survey knocked the tops off a few bottles that were raised from the depths of the bay 12 years ago.

The wine was found in 1982 by divers exploring the William Salthouse shipwreck at the head of the treacherous bay.

The William Salthouse, a 251-ton brig sailing from Montreal to Melbourne, was carrying flour, beef, pork, building materials and a consignment of luxury wine when it ran aground in 1841.

Remarkably, the contents of most bottles salvaged from the wreck were still intact. The bottles had been carefully packed in their crates, bedded in straw and surrounded by wicker baskets.



## Rutskoi will contest next presidential polls

TOKYO, Mar 19: Former Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi, a key leader in the October uprising against President Boris Yeltsin, said he was ready to run in the next presidential election, it was reported from Tokyo, says AP.

Japan's Kyodo news agency quoted Rutskoi as saying that he would run for the presidency if the country "objectively" needed him as a leader. Charged with inciting mass disorder, he was arrested and released from prison last month.

"I have enough force and experience to conduct an election campaign and to be at the head of the state," Rutskoi said in a written interview with Kyodo.

He added he was confident of himself because Yeltsin gave him a lesson.

## Berlin Wall fell but similar walls exist throughout Europe

BERKELEY, California, Mar 19: When jubilant demonstrators scaled the Berlin Wall in the autumn of 1989, even the most jaded observers briefly believed that it represented a sort of ultimate triumph of freedom, reports IPS.

Just over four years later, that fond hope now seems like a cruel illusion.

Freedom House, a human rights watchdog group based in New York, recently reported that after a spectacular surge of liberating revolutions at the turn of the decade, the tide is retreating at an alarming rate.

In 1992, 38 nations were judged unfree in relation to several key indices, including free elections and freedom from political intimidation or undue governmental intervention in the lives of citizens.

This year, the number stands at 55 — fully one-third of the world's nations. According to Freedom House,

500 million people lost their liberty in the last year alone, a statistic almost too appalling to comprehend.

Although some may quibble with certain designations, the larger trend is undeniable and profoundly disturbing, while some, western politicians continue to speak of the promise of the post-cold war era, they do so now with a quaver in their voices ready at any moment to switch that word to peril.

Why has the tide so suddenly reversed and how far is it likely to retreat?

We may all have placed too much hope in the collapse of communism those nations liberated in heady 1989 revolutions are now discovering that freedom is far harder to sustain over time than to celebrate in a weekend of delirious abandon.

In Moscow, the democratic demonstrators who proudly defended the Russian White

House form the old guard's attempted coup in August 1991 have been supplanted by an embittered public scavenging for food outside a parliament dominated by freely elected fascists and former communists.

Between these two starkly opposing scenes lie three brief years of pivotal importance, when opportunities not seen in half a century or more were sabotaged by forces both internal and external to the revolutionary nations.

Domestic circumstances vary from one country to another, but the general pattern, epitomized by the Soviet Union, is distressingly similar: A precipitous collapse of the old order followed by a devastation of the economy, a fragmentation of political authority, a rise in social unrest, and a dramatic increase in extremes of wealth and poverty.

Lacking deep historical roots in the stony soil of the

east, the fragile flower of democratic renewal has been stunted by an absence of fertility — those institutions, values, and practices that together create a civil society capable of self-governance.

Acquired through decades and centuries of painful experience, these attributes are being challenged today even in political cultures that have long enjoyed democratic guarantees.

Crises of confidence in the established democratic order now beset the West as well, where endemic corruption erodes public trust and extremists of all stripes shred the tattered remnants of consensus that knit nations together.

Ironically, some of the very forces liberated by the revolutions of '89 now wreak their erstwhile liberators. To these internal dynamics must be added western politicians' criminal neglect of their col-

lective responsibility to nurture and support the growth of these frail democratic experiments.

A generation of exceptional leadership in the East, including Gorbachev, Havel, Walesa, and a tradition of principled dissidents, found itself utterly mismatched with a succession of ignorant, obdurate, and unimaginative leaders in the west.

Risking their lives and relinquishing their meagre standard of living, Russians and eastern Europeans waited with legendary patience acquired through centuries of oppression for the United States and western Europe to follow through on their generous pledges of material assistance.

But they have only come up empty-handed with western leaders, strapped for cash and wedded to rigid free-market principles, finding ways to weasel out of their commitments of freedom in Russia

and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, how far will it go before finding a new balance, and how widely will its effects be felt?

The reversal may be substantial, but it will also be self-limiting.

The same global economic forces that now wreak such social pain and political turmoil in the former Soviet empire and elsewhere render it difficult if not impossible for those nations to bolt altogether from the world community and re-establish their own antagonistic bloc.

Like it or not, the world is now a single marketplace of products, services, and ideas, and there is no longer a way to opt out of it.

Even a Zhirnovsky will find it impossible to defy this inexorable trend. But this fact will not prevent him and others from trying, and spilling far too much blood in the process.

## Dalai Lama to visit Israel this weekend

NEW DELHI, Mar 19: Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, will travel to Israel this weekend on his first visit to the Middle East, a spokesman for his government-in-exile said today, reports AP.

The spokesman, Tashi Wangdi, said the five-day trip, starting tomorrow, was "basically a pilgrimage."

"He has always wanted to visit Jerusalem and he never had the opportunity before," Wangdi said.

The spokesman said no meetings were planned between the Dalai Lama and Israeli leaders but the Nobel laureate will deliver lectures on the Tibetan issue at Israeli universities.

The Dalai Lama has lived in exile in the Northern Indian town of Dharamsala since fleeing Tibet following an abortive anti-Chinese uprising in 1959.