

Singapore slams Western concept of democracy

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 4: Singapore's Foreign Minister S Jayakumar, in a jab at the West said Tuesday that democracy in its Western conception is not necessarily a condition of development and good government, reports AFP.

Calling the issue a largely theological debate about the relationship between democracy, development and human rights, he told the UN General Assembly that they should separate the issues.

Of course these concepts may well be lined in some way. But let us be clear that what we are really talking about is the relationship between democracy and human rights on the one hand, and development on the other, he said.

The terms democracy and good government are often used as if they were synonyms. But they are not the same thing, he said referring to us criteria applied for financial aid to developing

countries. The clash and clamour of contending interests, street demonstrations and a ram-bunctious and abusive press may make for more exciting television for western audiences. But more often than not they contradict the second pillar of good government which is long term orientation, Jayakumar said.

This requires the ability to resist populist and sectional pressures and, on occasion, administer bitter medicine to overcome economic challenges, he said.

Singapore's experience has convinced us that the first duty of government is to govern and also to govern fairly at times this will require a firm hand."

The comments come a year after strained relations between the United States and Singapore, when the Singapore government detained and punished by lashing an American youth

Strike paralyses Kashmir Valley India to arm villagers living along Pak border in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Oct 4: India will arm villagers living on the border with Pakistan in the troubled Kashmir region in a bid to block guerillas and the smuggling of arms into India, a senior police official said on Tuesday.

"Already, a beginning has been made this week," Rajan Bakshi told Reuters. Village-level committees had been established in 126 strategically-located villages on the border ready for the distribution of guns, he said.

Ten-member committees of civilians, mainly comprising former soldiers, would be given self-loading rifles and stenguns. The civilians would be commanded by some 660 police officers along the border, he said.

New Delhi accuses

Islamabad of arming and training Islamic militants waging a five-year-old rebellion in Jammu and Kashmir, mainly Hindu India's only Muslim majority state.

Pakistan denies the charge and says it only provides moral support to the separatist in the disputed region, over which it has fought two of its three wars with India.

The villages being armed are in a 180-mile (290-km) stretch along the border in the Kathua, Doda, Udhampur and Jammu districts of the southern Jammu region of the Himalayan province.

The security drive followed increasing intrusions and smuggling from Pakistan's side, Bakshi said. "This poses a threat from

across the border to the security and integrity of the country," he said.

The intruders included Pakistanis, Afghans and Pakistan-trained Kashmiri separatists, he said.

More than 20,000 people have been killed in Kashmir since the rebellion began in 1990.

AFP adds from Srinagar: A general strike called by Muslim separatist groups to denounce alleged killings by Indian troops paralysed the Kashmir Valley today, police and witnesses said.

Shops, government offices, banks and schools were closed in this Kashmir summer capital and private and public transport were off the roads, they said.

The general strike was reportedly widely observed in other towns in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley, where a Muslim separatist campaign has left more than 12,000 people dead since 1989.

The Indian authorities stepped up security across the strife-torn valley to prevent anti-Indian protests during the strike.

The strike was called by the Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen, or Muslim Brotherhood, to protest against the death two years ago of the chief commander of the group, Altaf Qureshi, allegedly while in the custody of paramilitary troops.

Indian officials claimed Qureshi died in a shootout.

Suu Kyi makes first trip out of Yangon

YANGON, Oct 4: Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi made today her first trip out of Yangon since she was released in July from nearly six years of house arrest, reports Reuter.

Suu Kyi left for Tharmanya Hill in Karen state, about 160 miles (270 km) from Yangon, this morning for a one-night pilgrimage to see a well-known monk, sources close to Suu Kyi said.

The *sayadaw*, or monk, in Tharmanya Hill is highly revered by many Buddhists. Every year thousands of pilgrims from all over the country go to the hill to see him and worship.

Suu Kyi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her efforts to try and bring democracy to Myanmar has not ventured out of the capital since the country's military leaders unexpectedly released her from house arrest on July 10.

Although she said the re-

lease was unconditional Suu Kyi has spent most of the last three months in her lakeside Yangon home, meeting with colleagues from the National League for Democracy party she helped found.

She has also spoken regularly to her supporters from the front gate of her house, but has not given any major public speeches.

Meanwhile, Myanmar military intelligence agents arrested a man who authorities said concocted news stories about Myanmar and sent them to anti-government groups abroad. Myanmar state-run newspapers reported today.

Ye Htut was arrested in Yangon on September 27 and admitted sending "concocted" news reports to exiled dissidents in Canada since 1991.

The next year he began sending similar reports to the Thai-based Burma Information Group (BIG).

BRIEFLY

Blast kills 2 in New Delhi: A bomb exploded in a marketplace in the old quarter of the Indian capital, New Delhi, Wednesday killing two people and injuring one, a news agency said. AP reports from New Delhi.

The explosion, at dawn, also damaged two shops, United News of India said, quoting unnamed police officials. This was the sixth explosion in New Delhi and a nearby town since the last week of September, when crude bombs went off near a Hindu religious festival and a railway station. But the previous blasts had caused no deaths.

Quakes hit Japan's seaside resort: The number of earthquakes over the past week off the shores of a seaside resort just southwest of Tokyo reached 6,518 early Wednesday, with 100 of them strong enough to be felt by humans, AP reports from Tokyo.

Seismologists believe the activity, which has caused only minor damage and no injuries, in the result of the movement of molten rock deep beneath the earth's crust.

2m children die for lack of vaccines: Two million children died for want of vaccines around the world last year, despite major progress in international campaigns, the UN World Health Organisation (WHO) said Tuesday, AFP reports from Geneva.

The percentage of children vaccinated against basic diseases, with the exception of small pox, rose to 80 per cent last year, the organisation said. It said the rate in Africa had increased to 50 per cent.

Arafat meets Saleh: PLO leader Yasser Arafat arrived late Tuesday in Yemen and met with President Ali Abdullah Saleh to brief him on the latest developments in the Middle-East peace process, a Yemeni official said, AFP reports from Sanaa.

Saleh reiterated his country's support of the Palestinian cause and the efforts by the international community to realise a just and global peace in the region and the peaceful coexistence of the peoples in the Middle East.

Clinton, Powell close in polls race: President Clinton's standing in national surveys is improving as the debate between Republicans and Democrats over social programme intensifies. Retired Gen. Colin Powell remains a strong wild card as a potential addition to the 1996 presidential race, AP reports from Washington.

Two news polls show Clinton has widened his lead over the Republican presidential front-runner, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole while the president and Powell run closely together ahead of Dole in a hypothetical three-way matchup with Powell as an independent.

Myanmar drug lord killed in China: A senior commander of a northeastern Myanmar militia group heavily involved in the narcotics trade has been found beheaded in southern China, a Thai intelligence source said Wednesday, Reuter reports from Bangkok.

Colonel Theng Kwang Ming, a regional commander of United Wa State Army (UWSA), travelled to the southern Chinese city Kunming in April and disappeared soon afterwards, his family members said.

Cambodian troops kill 2 Khmers: Cambodian soldiers killed two Khmer Rouge guerillas, wounded several more and captured three when a 500-strong government force repulsed a rebel raid in the northwest, a senior officer said yesterday, Reuter reports from Phnom Penh.

The force of 60 guerillas attacked a front line government position in Banan District, some 25 km (15 miles) south of Battambang early on Tuesday morning, the officer said. Battambang is Cambodia's second largest city.

Yeltsin plans to visit Norway in Nov: Boris Yeltsin plans to visit Norway in late November on a visit that had been postponed in July due to the president's heart problems, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said on Wednesday, a news agency reported, AP says from Moscow.

Kozyrev said Yeltsin would visit Norway on Nov. 20-21 to discuss trade issues and sign an agreement on cooperation between the two countries, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

US won't scale back military presence in Japan

WASHINGTON, Oct 4: The United States has no plans to scale back its military presence in Japan or Asia, a State Department spokesman said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Pressure to reduce the US military presence on the southern Japanese island has been mounting since three US servicemen allegedly beat and gang raped a Japanese schoolgirl in early September.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said a joint review of the US presence on Okinawa, home to 27,000 US service personnel and three quarters of US military facilities in Japan was underway before the September 4 attack.

Tough law, more fund needed to curb domestic violence in US

LOS ANGELES, Oct 4: Millions of American women are physically abused and thousands are killed by husbands and boyfriends each year, but statistics have never been enough to get funding and win tough legislation to combat the problem, reports Reuter.

Until O J Simpson was charged with the stabbing murder of his ex-wife, that is, and domestic violence became a topic people could not stop talking about. "We had been pushing very, very hard for increases in funding and had absolutely no response before the Nicole Brown Simpson murder," said Elizabeth Toledo, the California branch president for the National

Organisation of Women (NOW). "But then the ball started to roll quite fast. The California legislature was in the final stages of constructing a budget and they stopped and went back and found 30 million dollars for the women's safety and education programmes," she said.

The national coalition against domestic violence, which tries to spread the word about shelters and other resources available, saw a similar burst of interest. "We had never before been able to get that much information out to that big an audience," said Rita Smith, the group's coordinator. "There have been stories

about domestic violence for as long as it's been happening but this time people actually paid attention and formed opinions in a way that didn't happen when 'Joe Schmo' killed his wife.

OJ Simpson on Tuesday was found not guilty in the 1994 stabbing deaths of his ex-wife and her friend Ronald Goldman. But women's activists say that as an admitted wife beater years before the murders, he benefited from a justice system that has long been too lenient on domestic violence.

Not only did Simpson never spend a day in jail after pleading "no contest" to a 1989 beating of Nicole, but he emerged from the scandal with his nice-guy public im-

age — and his sportscasting and product endorsement contracts — intact.

While that became a source of public outrage during the double murder trial, crusaders for legislative reform say Simpson received the treatment typical for spousal abusers, who could be prosecuted as felons but routinely get off with a slap on the wrist.

After Nicole Brown Simpson's murder, her family set up a charitable foundation in her name that has helped keep the spotlight on the abuses some women suffer at the hands of their spouses.

Months after photos of her bruised face made the national news during Simpson's trial, it is less

clear how much has been done actually to prevent domestic violence.

The violence against women act, a 100 million dollar package that was incorporated into the federal crime bill in the wake of the murders, has since been gutted by committees in Congress. Now is seeking to restore funding it says is crucial to its efforts but doubts it will get back the full amount.

"Many politicians saw it as a way to respond to the news of the day rather than to become a real advocate," says NOW's Toledo.

A more important but more daunting objective is changing the attitudes of district attorneys and judges,

who often hand out perplexing sentences, including ordering one battered woman to marry her boyfriend, according to Joan Zarza.

In a worst case scenario, Zarza said, publicity over Simpson's lax treatment at the hands of law enforcement may set back the cause if betterers think they can act with impunity. Some women have reported being hit in the name of the famous defendant by men who say "I will O J you."

Long time women's rights attorney and Brown family spokeswoman Gloria Allred says true preventive measures like mandatory jail time for first offenders are still lacking.



Demonstrators hold portraits of some of the victims of the October 1993 battle for the Russian Ostankino TV centre as pro-communist supporters unfold Soviet-era symbols in Moscow Tuesday. Several hundred people brought flowers and took part in a ceremony commemorating the bloody events that happened in front of the TV centre two years ago. — AFP/UNB photo

VHP launches campaign to assert Hindu supremacy in India

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: A Hindu fundamentalist group has launched a nationwide campaign to assert Hindu supremacy in secular India, the world's largest democracy with a population of more than 900 million, reports AFP.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), World Hindu Council, said its 17 day "unity" campaign, ending in the central city of Nagpur on October 20, would educate more than 150 million people about the threat to Hinduism and its sacred symbols.

It is the biggest campaign in a century said Sadananda

Kakade, an organiser and spokesman for the VHP which held a similar event in 1984. He said the campaign would be held in nine locations across India and one from the famed Hindu pashpatinath Temple in the Nepal capital Kathmandu would be led by some 2,000 Hindu holy men and VHP activists.

They will touch nearly 350,000 villages and the saints will tell people to venerate the three deities mother India, the cow and the Ganges River, said co-organiser Jiveshwar Mishra. The cow personified the

mother to Hindus and cow slaughter is taboo while the waters of the Ganges are held to be sacred and believed to wash away sin.

The total distance covered will be more than 2.5 million kilometre (1.5 million miles), Mishra added.

In a statement the VHP said infiltration of foreign elements and conversion of poor Hindus by petro dollar — rich Muslim agencies and Christian missionaries in the garb of charitable services would be highlighted.

Hindus will be a minority by the end of the century, said Kakade.



Former French Communications Minister and mayor of Grenoble Alain Carignon (C) is escorted out of the Lyon courthouse on Tuesday. A prosecutor called for Carignon to be jailed for 4 to 5 years over allegations that he sold off his city's water supply system for kickbacks of 20 million francs (4 million US dollar). The prosecutor also said he should be banned from holding public office for five years and fined 500,000 francs. — AFP/UNB photo

118 bodies of LTTE guerillas handed over to ICRC

COLOMBO, Oct 4: Sri Lankan security forces handed over the International Red Cross the bodies of 118 Tamil Tiger guerillas that were recovered from the site of a fierce battle in the island's north, the military said today, reports AFP.

The bodies of cadres from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were given to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Tuesday at Madagalin the northern Jaffna peninsula, a military spokesman said.

"We have so far recovered 149 bodies of terrorists, 118 bodies including the bodies of 10 females have been already handed over to the ICRC," the spokesman said.

The military said the LTTE lost at least 200 men Tuesday when they launched a counter-attack to try to drive out troops, who had captured a swathe of territory that was held by the LTTE in the rebel controlled Jaffna peninsula.

At least 68 security personnel were killed in two days of fighting in the embattled northern and eastern regions of the island while the military claims killing 287 LTTE militants in the same period.

Rabin ready to resolve Egyptian POWs issue

CAIRO, Oct 4: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is ready to resolve the issue of Egyptian prisoners of war executed in 1966 and 1967, but has asked for a delay, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Tuesday, reports AFP.

"I had a good discussion on the prisoner of war issue with Rabin" said Mubarak, who spoke after attending a museum inauguration.

I asked him to do something because of Egyptian public opinion.

Kim unlikely to assume formal power soon

SEOUL, Oct 4: North Korean de facto leader Kim Jong Il is unlikely to assume formal power soon, his half-brother was quoted Wednesday as saying, reports AP.

There has been widespread speculation that the 53-year-old Kim Jong Il would assume the communist country's top two titles on Tuesday, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers Party.

But Kim, Pyong Il, North Korea's ambassador to Finland, told South Korea's Dong-A Ilbo newspaper that he was not aware of any plans by his elder sibling to do so.

Off the Record



Hsu Tsun-tsun (R) 22, a hotel receptionist is crowned on Tuesday Miss ROC along with 23-year-old fashion designer Chen Hsiao-Ping after both shared first place of the Miss ROC beauty contest. One of them will represent Taiwan at the Miss World contest in Sun City in South Africa next month. — AFP/UNB photo

Tit for tat

NEW YORK: An enraged prostitute cut off part of a client's penis after he refused to pay her for her services, police said, reports AP. The woman fled after the Monday afternoon attack on Domingo Morales, 67, who summoned her to his apartment in the Bronx, said Officer Valerie St. Rose, a police spokeswoman. Today, police were still searching for the severed organ and the woman. Morales, a retired trucker, was in stable condition after undergoing surgery. The trouble began after the two had sex and he didn't want to pay. "She took out a knife and cut off a part of his penis," St Rose said.

Now there is no excuse

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE (England): Pupils at a school in this northern English city now have no excuse for being late after being issued with free alarm clocks, reports AFP. The principal of West Gate Community College, which was marked by inspectors earlier this year as needing "special measures," said Tuesday it had handed out 230 clocks to its new 11-year-olds because pupils were arriving late and saying they had overslept.

Diana regains her 'saintly' image

LONDON: Princess Diana polished up her "saintly" image, badly tarnished by rumours of secret trysts with a married rugby star, when she visited London's homeless, reports Reuter.

As patron of a charity for homeless youth, she met young people sleeping rough in the capital's King's Cross district, notorious for drug addicts and prostitutes, on Tuesday night.

The estrange wife to heir to the throne Prince Charles has already taken her young sons William and Harry to meet down-and-outs on the streets as part of her determination not to let them grow up ignorant of less privileged people in the kingdom.



US, Britain reject Libya's plea to lift ban

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 4: Diplomatic fireworks erupted in the General Assembly on Tuesday as the United States and Britain reacted strongly to Libya's claim that sanctions against it should be lifted, reports AP.

Omar Mustafa Muntasser, the Libya's foreign minister, told the 50th annual meeting that the Americans and the British were responsible for holding up the trial of two Libyan suspects in the downing of PanAm Flight 103. Muntasser said his country had agreed to a proposal to hand over the two men to the International Court of Justice in The Hague — a solution backed by the Arab League.