multibillion-dollar Fed-

violates the

A eral effort to create tiny

Ablasts of pure fusion

energy like that of a hydrogen

dollars in advanced technology

that can perfect new kinds of

tute for Energy and Environ-

mental Research, of Takoma

Park, Md., a respected scientific

group founded in 1987 that has

won praise from private experts

for its critiques of the Federal

nuclear establishment. Its

analyses have prevailed in law-

suits against the Energy De-

partment, mostly involving

contaminated nuclear weapons

plants, and led to out-of-court

group warns that fusion re-

search like that now under way

by the Government could be

used to develop a new genera-

tion of hydrogen bombs and

that it is thus illegal under the

test ban. Some 150 countries.

including the United States, are

The Energy Department,

signatories to the treaty.

The new study is by the Insti-

weapons.

settlements.

Fusion-Research Effort Draws Fire

by William J. Broad

Critics fear that proposed ignition systems are getting quite small, raising the prospect of pure-hydrogen bombs that could be easily transported to distant targets. Arms controllers worry that the fuel for hydrogen fusion is relatively easy to obtain and that a pure-hydrogen bomb, if perfected, could in theory be cheap to build.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and shows that the United States is pursuing a double standard on the control of nuwhich runs the research proclear weapons, a news report says. The study, published by an gramme, strongly denies the American scientific group, is institute's accusation. The dethe first to make that specific partment said that its fusion research would produce no new accusation but echoes growing criticism that the United States weapons and instead was meant to help keep the nation's existis heading down a dangerous nuclear road. The nation, criting nuclear stockpile in good ics say, is at risk of becoming a working order, as well as to nuclear hypocrite, talking elohelp harness nuclear fusion for peaceful energy production. quently of disarmament and Dr. Ray E. Kidder, a former the virtues of a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing while nuclear bomb designer at the quietly investing billions of Lawrence Livermore National

Laboratory, who reviewed the institute's report for technical accuracy, praised the group's work as rigorous and thorough, and said the issue of a possible treaty violation was important. "This question needs to be taken seriously and discussed in an open forum, and some decisions made about it," Dr. Kidder said in an interview yesterday. He added that he and two colleagues had prepared a proposal for limiting pure-fusion research and that the proposal would appear in a coming issue of Physics Today, a pro-In its new, 92-page report the fessional journal.

> One of his colleagues, Dr. Frank von Hipple, is a former adviser to the Clinton White House who now works at Princeton University. He has warned that pure-fusion research could result in devices "compact enough to be used as weapons," a prospect taken increasingly seriously. Dr. Hans

(he is Polish-born), his mas-

(number 41) was among my

9th grader son's summer read-

A. Bethe, a Nobel laureate who was a main architect of the first atomic bomb, a half-century ago, wrote President Clinton last year to warn of the dangers of "pure-fusion weapons." The institute's criticism focuses on a sprawling Federal programme that, in all, involves a dozen or so new major scientific projects at the nation's weapons laboratories and will cost roughly \$4.5 billion a year for at least 10 years.

The ostensible aim of that programme is to shift national efforts away from developing nuclear arms and toward maintaining stockpiles in good condition, using computer simulations and a battery of other advanced techniques to insure the arsenal's potency. But the institute says in its report that the fusion-research aspects of the colossal effort are so ambitious that they violate the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, long a holy grail of arms controllers. The Clinton Administration promoted the treaty and signed it in 1996. Its aim is to end all nuclear blasts as a way to stop

Specifically, the institute criticizes a huge laser complex now under construction in Livermore, Calif., known as the National Ignition Facility. The

nuclear innovation, which

customarily must be tested ex-

plosively.

\$2.2 billion complex, about the size of the Rose Bowl, is to be completed in 2002, the world's first machine to generate tiny thermonuclear explosions, igniting hydrogen without the usual atomic match.

The laser would fire a titanic bolt of energy onto a tiny pellet of hydrogen fuel, heating it hotter than the surface of the sun and causing hydrogen atoms to fuse into helium in a burst of pure fusion energy. Weapons scientists have also been pursuing a number of smaller projects that strive at miniaturizing the machinery needed for such feats. Weapons scientists and the Energy Department are lobbying to continue such work. saying it is permitted under the Comprehensive Test Ban

But critics fear that proposed ignition systems are getting quite small, raising the prospect of pure-hydrogen bombs that could be easily transported to distant targets. Arms controllers worry that the fuel for hydrogen fusion is relatively easy to obtain and that a pure-hydrogen bomb, if perfected, could in theory be cheap to build. The main fuel for nuclear fusion is deuterium. an isotope of hydrogen that is ubiquitous in sea water. By contrast, atomic bombs are fueled by uranium and plutonium,

which are scarce and costly to

acquire. Questions about the fusion work's legality arise because the test ban treaty bars "any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion." Despite the treaty, the nation's nuclear weapons laboratories and allies in Washington argue that the comprehensive test ban has a loophole that allows purefusion research, including explosive tests. But the institute, in its report, strongly disagrees. "There is no technical basis on which laboratory thermonuclear explosions can be excluded from this ban," the report says, adding that work to achieve that goal is illegal.

The report's authors are Arjun Makhijani and Hisham Zerriffi, both physicists. Dr. Makhijani, the institute's president, holds a Ph.D. in nuclear physics from the University of California at Berkeley. "This debate is similar to the one before the hydrogen bomb," he said in an interview. "Once pure-fusion weapons are demonstrated, they will be very difficult to stop. So the time to act is now." Robin Staffin, who oversees fusion-energy research for the Energy Department, dismissed such worries, saying international opinion and prior arms control agreements both held that fusion experiments were not "nuclear explosions" as defined by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Dr. Staffin further disparaged the idea that any sort of pure-fusion research could ever turn dangerous. "All these methods strike out on the criteria of being useful as a weapon." he said. "We have no fusionweapon programme." In addition to faulting the American work, the institute's report criticizes a large effort under way in France known as the Laser Megajoule project, which also seeks to ignite fusion with powerful lasers. The institute's report calls for a halt to the big French and American laser efforts, and for bans on certain types of smaller research. It also calls on the next international test-ban conference to consider formally and specifically outlawing such work. That meeting may occur as soon as next year. If the United States adheres

to its present path, Dr. Makhijani said, it will only further alienate the developing world, which has sometimes criticized the American programme of fusion research as provocative and resents Washington's insistence that there be no further members of the nuclear club. In May, India and Pakistan stunned the world by conducting a series of underground nuclear blasts. "Part of the reason we're in this very messy situation in South Asia is the double standard by which nuclear powers can go on possessing nuclear weapons indefinitely but deny them to other parties," Dr. Makhijani said. "This technology provides one more illustration of that double standard.' South Asians Against Nukes

Under the Limelight

Pallab Bhattacharya writes from New Delhi

In his films Benegal has thoughtfully dealt with subjects that have touched the common man's life. In "Ankur", for example, Bengal has portrayed the effects of feudalism with Shabana Azmi, making her debut, creating waves with her brilliant performance as a harijan woman exploited by a Zamindar.

HYAM Benegal hates travelling back in time when it comes to looking at his own career.

But the doyen of India's "new wave cinema" could not but be nostalgic when some of his close friends and admirers got together in Bombay on July 15 to celebrate the director's completion of 25 years in filmmaking.

It was a big event in the history of Indian "Parallel Cinema" which has been enriched by the contributions of Benegal. There was that customary grace when a smiling Benegal accepted the greetings of eminent playwright-actor Girish Karnad and actor-director Amol Palekar.

Benegal said he hated nostalgia but was happy to reminisce about his works in the company of friends.

Rolling back in time, the director recalled how he struggled for 12 years to find a producer for his first film "Ankur" in 1973 and how he turned to actress Shabana Azmi to do the lead role after Waheeda Rahman rejected it.

"I had opted for Waheeda Rahman and when she turned down the offer it shattered me. It was Shabana's mother who persuaded her to do the role as the actress was initially reluctant," said Benegal. "Ankur" was made with what presentday producers would unanimously endorse as a "shoestring" budget - Rupees five

The last 25 years, which saw Benegal directing 12 films, had been a "challenging and fulfilling" time, the director said. Beginning with Ankur in 1973, he went on to direct "Nishant," 'Manthan", "Bhumika" "Mandi", "Junoon," "Kalyug," "Trikaal," "Suraj Ka Saatvan Ghoda." "Susman," "Mammo," "Sardari Begum" and, most recently. "The Making of the Mahatma," the last one a film on

Mahatma Gandhi. Benegal's success lies in combining the qualities of art cinema with elements of popular genres. He has dealt consistently with themes in a sophisticated, yet easily accessible

Marked by a visual richness and a simple story line, Benegal's films have earned him international critical acclaim and moderate commercial suc-

In his films Benegal has thoughtfully dealt with subjects that have touched the common man's life. In "Ankur", for example, Bengal has portrayed the effects of feudalism with Shabana Azmi, making her debut, creating waves with her brilliant performance as a harijan woman exploited by a Zamindar.

Indian cinema, parallel as well as mainstream commercial, are indebted to Benegal for bringing to force the immense acting talent of Shabana Azmi. Smita Patil, Naseeruddin Shah and Amrish Puri.

And naturally none could grudge Benegal, not normally given to expression of emotionsin public, when he said allowing pride in his voice: "they

have created a whole new firmament of their own.

TINSEL town stars have started shining again over the "Paradise on Earth" - Jammu

and Kashmir. Who can forget the breathtaking beauty of the locals of Jammu and Kashmir that has enriched so many Indian films? Not only the firm industry benefited from Jammu and Kashmir but the visit of film units also contributed to the generation of economic activities in the state.

When Hindi film industry's star actor Amrih Puri flew into Srinagar, capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recently for the shooting of "Mere Apne", it was as much a celebration for the local resident as for the Bolly-

This was the first time that a film unit came to the state for shooting since militancy broke out in 1987.

"Mere Apne" represents a break not only for Amrish Puri to shed his image of "perennial villain" and play the role of a hero but also the people of Jammu and Kashmir who haven't seen film stars so close to them for over a decade.

Meanwhile, moves are afoot to reopen cinema halls in the state which have remained closed since 1990. A delegation of hall owners met Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah who assured them of all possible assistance to reopen the halls.

POLITICIANS being booked on charges of corruption is quite common.

But it is not often that they are halved up for violating traffic law.

When Chief Minister of India's BJP-ruled national capital territory Delhi Sahib Singh Verma paid a fine of Rs two hundred on July 21, he was not exactly given punishment but courted it.

Verma did not wear a helmet while driving a two-wheeled scooter through a South Delhi locality on July 20. Verma had as pillion rider another senior BJP leader Kishan Lal Sharma who was also without the protective headgear.

Wearing of helmets by scooter or motorcycle riders is compulsory in Dohi, and some other Indian states have either introduced the same rule or are in the process of doing so.

The violation of the traffic rule by Verma went unpunished on July 20. But the next day when a popular English language newspaper front-paged the photograph of Verma and Sharma riding the scooter pointing to their not wearing helmets, the Chief Minister called senior traffic police officials and asked them to impose the fine on him.

"It just didn't strike me at that moment that I was committing the offence. Law is equal for all and I decided to punish myself." Verma told a press conference shortly before paying the fine in full glare of television cameras.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

There is no one from the Subcontinent, Australia (what about Nobelist Patrick White?) and South Africa

(what about Doris Lessing and Nobelist Nadine Gordimer?) — all of which have thriving

The Hundred 'Best' English Novels of the Twentieth Century

S the millennium draws to A a close, there is this ▲ Linsatiable desire to take Newspapers and magazines have already come out with the list of the best statesmen, entertainers and films of the century. The latest is the list of the best one hundred novels written in English. Irishman James Joyce's "Ulysses" — "in which an immensely long account of a single day in the lives of a group of Dubliners becomes a metaphor for the human condition" topped the list. "Ulysses" was

banned in the United States be-

tween 1920 and 1933 as "ob-

scene". The list was drawn up by the editorial board of Modern Library, a division of Random House publishers. It was released on July 24, at a workshop for young publishers known as Radcliffe Publishing Course at Radcliffe College of Harvard University. The board members are no literature slouches - British novelist and critic A. S. Byatt, novelists William Styron (a winner) and Gore Vidal, historians Daniel Boorstin, Shelby Foote, Vartan Gregorian and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., biographer Edmund Morris, art critic John Richardson and board chairman Christopher Cerf.

"The Great Gatsby", F. Scott Fitzerald's magical tale of romance, mystery and violence among rich Long Island (New York) socialites in the 1920s is second, followed by James Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man", his autobiographical account of a young "Lolita", Vladimir Nabakov's tale of the ageing Humbert Humbert's doomed passion for the nymphet Dolores Haze, and the "Brave New World", Aldous Huxley's satirical horror tale of

civilization where humans

are made to order. The list is primarily British (39 in all) and American (58 in Most listed have been cited more than once. The list includes Samuel Butler's autobiographical attack on Victorian morality. "The Way of All Flesh" (No. 12), and Max Beerbohm's comic tale of a femme fatale at Oxford University, "Zuleika Dobson" (59). There is no one from the Subcontinent. Australia (what about Nobelist Patrick White?) and South Africa (what about Doris Lessing and Nobelist Nadine Gordimer?) — all of which have thriving literary traditions in English. (V. S. Naipaul was born in the West Indies, and now lives in England. Salman Rushdie was born in India, lived in Pakistan for a while, and now calls England his

literary traditions in English. bridges. Cuba is 90 miles from Key West. When President Only eight women make the list: Virginia Woolf (15), Carson Kennedy stated during the 1962 Cuban missiles crisis that the McCullers (17), Edith Wharton US could not tolerate missiles (58, 69), Willa Cather, Muriel 90 miles from its mainland, Spark, Elizabeth Bowen, Judy Rhys and Iris Murdoch. What Key West, (where President Harry Truman spent a lot of his about African-American writtime) is what he meant. It is ers, especially Princeton Unialso Hemingway's island.

versity Professor and Nobel Prize winner, Toni Morrison and her three books, "Song of Solomon", "Beloved" "Jazz"? The judges were adamant that the books have to stand the test of time before they could be considered. They called "Ulvsses" the first truly modern novel, a real break with the past, like Picasso, the watershed novel of the 20th century, from which all modernism flows. I have always been a fan of Joseph Conrad (numbers 46, 47, 67, 85). For someone whose first language was not English

"The Old Man and the tery of the English prose is mind-boggling. "Lord Jim" Sea"(1952), a tale of human (number 85), his book about a man's sense of honour and his inner battle between good and evil, and the film exemplification of it by Peter O'Toole, are both exquisite. Bertrand Russell, a man not easy to please, was so awed after a literature session with Conrad, that he named one of his sons Joseph, after Conrad good to see E. M. Forster, so well known to the people of the Subcontinent, make the list thrice (numbers 25, 38, 79). Each of the three cited have been made into very successful movies. The histo-Arthur Schlesinger Jr. said that he would have preferred to have seen "A Passage to India" (25), a tale about the far-reaching ramifications of the chance encounter and "bridging" between an English woman and an Indian man in British India, in the fifth place. D. H. Lawrence of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" (in)fame, also made the list three times (9, 48, 49). Last year, William Golding's "Lord of the Flies"

ing list. I was overwhelmed by the power of his narrative and the precision of his prose. Key West, off the coast of Florida, is the southern most island in the United States. It is actually about one hundred miles into the Gulf of Mexico. and through American ingenuity connected to Florida through a series of islands and

Ernest Hemingway

(numbers 45, 74) wrote several of his novels from Key West and Cuba. Five years ago, the writer visited Hemingway's house, now a national monument, in Key West. The two-storied, fairly lavish house has a museum that exhibits his memorabilia. What struck me was that he had a smaller second house, which could only be reached by a monkey bridge from the second floor of the main house, where he would retire to write, until it was time to go fishing, which was his passion.

struggle against nature - about an old Cuban fisherman who hooks a giant marlin only to lose it to the sharks — arose from his obsession with fish-Although the book was mentioned in his Nobel Prize (1954) citation, I find it to be more of a captivating narrative than epic literature. Most of Hemingway's classic novels were written in Paris - including "A Farewell to Arms" (number 74, based on his World War I combat experience), and "For Whom the Bell Tolls" (based on his support for the nationalists during Spanish Civil War) — where he was the foreign correspondent of the Toronto Star. Fishing, hunting and attraction to war consumed his life. Hemingway's virile writing masked "an aesthetic sensibility of great delicacy." Ousted from Cuba by Fi-Castro in 1960, "Papa" Hemingway settled back in the Suffering from depression, and upset with shock therapy (Lithium treatment was unknown then) Hemingway shot himself to death in 1961.

It was not surprising to see the two "imperialist's lackeys" V. S. Naipaul (numbers 72 and 83) and Salman Rushdie (number 90) — make the list. Naipaul has made a career ridiculing his heritage, Indian culture, and Rushdie his religion, Islam. If one concedes the his bias, Naipaul is readable. On the other hand, I found it impossible to read Rushdie's infamous "Satanic Verses." I blasted him in the pages of TIME magazine in 1989, welcomed him into Islamic fold through the New York Times in 1991 when he said (deceitfully) he "reconverted" to Islam (to please the Iranians), and blasted him again last year in the NY Times when he became a heretic again. In his writing, Rushdie comes across as a mean person.

Occasionally, Naipaul and Rushdie stray into each other's Recently, Ruslidie criticized the Hindu religion. and in his book "Among the Believers", Naipaul had the audacity to say that the five daily prayers in Islam were "unnecessary." It is worth remembering that neither Rushdie nor Naipaul ever criticizes the West in any meaningful way. They remember the fate of the 1970 Literature Nobel Prize winner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. After being rescued from communist USSR by the West in 1974, he criticized western decadence and emphasis on democracy and individual rights, and was quickly forgotten. (Bearded Solzhenitsyn is now back in Russia).

Many of the novels in the list have been made into successful movies. This gives credence to the American joke: "Would you like to read the best seller?" "No dear, I shall wait

for the movie!" Here is the list of the hundred best English language novels of the century.

Ulysses (James Joyce, 1922). 2. The Great Gatsby (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1925. Film: Robert Redford), 3. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (James Joyce, 1916), 4. Lolita (Vladimir Nabokov, Film: James Mason), 5. Brave New World (Aldous Huxley, 6. The Sound and the Fury (William Faulkner, 1929). 7. Catch-22 (Joseph Heller, 1961. Film: Donald Sutherland). 8. Darkness at Noon (Arthur Koestler, 1941), 9. Sons and Lovers (D. H. Lawrence, 1913). 10. The Grapes of Wrath (John Steinbeck, 1939. Film:

Henry Fonda) 11. Under the Volcano (Malcolm Lowry, 1947), 12. The Way of All Flesh (Samuel Butler, 1903), 13, 1984 (George Orwell, 1949), 14. I, Claudius (Robert Graves, 1934. BBC Television series). 15. To Lighthouse (Virginia Woolf, 1927), 16. An American Tragedy (Theodore Dreiser, 1925), 17. The Heart of a Lonely Hunter (Carson McCullers, 1940), 18. Slaughterhouse Five (Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., 1969). 19. Invisible Man (Ralph Ellison, 1952), 20. Native Son (Richard Wright.

21. Henderson the Rain King (Saul Bellow, 1959), 22. Appointment in Samara (John O'Hara, 1934). 23. U.S.A.. (triology, John Dos Passos, 1936), 24. Winesburg, Ohio (Sherwood Anderson, 1919), 25. A Passage to India (E. M. Forster, 1924. David Lean film, 1984: Victor Banerjee, Peggy Ashcroft, Judy Davis, Edward Fox, Art Malik, Alec Guinness). 26. The Wings of the Dove (Henry James, 1902). 27. The Ambassadors (Henry James, 1903). 28. Tender is the Night (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1934). 29. Studs Lonigan (triology, James T. Farrell, 1935), 30. The Good Soldier (Ford Madox Ford,

31. Animal Farm [George Orwell, 1945), 32. The Golden Bowl (Henry James, 1904), 33. Sister Carrie (Theodore Dreiser, 1900). 34. A Handful of Dust (Evelyn Waugh, 1934), 35. As I Lay Dying (William Faulkner, 1930), 36. All the King's Men (Robert Penn Warren, 1946). 37. The Bridge of San Luis Rey (Thornton Wilder, 1927). 38. Howards End (E. M. Forster. 1910. Merchant-Ivory Film, 1992: Emma Thompson), 39. Go Tell It on the Mountain (James Baldwin, 1953), 40. The Heart of the Matter (Graham

Greene, 1948)
The Lord of the Flies (William Golding, 1954), 42. Deliverance (James Dickey, 1970. Film: 1972. Jon Voight). 43. A Dance to the Music of Time (series, Anthony Powell, 1975), 44. Point Counter Point (Aldous Huxley, 1928), 45. The Sun Also Rises (Ernest Hemingway, 1926), 46. The Secret Agent (Joseph Conrad, 1907) 47. Nostromo (Joseph Conrad, 1904), 48. The Rainbow (D. H. Lawrence, 1915), 49. Women in Love (D. H. Lawrence, 1920. Film: Alan Bates, Oliver Reed), 50. Tropic of Cancer (Henry

Miller, 1934) The Naked and the Dead (Norman Mailer, 1948), 52. Portnoy's Complaint (Philip Roth, 1969), 53. Pale Fire (Vladimir Nabokov, 1962), 54. Light in August (William Faulkner, 1932), 55. On the Road (Jack Kerouac, 1957), 56. The Maltese Falcon (Dashiel Hammett, 1930.

Beerbohm, 1911), 60. The Moviegoer (Walker Percy, 1961) 61. Death Comes for the Archbishop (Willa Cather, 1927), 62. From Here to Eter-1953: Frank Sinatra, Deborah

Humphrey Bogart), 57. Pa-

rade's End (Ford Madox Ford.

1928), 58. The Age of Inno-

cence (Edith Wharton, 1920),

Zuleika Dobson (Max

nity (James Jones, 1951. Film, Carr, Burt Lancaster, Ernest Borgnine), 63. The Wapshot Chronicle (John Cheever, 1957) 64. The Catcher in the Rye (J. D. Salinger, 1951), 65. A Clockwork Orange (Anthony Burgess. Stanley Kubrick film. 1971: Malcolm McDowell), 66. Of Human Bondage (W. Somerset Maugham, 1915), 67. Heart of Darkness Joseph Conrad. 68. Main Street (Sinclair Lewis, 1920). 69. The House of Mirth (Edith Wharton, 1905), 70. The Alexandria Quartet (Lawrence Durrell, 71. A High Wind in Jamaica

(Richard Hughes, 1929), 72. A

House for Mr. Biswas (V. S. Naipaul, 1961), 73. The Day of the Locust (Nathanael West, 1939). 74. A Farewell to Arms (Ernest Hemingway, 1929, Film.), 75. Scoop (Evelyn Waugh, 1938), 76. The Prime of Jean Brodie (Muriel Spark, 1961. Film), 77. Finnegans Wake (James Joyce, 78. Kim (Rudyard Kipling, 1901), 79. A Room With a View (E. M. Forster, Merchant-Ivory Film). Brideshead Revisited (Evelyn Waugh. BBC television series.) The Adventures of Augie March (Saul Bellow, 1971), 82. Angle of Repose (Wallace Stegner, 1971). 83. A Bend in the River (V. S. Naipaul, 1979), 84.

The Death of the Heart (Elizabeth Bowen, 1938), 85. Lord Jim (Joseph Conrad, 1900. Film: Peter O'Toole, Daliah Lavi, Eli Wallach), 86. Ragtime (E. L. Doctorow, 1975), 87. The Old Wives' Tale (Arnold Bennet. 1908). 88. The Call of the Wild (Jack London, 1903), 89 Loving (Henry Green, 1945), 90. Midnight's Children (Salman Rushdie, 1981) 91. Tobacco Road (Erskine

Caldwell, 1932), 92. Ironweed (William Kennedy, 1983), 93 The Magus (John Fowles, 1966). 94. Wide Sargasso Sea (Jean Rhys, 1966), 95. Under the Net (Iris Murdoch, 1954), 96. Sophie's Choice (William Styron, 1979. Film: Merril Streep. Kline). 97. The Sheltering Sky (Paul Bowles, 1949), 98. The Postman Always Rings Twice (James M. Cain, 1934), 99. The Ginger Man (J. P. Donleavy, 1955), 100. The Magnificent Ambersons (Booth Tarkington, 1918).

Largest UNFPA Programme in India

NEW DELHI: India has been allocated \$100 million for the fifth cycle (1997-2001) of the population and development programme funded by the United Nations Population Fund, the largest UNFPA programme ever.

The programme will complement the Indian government's efforts to operationalise the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) programme enunciated at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, 1994, replacing the target-oriented family welfare programme of the past.

national levels of operations. district/town level projects have also been formulated in the states of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

These projects will go beyond reproductive health to cover need-based education, gender and community development issues, with special focus on HIV/AIDS, and have been developed through a decentralised participatory planning

Between 1974-1995, UNFPA funds to the tune of \$220 million have been spent on four country programme cycles in

Apart from the district and Unethical Population Control Practices

NEW DELHI: On the occasion of World Population Day on July 11, the Government of India was urged to put an immediate stop to aggressive population control policies and practices, the brunt of which is borne by women, often in total violation of ethical and medical guidelines.

In an open letter to Dalit Ezhimalai, the Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Saheli, a women's group working on issues related to women's health for the last 17 years, drew attention to the fact that illegal trials and propagation of quinacrine pellets for chemical sterilisation of women are still current in India. This is despite the ban imposed on its import, manufacture, distribution and sale for chemical sterilisation by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), a ban which was upheld by the Supreme

Court on March 16 this year. But since the ban has not been applied with retrospect. the DCGI has claimed helplessness in taking punitive action.

This, despite the fact that he has enough documentary evidence of the involvement of private practitioners, NGOs and even government hospital doctors in these malpractices. claimed Saheli, which released a booklet titled 'Quinacrine: a sordid story of chemical sterilisation of women' on World Population Day last year.

Women subjected to illegal trials throughout the country. continue to suffer the pain, menstrual abnormalities and complications caused by the procedure, and unwanted pregnancies due to its failure, without the follow-up that is expected of 'clinical trials'.

WFS/News Network

S the tenth anniversary of groups are looking up to the Indian government to lend moral Burma's pro-democracy Amovement approaches, the and political support in case any movement erupts. Some capital city Rangoon is tense prominent Indian leaders, inonce again in anticipation of cluding Defence Minister possible trouble. Governments George Fernandes, are known throughout the region are

closely monitoring political developments in Burma to watch out for signs of escalating confrontation between the country's shaky military junta and opposition forces led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

It was a decade ago on August 8, 1988, that Burmese students led thousands of people onto the streets of Rangoon, Mandalay and other major cities in demonstrations against the then military government headed by the longtime dictator, General Ne Win. The movement led to the resignation of Ne Win but only to be replaced by a State Law and Order Council (SLORC) composed of his handpicked military men.

Burmese pro-democracy

for their sympathy to the Burmese pro-democracy cause

Arousing expectations of a fresh round of nationwide agitation in Burma is a recent ultimatum to the military government by dissident leader Suu Kyi to convene a meeting of Parliament members. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won the general elections in 1990 by a landslide majority but the results were never ac-

and Burmese activists feel that

the current Indian government

could play a positive role in aid-

has clung on to power till now. During the eighth anniversary celebration of the 1990 election victory late June, Suu Kyi demanded that Parliament

cepted by the military, which

Satya Sivaraman writes from Bangkok

Rangoon Tense as Pro-democracy Movement Anniversary Approaches

be convened by August 21 to facilitate a session of elected members. The fresh ultimatum has been seen as a long awaited signal to the public from Suu Kyi, who has so far advocated patience and dialogue with the military junta, to start an agitation.

The military has responded to Suu Kyi's call by threatening to take legal action against her. Pro-democracy activists have alleged that the military plans to arrest Suu Kyi and has even prepared a special cell for her in Rangoon's infamous Insein prison where hundreds of political prisoners are kept.

Reports from Rangoon say there are more troops out on the streets and several members of the NLD have already been arrested by the authorities prior

to the August 8 anniversary.
"If the military attempts to arrest Suu Kyi again or harm

her in any way, the action will

protest from the public," said a Rangoon-based political analyst. According to him, frustrations among various sections of Burmese society have reached a peak and the mood is similar to that prior to the 1988 movement when people, fed up with unemployment, rising prices and lack of basic freedoms, took their battle against the military to the streets. "We are quite confident that

certainly trigger off a mass

there will be another uprising soon in Burma because the feeling among many activists is that it is a do-or-die situation now," Moe Thee Zun, a leader of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) who is currently in exile in Thailand, told IANS.

On the economic front in Burma - already a basketcase the situation has deteriorated in recent months. The country, which ventured on the path of

early nineties, has been hit hard by the Asian economic crisis which has dried up the trickle of foreign investment going in previously, hurt exports and devastated the local currency. The economy has already

economic liberalisation in the

been in bad shape for the past few years due to dwindling foreign exchange reserves, high inflation, chronic budget deficits and poor agricultural performance.

The huge deficits - estimated to reach nearly 81 per cent of GDP during 1997 - has prompted the government to print more and more banknotes to fill the gap, leading to serious devaluation of the currency. The Burmese kyat, officially valued at six to the US. dollar, has now crossed 300 to the dollar in the black market. The crisis has forced up prices across the board in Burma and the costs of basic items such as beans, pulses and onions have

Rangoon's markets in the last month. The devaluation of the currency has also resulted in a surge in prices of numerous imported goods. While many of the social and economic factors conducive to

soared by about 100 per cent in

public unrest have been there for the past couple of years, a political wild card that has come into play is the possible death of the ageing former dictator Ne Win. Rumours of his death have been circulating in Rangoon and Bangkok.

Ne Win, who ruled Burma for 36 years, is still believed to be a key factor in preserving the unity of the military. With his demise, observers expect a definite split in the Burmese armed forces between reformers and status quoists - a development that has been long awaited by Burma's pro-democracy forces.

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