

Junta waging dirty propaganda war against NLD: Suu Kyi

YANGON, Feb 26: Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has called mass resignations from her party reported by the state-controlled press part of a government campaign of dirty tricks, reports AP.

The resignations are "not worth the paper they were written on," Suu Kyi told a small news conference of foreign journalists Thursday. "Immense pressure is subjected on our people everywhere."

Suu Kyi, head of the embattled National League for Democracy and winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, said that some resignations were forced under threat of jail and others were fabricated and submitted by people who were not party members.

For several months, the media — all of which is controlled by the military government — has been reporting the resignations en masse of members of the NLD nationwide, part of a propaganda war.

The pressure increased on Suu Kyi and her colleagues last year when they declared they were creating an alternative

parliament to symbolically represent the legislature voters elected in 1990.

The NLD won a landslide victory in those elections, but the military, which has ruled since 1962, never allowed the legislature to meet.

The government reacted to the new moves by detaining more than 100 party officials who were among the would-be lawmakers and reportedly tried to coerce them to resign from the party.

The government's next move was to report the resignations of NLD members at the grassroots level and the alleged voluntary closings of local party offices.

Lately, the government has publicised what is alleged to be a grassroots campaign to recall and deprived of their seats NLD victors in the 1990 election with so-called no-confidence motions.

She said many signatures included the notation that the signers could not recall their party registration numbers, or simply didn't include the number at all.

Senate asks Clinton admn to condemn China for HR abuse

WASHINGTON, Feb 26: The US Senate urged the Clinton administration to sponsor a resolution condemning China for human rights abuses when the UN Human Rights Commission meets next month in Geneva, reports AP.

Sponsors of the measure said Thursday's 99-0 vote, although not legally binding, would send a powerful message to the Beijing government as well as to democracy advocates in China in advance of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's visit next week.

"The arrested dissidents and their courageous supporters deserve our full backing in their historic struggle to bring democracy to China," said Sen. Paul Wellstone, a sponsor of the measure.

President Clinton ignored a similar resolution passed by congress last year.

The administration had pushed human-rights condemnations of China at past Geneva sessions but declined to do so in 1998 because Clinton was then planning a visit to China.

But since that trip last July, and despite Beijing's promises to exhibit more tolerance, China's communist leaders "have intensified their crackdown," said Sen. Tim Hutchinson. "The pattern of abuse is clear."

"It's important for our secretary of state to have that message when she goes to China," Hutchinson said.

Albright is scheduled to meet Chinese officials on Monday and Tuesday for talks on an array of concerns, including human rights.

Testing before the House International Relations Committee, Albright said Thursday she should "bring a strong message of support for international norms of respect for human rights, and this will come as no surprise to Beijing." "Let me stress," she said, "in our relations with China, engagement is not endorsement. We continue to have sharp differences with Beijing, but we also believe that the best way to narrow those differences and to make progress where our interests coincide is through regular contact and dialogue."

Albright told a Senate panel Wednesday that the administration hadn't yet decided whether to offer an anti-China resolution at the upcoming Geneva meeting.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott told the Senate: "There continue to be terrible human rights violations in China."

Lott said he deliberately scheduled the measure second on the Senate calendar to emphasize its importance. The first, passed Wednesday, was a big pay raise for the military.

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 26: Over protests it was putting its domestic agenda ahead of international peace, China lashed back at Macedonia for establishing ties with Taiwan and blocked peacekeepers from staying in the strategic Balkan country, reports AP.

Chinese Ambassador Qin Huasun vetoed a Security Council resolution extending the Macedonia mission for six months, marking only the fifth time Beijing has used its "no" vote on a council resolution.

Qin said Thursday that the force wasn't needed because the ethnic conflict in Kosovo didn't constitute a true threat to Macedonia. Allegations that Beijing was vetoing the mission over the Taiwan dispute were "totally groundless," he said.

The outcome was a major blow to the United Nations, which has held up the Macedonia mission as a unique model of preventative peacekeeping.

The UN Preventative Deployment Force was dispatched to Macedonia in 1992 during the Bosnian war to prevent the spread of the ethnic conflict.

China severed ties with Macedonia after it established diplomatic relations last month with Taiwan. Beijing considers Taiwan a renegade.

UN officials believe Thursday's vote was the first time a UN peacekeeping mission was cancelled by a veto. They said the peacekeepers would start packing their bags Monday — a day after the mandate expires.

Russia, which has close ties to Serbia, abstained from the vote, saying its efforts to have the peacekeepers tighten the arms embargo on Kosovo hadn't been taken into account. The ethnic Albanians are believed to be arming themselves from neighboring countries.

The move "fully demonstrated the Chinese communists' power abuse and their hegemonic mentality that undermines world peace," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Roy Wu.

Meanwhile, Taiwan today accused China of abusing its power in the United Nations by vetoing peacekeepers for Macedonia as a means of retaliating against the Balkan nation for establishing diplomatic ties with Taipei.

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