

Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:20:00 PM EEST

Job Number: 223508034

Documents (82)

1. [*Scandinavian monitor jeered as Tamil rebels raise flag*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

2. [*ROUNDUP: At least six killed as blast rocks outskirts of Colombo*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

3. [*The Healing Games*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

4. [*Fear the creeping powers of the state THE ESSAY*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

5. [*Why Muslims should have rethink on veil urge*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

6. [ROGUE ELEPHANTS Attacks by elephants on humans, both in Africa and India , have been increasing dramatically in the past five years. As villagers tell of 'revenge raids', scientists argue that loss of habitat and social structure is seriously destabilising these magnificent creatures. Justin Huggler reports from Delhi](#)
[Animal behaviour](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

7. [Family: Interview: In 1971, Fleetwood Mac guitarist Jeremy Spencer left the band to join the Family, a notorious cult. Here, his children reflect on their bizarre upbringing, and their decision to leave and form a band](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

8. [Despair in paradise; End of ceasefire means Sri Lanka 's renaissance is over, too](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

9. [CORRUPTION,THEFT,WASTE THE TSUNAMI A YEAR ON THE UN DISATER ENVOY BILL CLINTON IS DUE TO ARRIVE IN SRI LANKA TOMORROW. BIT HE WILL FIND THAT DESPITE THE PLEDGES OF Pounds 1.8 BILLION IN AID HAS BEEN DONE FOR THE VICTIMS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press

10. [ONE-STOP MOVIE PICKS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

11. [Feeding on conflict](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

12. [Travel: The Big Trip: East in Eden: Mimi Spencer on how Sri Lanka is healing, growing, moving on](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

13. ['The tsunami generation' : Orphan's worst days may be in the past](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

14. [Lessons of the tsunami: 'For some, the aid business is just that -- a business. When each NGO is out for itself, everyone loses'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

15. [THE BIG TRIP: IT'S SMALL. BUT IT'S GOT IT ALL; WITH ITS UNMISSABLE SCENERY, WILDLIFE AND ANCIENT SITES, SRI LANKA IS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

16. [WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM RULED BY FEAR; TOURISTS ARE STILL BEATING A PATH TO NEPAL AS ITS BLOODY CIVIL WAR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

17. [Letters & emails](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

18. [Escape: SRI LANKA : The red road to island's secret side: Hidden temples, dense jungle, vibrant wildlife and a unique eco-retreat built from mud: Gemma Bowes journeys north to a part of Sri Lanka rarely visited by tourists](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

19. [Making of Muriel the suicide bomber](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

20. [Global Warning](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

21. [Karunanidhi pays floral tribute to Rajiv Gandhi](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

22. [Pious people with lost souls](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

23. [pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for them. Do they get value for money? Charles Starmer-Smith investigates.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

24. [Five dead in Sri Lanka rebel attack](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

25. [15 killed in Sri Lanka by Tamil](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

26. [Explosion kills 1, injures 2 in Sri Lankan capital](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

27. [TSUNAMI DISASTER: THE WAVE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD; A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER CAME FROM NOWHERE, WITHOUT WARNING, AND SWEEP](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

28. [Letters & emails](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

29. [Against the odds](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press

30. [93 ROD LAVER](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

31. [Tsunami relief draws out the best in Sri Lanka TRAVEL](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

32. [New directions for female warriors](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

33. [WORLD at 0200 GMT](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

34. [REP. LEACH COMMENTS ON TSUNAMI TRAGEDY, U.S. ASSISTANCE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

35. [*Headlines in major Indian newspapers*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

36. [*Six soldiers killed in north Sri Lanka*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

37. [*The Bengal Paradox*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

38. [*No Headline In Original*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

39. [*World Report*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

40. [*Sri Lankan police identify suicide bomber*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

41. [ROARING BACK - HOT SPOT SRI LANKA - TRAVEL ISSUE '05](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

42. [REGULAR PRESS BRIEFING BY INFORMATION SERVICE MAY 15, 2007](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

43. [STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

44. [The island that heals Sri Lanka offers sunshine and smiles - and an ancient system of healthcare that has exotic treatments for stress and illness. Christina Patterson goes on an Ayurvedic adventure](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

45. [Letters to the Editor](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

46. [*Death Is Celebrated and Life Means Less Than Nothing Three Authors Strive To Understand the Violent Evolution of Modern Terrorism*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

47. [*THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

48. [*UN Human Rights Committee considers reports from four countries; Comments made on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Philippines , Russian Federation , Latvia , Sri Lanka*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

49. [*COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

50. [*No Headline In Original*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

51. [ASIAN TSUNAMI DISASTER: FIRST A RUMBLE, THEN A WALL OF WATER TRAILING DEATH IN ITS WAKE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

52. [THE WEEK](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

53. [Looking back: A diary of events for 2006](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

54. [DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

55. [Torn From Moorings, Villagers Grasp for Past](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

56. [BJP chargesheet of UPA Government](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

57. [Tea with milk Tea facts. Milk facts](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

58. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

59. [Hell to pay when man bites God](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

60. [UN Foreign Minister of France to Commission on Human Rights - World is living dramatic events with Iraq crisis; Commission continues to debate right of peoples to self-determination - Part 2 of 2](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

61. [REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

62. [WAVE OF HUMANITY TSUNAMI](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

63. [Fight terror with ideas, not just armies; Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what communism was to the 20th - a global ideological battle that needs to be fought both off and on the battlefield. This is why absolute, unsentimental clarity is needed, not political correctness that fudges the seriousness of the threat, says Prime Minister GOH CHOK TONG](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

64. [THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

65. [STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

66. [QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mourinho's controversial Yorkshire terrier?... Here are 170 questions to find out how much you really remember about the year that was](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

67. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

68. [UN Commission concludes general debate on promotion and protection of human rights; Issues concerning capital punishment, anti-terrorist laws, human rights defenders, and human rights and sexual orientation raised. Page 2 of 2.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

69. [STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press

70. [DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

71. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

72. [HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

73. [HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES INTERACTIVE DEBATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

74. [TANZ "Ich entscheide, mit wem ich arbeite!"](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press

75. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

76. [HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

77. [HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

78. [HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

79. [HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

80. [COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

81. [NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

82. [NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Jan 01, 2003 to Dec 31, 2007

Scandinavian monitor jeered as Tamil rebels raise flag

Deutsche Presse-Agentur

September 4, 2003, Thursday 10:25 Central European Time

Copyright 2003 Deutsche Presse-Agentur

Section: Politics

Length: 192 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

A **female** Scandinavian peace monitor was jeered in northern Sri Lanka after she attempted to prevent Tamil Tiger rebels from flying a flag in a government-controlled area, reports said Thursday.

Tamil rebels disregarded a protestation by the Scandinavian peace monitor, and raised the flag in the government-controlled town of Vavuniya, 254 kilometres north of Sri Lanka's capital Colombo.

The flag carried a Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (**LTTE**) emblem, a violation of the current ceasefire agreement signed between the government and rebels in February last year.

The Scandinavian representative left the area after being jeered, reports said.

The monitors - known as the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) - have some 60 Scandinavian representatives working in the north and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

A SLMM spokesperson said the group would take up the incident with the **LTTE** leadership.

The peace deal was introduced under a Norwegian-backed process aimed at ending the 20-year-old ethnic Tamil conflict. Under the agreement, rebels cannot carry out propaganda activities in government-controlled areas. dpa
ad rk

Load-Date: September 4, 2003

ROUNDUP: At least six killed as blast rocks outskirts of Colombo

Deutsche Presse-Agentur
May 28, 2007 Monday 2:02 PM EST

Copyright 2007 Deutsche Presse-Agentur All Rights Reserved

Section: POLITICS

Length: 199 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

DPA POLITICS SriLanka Conflicts ROUNDUP: At least six killed as blast rocks outskirts of Colombo Colombo
At least six civilians were killed and more than
30 injured in a powerful claymore bomb explosion in the outskirts of
Sri Lanka's capital, a military spokesman said Monday.

The mine set on a building had been triggered as a bus carrying
members of the elite Special Task Force (STF) was passing by at
Ratmalana, 10 kilometres south of Colombo, he said.

Four males and two females were killed, while most of the injured
were persons returning home after work. The spokesman blamed rebels

of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for blast.
Initially police believed that the mine had been set on a
motorcycle similar to last Thursday's blast in Colombo when an army
bus was targeted. At least one person was killed and 10 injured then.
Witnesses said although the STF bus was the target of Monday's
attack, the vehicle had not caught the full impact of the blast and
instead at least five civilians' vehicles and bystanders were caught.
The Colombo attacks come as government troops step up offensive

operations against the LTTE rebels in northern and eastern parts of
the country.

May 28 2007 1402 GMT

Load-Date: May 28, 2007

The Healing Games

The Tampa Tribune (Florida)

March 20, 2005 Sunday

FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2005 Times Publishing Company All Rights Reserved

Section: BAYLIFE; Pg. 1

Length: 1987 words

Byline: JENNIFER BAGGERLY as told to KARLA JACKSON, , kkjackson@tampatrib.com

Dateline: TAMPA

Body

Simple play therapy such as puppets, the hokeypokey and Duck, Duck, Goose brings comfort and eases fears of young tsunami victims.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jennifer Baggerly, 41, an assistant professor of counselor education at the University of South Florida, was among a group of 17 play therapists who spent seven days in Sri Lanka in February on a mission sponsored by the Association for Play Therapy and Operation USA, a small international relief organization. Their goal: to help orphans traumatized by the Dec. 26 tsunami.

By JENNIFER BAGGERLY as told to KARLA JACKSON

kkjackson@tampatrib.com

TAMPA — After 28 hours on a plane, we flew into Colombo, Sri Lanka. We stayed at the Hilton, which was really very nice. It was overrun with internationals, mostly from relief organizations. After a good night's sleep, we got some cultural and political orientation from our escorts.

That turned out to be very helpful because I wasn't aware of the impact of the 20 years of civil war between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. It's like the race riots here in the '60. The Tamils — who are mostly Hindu — are just a small percentage of people, and they've been oppressed by the Sinhalese — who are mostly Buddhist — and haven't had fair representation in government.

The most interesting thing we learned was that there are 50,000 orphans from the civil war alone. There are about 6,000 orphans from the tsunami, so comparatively, there are more orphans from the civil war than the tsunami.

Our group broke up into three teams. One went to Galle, a Sinhalese area hit very hard by the tsunami. We had another team go up to Jaffna, and my team went to Trincomalee, on the northeast coast.

We arrived in Trincomalee around midnight. Unfortunately, I got food poisoning and vomited five times along the way. My team was very nice about pulling over when I needed to. It was from the prawns I ate at the hotel restaurant. From then on, I said, "Nope. No seafood."

The Healing Games

There were five Association for Play Therapy people and three Operation USA people in my group. We were very culturally diverse. We had a Haitian-American, a Puerto Rican-American, an Indian therapist who had lived in the United States for 30 years, a therapist from Japan and me.

Trincomalee is a Tamil area that was hit hard during the civil war. The first place we went was Grace Church Orphanage, which is funded by an American benefactor. Those kids were very well taken care of in the sense that they had clean clothes and enough food. About 100 girls lived there, ranging in age from 5 to 17. Nearby was a Tamil refugee camp, Ellis Garden, with about 450 boys and girls.

The tsunami had damaged the orphanage — knocked out the glass, knocked down buildings and flooded the place. The kids were in church. They saw the tsunami coming and ran up the hill, so they all survived.

Breaking The Ice

It was a little chaotic when we first arrived because our translator was delayed and I was recovering from food poisoning. I kept telling myself, "These people have been through so much worse. I can't let a little food poisoning stop me."

We had about 100 kids all lined up, waiting for us to do something. We played games — a ball toss game, the hokeypokey and head-and-shoulders-knees-and-toes — to break the ice.

Finally the translator got there and we read them a story we wrote about the tsunami. It was about some animals that had something bad happen and they found ways to calm themselves. Then we did a puppet show with my puppet Shep, the sheepdog.

The main thing we did was teach them about the tsunami. We explained that it was caused by an earthquake in the ocean. Apparently a lot of kids were thinking that other things caused it. Some thought it was because they had bad thoughts. Some thought maybe God was mad at them. Some thought someone put something in the ocean to make it happen.

Even the teachers were asking us, "Is another tsunami coming?" as if we knew. The teachers had told the children, "Don't go back to the beach because another tsunami will come."

We had to explain to the teachers that there is a very low risk of another tsunami coming and that they should help the children calm down and eventually go back to the beach because that is their livelihood.

Unlike in Florida, where all the rich people live on the water, in Sri Lanka, the poor people, the fishermen, live on the water. But the teachers were perpetuating this phobia of the beach and the water.

The children would talk among themselves and start rumors of another tsunami. Things would build up, and suddenly you would have a stampede of hundreds of kids running for their lives up the street to get away from an imaginary tsunami.

We stayed at a nice place called the Oceanic Hotel. It had air conditioning, running water, flush toilets and a buffet, but I ate only pineapple and rice. We made day trips by van to the orphanage and refugee camps. There wasn't a place for us to stay at the orphanage, and it was a health concern for us because of all the mosquitoes, which could carry malaria. After having that food poisoning, it wasn't worth the risk.

The first day, after we were done working with the children, our escorts sat us down and said, "We need to tell you what has happened. There has been an assassination."

The country is supposed to be on a cease-fire, but apparently some Sinhalese-backed people had assassinated six top Tamil leaders in Batticaloa. It didn't make the papers in Tampa. I called home and said, "Oh, don't worry about the assassination; we're safe," and they were like, "What?!?"

The Healing Games

The next day, all the Tamil people stayed indoors to protest the assassination. Anybody who went out on the street was stoned by villagers. Our van driver wouldn't drive us anywhere, so we had to stay in the hotel compound.

Unselfish Children

It was safe to go out the next day. We went to the Ellis Garden refugee camp, and I gave out the letters written by the kids at Metropolitan Ministries in Tampa. They were really thrilled to get these letters, even though they couldn't read them. They liked getting anything. They have no toys — nothing.

We had some candy and toys that we gave the teachers to give to the children, but the teachers said that the children felt guilty about receiving them. They said, "What about all the other children that were hurt during the tsunami? They need it more than us."

I'm sitting there thinking about the kids back in the United States who are like, "I want a new Game Boy!" or whatever. These kids have nothing, and they're feeling guilty for getting a piece of candy.

In my head, I'm thinking, "That's going to be hard to handle the next time I have a kid whining about not being able to buy \$120 tennis shoes."

We brought along some extra puppets and taught the teachers how to do the puppet show. That went over very well because the teachers really wanted to learn from us.

We taught them some new games and deep-breathing exercises to use with the kids, so they would be able to address any fears in the future.

It was very satisfying for me because the teachers immediately started using those techniques with the children.

One teacher was using the Shep puppet to talk about the tsunami and she asked, "What should I do if I'm afraid to go to the beach?" A little boy piped up and said, "I'm not afraid to go to the beach!"

Everybody — the teachers and the kids — started laughing. It broke this tension that was there, this panic and fear of going back to the beach. It helped them get things out in the open and talk about it.

Relief ... Now Recovery

I saw what the true meaning of the term "relief work" is about. We gave them a smile and some relief for the day — being there with them, giving them the candy and toys — helping them know that people care and want to help them.

But they clearly need ongoing recovery, and they need help in economic development to build things like water wells and libraries and to get books and teacher training. They need recovery after the relief, but the relief seemed to be helpful to them.

Along the beach, it is still pretty devastated. It looked like Florida after a hurricane, except that there are still saris and sandals laying on the beach. Our escorts explained that the tsunami had washed the saris off women and that they were too ashamed to run away naked, so they drowned.

I brought home a piece of a sari from the beach as a memorial, to remind me of what they had been through and to motivate me to do more.

Blondes Have More Security

The next day, we went to a refugee camp in Kalladi, in the Batticaloa district, which is controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE, essentially the Tamil resistance. We had to go through checkpoints with armed guards. Fortunately, myself and another lady in our group are blond. When they saw our blond hair, they said, "OK, you can go through," because they knew we weren't Sinhalese. That was helpful.

The Healing Games

I asked our escorts, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how safe are we?" They said, "Oh, you're a 10. Don't worry. They won't hurt foreigners because they want the sympathies of the U.S. and the U.N."

It was kind of funny. The two blond people were almost like security for the rest of the group.

The Kalladi refugee camp is in a remote area that was really devastated. I think the biggest problem is that so many water wells were destroyed. The kids were dirty and sick, and they didn't have any clean water.

We were playing games with them and we gave them candy, but they said, "We're thirsty." There were probably 150 of them, and we didn't have any water for them. We barely had enough for ourselves. It was so sad.

Supplies aren't getting through to that part of the country because President Bush put the **LTTE** on the terrorist list, so now there is an embargo against them. It makes me so angry that something like that would result in children suffering.

Operation USA told us that because of the tsunami, so much money is coming into Sri Lanka that now the Sinhalese government doesn't feel like it needs to have peace talks with the Tamils. Before, the United Nations was telling them, "If you want money, you have to have peace talks." Now they don't.

It was heartbreaking out there. We gave the kids candy and taught them coping strategies. We taught them how to play Duck, Duck, Goose, which doesn't sound very therapeutic, but it gives them a sense of relief, of having fun, of not having to focus on how dismal their lives are.

In the United States, you see the terrible devastation and you hear the stories of people helping each other. It seems like the media is trying to say, "Oh, look, after the disaster, now the Sinhalese and the Tamils are getting along. Isn't that nice." But they aren't.

We left for Colombo the next day. On the way back, we stopped and rode an elephant. That was fun. I'm not even sure where we were, somewhere in the middle of the country.

We had this discussion among ourselves: "Gee, we just left these suffering people. Should we do this or not?" My feeling was that you have to give yourself some relief because it's just so hard.

People ask me if I want to go back. I tell them, "Not right away." After all that, I need a break.

(CHART) What Is Play Therapy?

Play therapy involves using toys, games, stories and art projects to enable traumatized children to identify their turbulent emotions and learn healthy techniques for coping with fear and grief.

Children typically are too young to have the vocabulary needed to express their feelings, but their actions during play can give therapists a window into their emotions.

Play therapy gives a troubled child a safe way to resolve emotional issues in a symbolic fashion, under the guidance of a trusted adult.

Jennifer Baggerly is hosting a meeting Thursday at USF for those interested in ongoing relief efforts. For details, contact her at baggerly@tempest.coedu.usf.edu.

Copyright © 2005, The Tampa Tribune and may not be republished without permission. E-mail library@tampatrib.com

Graphic

The Healing Games

PHOTO 6 CHART MAP

(2) Play therapist Jennifer Baggerly spends time with children at Ellis Garden refugee camp in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, left. Below, she passes out candy in Kalladi, where thirsty children were more interested in getting water. Photos from Jennifer Baggerly Orphans at Grace Church Orphanage in Trincomalee line up for some fun games as part of their therapy to overcome fears brought on by the Dec. 26 tsunami. (2) A group of children sing and clap along with Baggerly at a refugee camp in Kalladi, an area of Sri Lanka devastated by the tsunami. At right, Baggerly, second from left, and other play therapists have fun themselves — riding atop an elephant. Tribune photo by JASON BEHNKEN Jennifer Baggerly, a play therapist and USF professor, holds the piece of a sari found on a beach in Sri Lanka that she brought back. Her group was told that the tsunami had washed away women's saris, and rather than run away naked, they drowned. Tribune map Sri Lanka

Load-Date: July 13, 2005

End of Document

Fear the creeping powers of the state; THE ESSAY

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

September 7, 2007 Friday

First Edition

Copyright 2007 John Fairfax Publications Pty Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: SPECTRUM; Pg. 26

Length: 1610 words

Byline: Clive Hamilton, Clive Hamilton is the executive director of the Australia Institute. This is an edited extract of a talk delivered at the Melbourne Writers' Festival.

Body

The anti-terrorism laws that were designed to protect us are enforced at the whim of the Government and could soon threaten us more than any hidden enemy.

FRANZ KAFKA WROTE in *The Problem of Our Laws* that "it is an extremely painful thing to be ruled by laws one does not know". Kafka's story told of an imaginary kingdom ruled by secretive nobles who kept knowledge of the law to themselves. But I cannot help thinking that Australians are increasingly ruled by laws we do not know or understand. I am thinking particularly of the new anti-terrorism laws passed by federal and state parliaments. Who of us feels confident that we understand the anti-terrorism laws and how they might affect us? I certainly don't understand them and I follow these things quite closely.

I sometimes think that there are things I might do, such as having an outspoken opinion on terrorism or the security services, that could see police with guns come crashing through my door. I could go to the statute books and read the laws but I don't think that would be much help because so much in them is undefined and left to the police and security services to interpret as they will, or in response to government direction.

The case of Dr Mohamed Haneef has left many of us feeling disconcerted and worried that the rule of law is under threat. As far as we can tell, he did nothing more than give an old SIM card to a relative. He may very well not have known or suspected that the relative knew someone who subsequently committed an act of terrorism. The public has been shown no evidence he has broken any law, despite the Government's attempts to blacken his name with highly selective quotations from some emails, ones that on the face of it lend themselves to perfectly innocent explanations.

The secrecy that has enshrouded the claims against Haneef and the way in which the case against him was deliberately distorted by the Government and the police in the media, must make us wonder whether we could also at some point find ourselves locked up for no good reason and without the usual protections.

Anyone who is politically active in Australia, especially if they are critical of the Federal Government, must live with low-level anxiety about what might happen to them or their families if some unknown threshold is crossed. It is not just the politically active: just to know someone who might be active could land you in hot water.

Here are some of those indistinct thresholds that come to mind.

Fear the creeping powers of the state THE ESSAY

What might happen to me if I send an email to a supporter of the Tamil Tigers? Is that an illegal organisation? Are those who spoke out against the treatment of Haneef now under surveillance? What would happen if I wanted to find out what al-Qaeda really stands for? If I go searching on the internet, will an alarm bell ring in a high-tech basement somewhere? Should we hesitate before we use the word "bomb" when speaking to someone on the telephone? What could happen to my son if he joined a demonstration and some agitators at the front jostled police? Is he going to be dragged out and assaulted by men who refuse to identify themselves - something that has happened in the past year?

Recently, a former ASIO agent asked me to consider for publication a paper he had written that was critical of the anti-terrorism laws. My initial reaction was positive, particularly if he could shed light on how the laws were being misused. But then I found myself hoping that there would be nothing new or controversial in the paper because I would almost certainly have the police and security services barging into my offices, in the same way that they spent days camped in the offices of the Melbourne publisher Black Inc as it prepared to publish Andrew Wilkie's book *Axis of Deceit*.

Tabloid commentators and shock jocks will declare that if you haven't done anything wrong, there is nothing to worry about. But the point is that we don't know whether many things we might do are illegal or might make us subject to suspicion. The laws are not transparent and are no longer in alignment with our natural sense of what is right and wrong.

The laws remind us of Walter Benjamin's distinction between "the foreseeable punishment that accompanies the disobedience of the law, and the harsh, unpredictable and generally violent 'retribution' that comes about for transgressing secret or unwritten rules that are unknown to us". Benjamin, a Jew persecuted by the Nazis, knew what it was like to live in trepidation of an uncertain fate.

None of us has to study the Crimes Act to know that killing someone is wrong and punishable but in today's environment conscience can no longer be our guide. The sort of unpredictable retribution Benjamin spoke of certainly seems to have been the fate of Haneef.

More so than ever before in Australia, the police are empowered, if not in law then by implicit political fiat, to interrogate, intimidate and even assault people innocent of any crime but suspected of associating with the wrong people. They can admonish and warn off citizens, threatening them with unstated but implicitly dire consequences should they, for example, attend a protest during APEC or a demonstration against the US President, George Bush.

When this happens we are deprived of our rights. In an observation that now has a resonance in our country, the American academic Guillermina Seri wrote: "Citizen encounters with the police open up a territory of unpredictability that blurs the distinction between written and secret laws, normalcy and exception. They are ultimately regulated by unwritten norms that those in charge of policing administer through their discretionary power."

In a recent Quarterly Essay, David Marr tells the disturbing story of the treatment of a number of young men in Sydney who were arrested for events that occurred at the G20 demonstration in Melbourne last year. Squads of heavily armed police, some from counter-terrorism units, arrived at dawn, in one case kicking the door down. Houses were turned upside down. One of the young men told how he had previously been snatched off the streets of Melbourne by eight men who did not identify themselves. He claims he was punched and kicked and subsequently charged as one of those who occupied an office building during the G20 demonstration.

The police warned the demonstrators to stay away from protests and not to go anywhere near APEC. Each of these young people - "middle-class boys" as one observer called them - was severely shaken up. If the intention was to frighten them out of their political engagement, it was very effective.

Although breaking into offices and throwing things at the police are clearly illegal, anyone contemplating going to a protest nowadays must be worried that simply being there may have serious consequences. They know they will be photographed by security agents and they may well have a police file kept on them merely for exercising their democratic rights. We are in danger of returning to the dark days of the 1950s and '60s when ASIO, armed with

Fear the creeping powers of the state THE ESSAY

excessive powers, carried out surveillance of anyone regarded as vaguely left-wing, including peace groups, anti-war activists and women's groups.

The security organisations were largely unaccountable, at least to anybody that might take a critical view of their activities and attempt to rein them in. We have subsequently learned that ASIO had a paranoid culture that made it jump at shadows. Most operatives, including the leadership, had crude political views and their reports on the activities of individuals and groups judged a threat were often laughable, in retrospect at least.

These are the lessons of history, yet who today could have confidence that the current Federal Government and its agencies will implement the anti-terror laws fairly and with due attention to questions of natural justice?

For some time I took comfort from the fact that the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, Mick Keelty, appeared to be his own man, one committed to the fair and proper application of the laws. But, after the Haneef case, it seems to me that the federal police's reputation for independence and competence has collapsed and the force has become, in some respects, a political arm of the Government. I no longer have confidence in Keelty's independence and that makes me very apprehensive. Parliamentary scrutiny of the security services has gone from minimal to zero, with the Government's majority in the Senate and the browbeating of any potential Coalition dissenters.

If the Government, the Parliament and the leadership of the security services are all unable or unwilling to exercise discipline over the implementation of the laws and the courts take an increasingly restricted view of their role, what protections remain for Australian citizens?

There is no doubt that we face a real danger of terrorist violence in Australia and heightened security measures are essential to deal with this situation. But the power and discretion that the anti-terrorism laws give to the Government, the police and the security services have created a climate of fear and not just among people who might be worried about whether their actions are lawful. I am more afraid of being innocently caught up in the new security laws than I am of being harmed by terrorist bombs.

The Howard Government exercises unprecedented power in this country. It is unaffected by many of the checks and balances that have traditionally constrained executive power and has shown itself willing to use its power ruthlessly. We desperately need those checks and balances to be strengthened, otherwise the terrorists really will have won.

Graphic

Illustration: Kerrie Leishman

Load-Date: September 9, 2007

Why Muslims should have rethink on veil urge

Yorkshire Evening Post

October 10, 2006

Copyright 2006 JPIMedia Publishing Ltd All Rights Reserved

Length: 1688 words

Body

I agree with Jack Straw's statements about the veiling of Muslim women, even if I do feel suspicious about the reasons for most politician's statements.

Our features are what defines each one of us as a unique personality. Historically and socially, the reasons why features are hidden make sinister reading. They are hidden when there is a desire to depersonalise, or even dehumanise people.

The horrific images from Abu Ghraib are of hooded prisoners. Hiding their features gave permission to abuse, as they are made to appear as not fully human. On the other side of the same coin, hooding, masking, or hiding features under paint has historically been used by torturers, executioners and warriors to intimidate enemies and others regarded as inferiors, by hiding any sign of humanity, fear or compassion.

Traditions

Those of us who are unaccustomed to veiling traditions instinctively tend to fear and distrust those who hide evidence of personality or mood.

For myself, I would like to read some apologia for the practice of the veiling of women by practising Muslim readers. Whatever the nature of recent history, this country has been conditioned by well over 1,000 years of Christian culture. Until recent years, any respectable church going woman would wear a hat in church, because St. Paul urged women to do so as a sign of subservience to their husbands. As a result, large numbers of us tend to instinctively react to the religious veiling of one sex as a signal of inferiority - unless it's a signal of male inferiority, in that it's felt that we'll succumb to unbridled lust at the sight of a woman's face! Either way, it casts an unfavourable light on Islam.

I'd rather think out my opinions than rely on conditioned reflexes, so come on you Muslims - please give us some reasons.

TONY SCHOFIELD, Pudsey, Leeds

John Reid states Britain will not be bullied by Muslim fanatics, and Jack Straw requests Muslim women to consider removing veils.

This is a discussion that all British subjects of all ethnicities should engage in.

Failure to ask those 'sensitive' questions risks polarising this issue with the extreme right or the radical Islamist (who unfortunately are sometimes supported by some on the left).

Why Muslims should have rethink on veil urge

On the issue of emancipation of woman alone, Jack Straw's comments are helpful. Muslim woman are amongst the most marginalised groups, with disproportionate poverty and social exclusion. A Niqab veil will hardly help their cause!

Leeds, like Jack Straw's constituency in Blackburn needs real social and cultural cohesion based on shared values and visions, not separateness.

Lest we forget, after 7/7, the warning by Trevor Phillips, head of the Commission for Racial Equality, that Britain is sleepwalking towards segregation.

STEPHEN STEWART, Horsforth, Leeds

I may be big but I'm entitled to respect

This morning (Sunday October 8) whilst waiting for a bus on Broad Lane, Leeds, a teenage boy walked past me and loudly commented "Look at the size of you, what a beast."

When I tackled him about his insults he laughed and carried on walking. Four hours later, I am typing this and I am still shaken and tearful.

Now, I'll happily admit that I am not svelte. In fact, I'd say that I am fat, overweight or even obese. However, it is my prerogative to say that and no one else's. I am absolutely staggered that a total stranger felt it was acceptable to say something so hurtful, so personal.

I haven't been ridiculed like that since my school days.

And yet, deep down I know that it is indicative of the selfish, thoughtless and disrespectful attitude that prevails amongst a minority of teenagers in Leeds. Over the last few years, I have noticed a marked decline in behaviour in the city's youth. As regular user of public transport, I have heard shocking profanity, threats of violence and young girls talking about their sexual behaviour in a way that made me blush.

Broad-minded

The ridiculous thing is, I am not some easily-shocked pensioner or over-sensitive church goer. I am a 32 year old, broad-minded woman who works in the rather debauched world of television. If this behaviour shocks me; how do the older generation feel about it? I can only imagine their horror and upset.

And it is this thought I am trying to cling to for the rest of today. You see, since this upsetting incident my mind has been full of the things that I would call that foul-mouthed, track-suited boy were I to come across him again.

I'm a writer, so I can think of many hurtful, nasty, spiteful things that I would like to say to him; names I would like to call him and his parents; who obviously did an appalling job of rearing him.

But then I would be dragging myself to down to his level. And as my parents made the effort to bring me up properly, I know I couldn't do that and feel good about myself.

It's called respect; for myself and for other people. And it seems it is in short supply at the moment.

LISA HOLDSWORTH, Leeds

'Ludicrous' price for airport sell-off

Your correspondent Graham Hoyle (Letters, October 5) is absolutely correct.

The ludicrous amount of £40m was again mentioned the following day by the deputy leader of Bradford Council when Bradford was the last partner to agree to sell its share of Leeds-Bradford airport.

Why Muslims should have rethink on veil urge

It is obvious that a rare happening such as this attracts an auction and you let the bidders fix the price, not the seller.

London City Airport has a smaller throughput of passengers than Leeds and is incapable of expansion, yet several interested parties are fighting to buy it at a price suggested to be over £700m. In May 2001 Newcastle sold 49 per cent of its airport for £145m, admittedly with 25 per cent more passengers.

I appreciate that there may be other factors to be taken into consideration such as commercial income but, nevertheless, to even mention a figure as low as £40m must be a joke.

It is to be hoped that our councillors will thoroughly investigate the matter, including the best organisation to handle the sale, before putting it on the market. Of course, there could be a major difference; London City is owned by Irish financier Dermot Desmond who knows what he is doing.

PERCY STERN, Alwoodley

Great days in Beeston

WELL done my old friend Bernard Galvin on post-war Beeston (Letters, October 5).

I lived at three Beeston addresses - Parkfield Avenue; Cross Flatts Road and Cross Flatts Grove - in the period. At St Anthony's we filled the church at three masses every Sunday and no wonder when Mary Arnold (wife of headmaster, Joe) sang in the choir.

The big shy new boy, John Charles, queued regularly in Harling's fish shop, which backed on to Walkden's bakery at the top of Cross Flatts Grove.

Beeston was home to many Leeds United footballers - Harry Duggan, Tim Twomey, Jimmy Dunne, the famous brothers Milburn and others.

My mother had a wartime allotment in Cross Flatts Park. With the frequent tram service into town, it was a great place in which to live.

If Bernard makes contact with me and I will arrange for him to receive a complimentary copy of my published book.

G FITZPATRICK, Dunhill Rise, Leeds

Plea for public skips

I sort my rubbish and place it in the designated bin, I then wait for four weeks for it to be collected (green bin).

Surely if we are throwing away bulky plastic bottles, cartons, cans and such, they should be collected on much more frequent occasions (ie with the black bin on that day) and if you happen to be on holiday on that pick-up day you wait eight weeks for your bin to be emptied.

The overflow goes straight into the black bin and you have a Catch 22 situation.

Where the rubbish is still not sorted correctly, the only other solution is to place the large skips at various strategic places where people with

disabilities can throw their bulky waste.

These could be policed during the daytime when the skip is opened to stop misuse which we know goes on by certain people, then locked on a night to stop vandalism during darkness.

KM PERKINS, Moortown, Leeds

Who invented the suicide bomb?

Why Muslims should have rethink on veil urge

R Miller ('The bigots who force us to live in fear,' Letters, October 6) displays a decidedly partial view in his comments on atrocities in "the years 2000-plus," stating with regard to Muslims - "who else embraces the culture of the suicide bomb?"

The first suicide bombs are generally attributed to the **Tamil Tigers** (who themselves have been guilty of attempting to 'ethnically cleanse' Muslims in the past) starting in the late 1980s and continuing to the present day - indeed, this year alone there have been five such attacks. While it is fashionable to see suicide attacks as a Muslim trend, it is more appropriate to consider them as marks of terrorists regardless of their faith background.

Terrorism knows no boundaries, religious, political or otherwise. Attempting to pigeonhole terrorists only reflects our own prejudices.

U MEER, Leeds

Praise for the first-class NHS

I have recently spent 17 nights in St James's Hospital, Leeds, and I would like to thank all those concerned with my excellent care.

Far too often we hear of people undermining the NHS, when in fact we should be thankful we have such a first-class institution.

The staff work very hard indeed, often in very difficult circumstances.

I would like to praise all the staff on Ward 61, and also those on the SHDU where I spent a short period. The doctors, nurses and ancillary staff were dedicated and very caring.

I was particularly impressed by the housekeeping staff. They are often much maligned and poorly paid, but they did an excellent job. Carol, Linda and Jean kept Ward 61 spotless, as well as providing us with good food. On top of this they also kept us amused, which is essential when one is there for any length of time.

We often forget our wonderful GPs who also work very hard in the community, and thanks go to mine (Dr Rosa Bobet)

in particular.

Long live the NHS and thanks to the people who founded it.

DAVID MARTIN, Leeds

A bad bunch

Gordon Brown says Tony Blair is the most successful Labour leader ever.

I'm old enough to remember them all, from MacDonald and Attlee to Wilson, Callaghan, Foot and Kinnock.

The phrase 'best of a bad bunch' comes to mind.

M NICHOLSON, Barwick, Leeds

Load-Date: October 10, 2006

ROGUE ELEPHANTS; Attacks by elephants on humans, both in Africa and India, have been increasing dramatically in the past five years. As villagers tell of 'revenge raids', scientists argue that loss of habitat and social structure is seriously destabilising these magnificent creatures. Justin Huggler reports from Delhi; Animal behaviour

The Independent (London)

October 12, 2006 Thursday

First Edition

Copyright 2006 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: WORLD; Pg. 32

Length: 1536 words

Byline: Justin Huggler

Body

Almost everyone who has been on holiday to India or Sri Lanka has a story about their encounter with an elephant: getting stuck in a traffic jam behind one in Delhi perhaps, riding on an elephant in Rajasthan, or being blessed by the temple elephants of Tamil Nadu. But my own encounters with the elephants of the subcontinent have been rather more unsettling.

The first time I saw a wild elephant was on a remote jungle road in West Bengal in the dead of night. It was a bad stretch of road, known to be frequented by bandits and separatist militants. We shouldn't have been out there so late at night, and we were going too fast in our hurry to get back to civilisation.

Suddenly we noticed something blocking the road ahead. There was another car coming in the opposite direction, and all we could see was the silhouette picked out between the lights. It was about the size of a cow, but the shape was all wrong.

The driver blew the horn, but the shape didn't move. Nervously, he began to slow. As we drew closer, we saw what it was: a baby elephant trying to cross the road, trapped between the headlights of cars coming from both directions. If we hadn't slowed down, we would have killed it. And then, as our eyes adjusted to the darkness, we saw them all around us, some of their eyes glinting where they caught the lights from the cars: a entire herd of wild elephants on either side of the road, waiting patiently to cross.

A couple of days later I visited a village near by that had been demolished by a herd of elephants. It looked like an earthquake had hit it. It wasn't just the traditional flimsy bamboo huts that had suffered. Twenty-foot palm trees had been uprooted from the ground. The villagers told us the elephant herd had stood patiently by while a single male wreaked all this destruction on his own. And they were in no doubt about why he did it. The road had cut through

ROGUE ELEPHANTS Attacks by elephants on humans, both in Africa and India , have been increasing dramatically in the past five years. As villagers tell of 'reven....

the elephants' traditional migration route. They were making a new route, and were not happy at finding the village in the way. Then there was the night in Sri Lanka, another nerve-racking drive, on the way back from interviewing Tamil Tiger rebels. Military convoys were coming under regular attack on the road, and it wasn't a good place to be, but we weren't expecting the huge bull elephant who suddenly came out of the foliage and blocked our path. After a tense standoff, the big male eyeing us suspiciously, he finally moved on and let us pass.

But as we drove on, we saw what had made the elephant nervous. The Sri Lankan military was setting light to the jungle, to clear away possible hiding places for Tamil Tiger ambushes. A herd of elephants was watching from a distance as the soldiers set fire to their habitat, to the leaves that were their food. The elephant was not the aggressor here: man was. Now new research has begun to emerge, suggesting that the incidence of elephant attacks on humans is growing because elephants are suffering severe trauma as a result of seeing so many of their kin killed by humans, according to a report in the New York Times Magazine. Charles Siebert describes how male elephants have begun raping and killing rhinoceroses in South Africa. He reports that 90 per cent of male elephant deaths at one South African reserve are now attributable to other male elephants - compared to only six per cent in more stable elephant communities.

That elephants are capable of ferocious violence is nothing new: they are not quite the cuddly animals the West seems so fond of portraying. They were the tanks of the ancient world, used to charge in battle by the Persians and the Indians, a practice that was quickly copied by Alexander the Great. When Alexander's army mutinied after his death, the generals put paid to the insurrection by throwing 300 offenders to the elephants, who crushed them. Hannibal, of course, crossed the Alps with his war elephants in tow.

But what is new is that the incidence of wild elephant attacks on humans has been increasing drastically in recent years. Just over a week ago, a British man on his honeymoon in Kenya was trampled to death by an elephant in the Masai Mara game reserve. In the Indian state of Jharkhand, 300 people were killed by elephants between 2000 and 2004. In Assam, 239 people have been killed by elephants since 2001.

Until recently, this was thought to be simply down to the fact that human and elephant habitats are increasingly colliding. As human settlement and agriculture spreads over more and more of the available land, the wild jungles where elephants thrive are shrinking, bringing them into more regular contact - and conflict - with man. But now scientists are suggesting it may be more complicated, and tragic, than that.

In a forthcoming book, Gay Bradshaw, a psychologist at the environmental sciences programme at Oregon State University, argues that elephants are suffering from severe trauma as a result of decades of poaching, culling and habitat loss that have disrupted the structures of traditional elephant society. "Everybody pretty much agrees that the relationship between elephants and people has dramatically changed," Ms Bradshaw said. "What we are seeing today is extraordinary. Where for centuries humans and elephants lived in relatively peaceful co-existence, there is now hostility and violence. I use the term 'violence' because of the intentionality associated with it, both in the aggression of humans and, at times, the recently observed behaviour of elephants."

Eve Abe, a London-based animal ethologist, described how poaching in her native Uganda reached the point where whole herds of elephants were killed with grenades for their ivory.

You would think that in India, which has a long history of human co-existence with elephants, and where poaching has never reached those depths, things would be better. Elephants are revered by Hindus, who consider them holy to the god of hard work and commerce, Ganesha, who has an elephant head.

But all is not well in India either. This week thousands of people fled a village in Jharkhand after elephants kept returning for what appeared to be revenge raids after the death of a member of the herd. Indian officials say the villagers did not kill the elephant, a 17-year-old ***female***. They say she strayed out of the forest into the village, fell into an irrigation ditch and drowned. The villagers gave her a respectful burial three days ago, but ever since the herd has attacked the village. "We have not slept for three days and the few of us left are lighting huge bonfires to keep the elephants at bay without success," one villager, Sambhu Mahato, told reporters.

ROGUE ELEPHANTS Attacks by elephants on humans, both in Africa and India , have been increasing dramatically in the past five years. As villagers tell of 'reven....

Mr Mahato and his fellow villagers may have been innocent victims but it is not always so. In March it emerged that villagers in Uttaranchal state had killed an elephant in anger at repeated raids by a herd who destroyed their crops. There was no sign of poaching: the villagers buried the elephants' tusks along with the rest of its body, which they cut in pieces to hide their crime.

Ms Bradshaw and Ms Abe are arguing that there is more to the rise in elephant attacks than just a clash over living space. They say elephant society has been traumatised by the scale of death inflicted on it by mankind - and that has led to a rise in elephant aggression.

In Sri Lanka elephants have been victims of the war between the government and the Tamil Tigers; in Nepal they have been killed in the war between the government and the Maoists. And deep in the jungles of India, where most fear to go, they are probably being killed in the war being waged by India's Maoists, the Naxalites, too.

It's not only war. It was the same in the village I visited in West Bengal, at the invitation of a retired Indian army major who informed me in tones straight out of the Raj: "There's a rogue tusker on the rampage. Care to come and see him?" When I asked why, he replied: "For the adventure of it." But when we got there it wasn't a rogue male at all, it was the dominant male of a herd. And the herd came through at the same time every evening, as if they were systematically trying to remove the village. At first the villagers scared them away with firecrackers, but after a few visits, the elephants realised these were harmless.

No one was in any doubt it was because the nearby road had cut through the elephants' migration route, and elephants were being hit by cars. And everyone knew it was only going to get worse. There were plans to widen the narrow road into a four-lane highway to connect Assam and the north-east to the rest of India.

In Bombay, one of the elephants used in religious ceremonies was killed by a car last month. There was an outpouring of grief and calls for elephants to be banned from the city for their own safety. Bombay has now announced plans to microchip the elephants so they can limit the number allowed in the city - only four are licensed.

One of the more remarkable sights of India are the temple elephants of Tamil Nadu, who bless women by touching them on the head with their trunks. Perhaps this sight - of an animal of such extraordinary strength and power reaching out so gently to a woman who stands tiny before it - is a symbol of all we are about to lose.

Load-Date: October 12, 2006

Family: Interview: In 1971, Fleetwood Mac guitarist Jeremy Spencer left the band to join the Family, a notorious cult. Here, his children reflect on their bizarre upbringing, and their decision to leave and form a band

The Guardian (London) - Final Edition

November 26, 2005

Copyright 2005 Guardian Newspapers Limited

Section: Guardian Family Pages, Pg. 3

Length: 1488 words

Byline: Hester Lacey

Body

Jynxt is a far cry from the standard, manufactured, pop band. Its four members are all proper musicians, with long apprenticeships behind them, for a start, and the, vocalist, Tally Spencer can really sing. Perhaps it's not surprising, as Jynxt come from a seriously musical background. Jeremy Spencer, one of the founders of Fleetwood Mac, is the father of three of the band members, Nat, Ben and Jez, while Tally is the daughter of Jeremy Spencer's wife Fiona, from her second marriage.

It sounds as though the band ought to have enjoyed advantages most young musicians can only dream of: a father who is not only a virtuoso on the guitar but well-placed to put in a word for them and set their feet firmly on the path to success. However, it wasn't quite like that. One of the tracks on Jynxt's debut album, Bring Back Tomorrow, is called Don't Believe. "I don't believe in God," sings Tally, with a passion that again isn't surprising, given their extraordinary childhoods.

Fleetwood Mac's first hit, Albatross, established the band as a huge success and in 1971 they were touring the US. The afternoon before a major gig, Jeremy Spencer went out to visit a Los Angeles bookshop. He never came back. He was eventually located five days later, at the headquarters of the notorious Children of God cult, later renamed the Family. His head was shaved and he had been renamed Jonathan (he later changed his name back again). Fiona joined him, bringing Jez, their eldest son, who was then a toddler. And that was the end of his involvement with Fleetwood Mac and the start of a life travelling the world with the Family. He fathered a total of five children and Fiona went on to have three daughters with her new husband, though Nat, Ben, Jez and Tally don't like the term "half-sister": as far as they're concerned, they are all full siblings.

Why Jynxt? "It's because we think we're jinxed," explains Nat. "It started when we were kids. Was it when we arrived in Sri Lanka?"

"No, it was Greece," says Jez. "They had the biggest earthquake in ages, so then we went to Sri Lanka."

"Then there was the revolution and the Tamil Tigers . . ." says Nat.

"So we went to the Philippines," resumes Jez, "and Aquino got shot. So we had to move again . . ."

"And we'd been living just under the Mayan volcano, which hadn't erupted for about 100 years, till we came on the scene," finishes Nat. "So we went to Japan."

Family: Interview: In 1971, Fleetwood Mac guitarist Jeremy Spencer left the band to join the Family, a notorious cult. Here, his children reflect on their bizar....

This peripatetic life is a feature of the Family. And as children get older, they travel even further. The Family has a policy of separating families and sending teenagers away from their parents. "The belief is that you need to split up families to create one big Family," explains Jez. The Spencers were farmed out separately to communes as far afield as Macau, Brazil and Italy, changing country every year or two.

"The worst was Siberia in October," recalls Tally, with a shiver.

"But no matter where you were in the world, it was like being in the same place . . ." says Jez.

". . . like McDonald's," adds Ben.

They also regularly had their names changed, another curious Family practice. The idea is that you take on a Biblical name that reflects a particular theme or lesson: if you want to learn how to fish, for example, you might be renamed Peter. Girls whose behaviour isn't coming up to scratch frequently get renamed for Mary Magdalene.

Despite, or perhaps because of, their shared experience, they are close-knit, finishing each other's sentences and laughing over private jokes. "When we're not working we spend most of our time together," says Nat.

"I didn't know what it meant to be a younger sister and have older brothers when I was growing up," says Tally.

The family element has brought them together professionally as well, says Nat. "If you're in a band with other musicians you don't know so well, the first argument and they're off."

Early musical influences were almost non-existent. "We weren't supposed to listen to the radio or watch TV, except for the news," says Nat. "But we'd always had a thirst for music. We'd have our Walkmans on with music recorded from the radio on one side and their propaganda shit on the other in case anyone came to see what we were listening to."

Occasionally they went to a local school, but they were mostly tutored at home. They were allowed no books and even National Geographic magazine was eventually banned for its emphasis on evolution, says Nat.

"As you get older you start to see that the Bible doesn't make sense," says Ben. "The Song of Solomon is fine and dandy, but as a basis for science, no way."

Cards were forbidden; they weren't even allowed to sit around and chat. "Idleness is the devil's workshop!" says Tally. "Mostly we were cleaning."

"If you were naughty you had to stand in the corner and you couldn't come out until you'd learned a whole chapter," says Ben. "The Book of Proverbs was best, the verses are very short."

Corporal punishment was regular and thorough. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him," recites Ben.

"I first decided I didn't want to be in when I was about seven," says Jez. "We were in London and I'd had some time in school. Then we had to go out trying to sell literature in the pouring rain. I really wanted to go back to school."

However, getting out of the Family was not an easy business. "When I wanted to leave, they put me in a room for three days to think about it, with no food," says Ben.

"I first asked if I could go when I was 16," says Jez. "I left when I was 18 or 19, with my pregnant wife, who was 18 as well, and our daughter, who was nearly a year old."

"They liked to get people married and dependent," explains Nat.

"I just left," says Tally. "I said I'm going to America with my boyfriend and I'm telling you, not asking you."

Family: Interview: In 1971, Fleetwood Mac guitarist Jeremy Spencer left the band to join the Family, a notorious cult. Here, his children reflect on their bizar....

The "boys" are all somewhat older than they look: Jez is 37, Ben is 33, Nat's 31, while Tally is just 24. They all have children of their own, though all are now separated from previous Family partners. Of the eight siblings, only one of their sisters is still a part of the Family and she has been promoted to a senior position in the organisation; she writes regularly to tell the others that she's praying for them.

They received surprisingly little musical encouragement from their famous father, when he was around at all. "Dad would just take the guitar off me and play it himself," recalls Ben.

"He would say 'don't do it like that, do it like this,'" agrees Jez.

"I worked with him in Brazil and he was keen on teaching me the technical side of music," says Nat.

Despite their father's notoriously wild persona (he was known for on-stage antics involving condoms filled with beer) they are adamant that this was more of a staged image. "The wild side is more Mum," says Nat. "Her stories of her teen years . . . !"

Jeremy and Fiona met at a party when he was 18 and she was just 14, explains Jez, and Fleetwood Mac was just getting under way. "We blame acid on Dad joining, and Mum was just so young."

"There was that whole hippy thing going on at the time, communal living and no possessions," says Nat.

"It's great in theory but it doesn't work," says Jez.

They are pragmatic about their parents' split. "Dad was hardly ever home and this Italian was around, who was the same age that she was, 26," says Nat.

"He was tall, dark and handsome and she was lonely with five kids," chips in Ben.

"And he could cook!" adds Jez. "He could slaughter a cow, I've seen him."

"Dad is the most impractical man in the world," explains Nat. "He can't ride a bike, he can't swim, he can't drive a car. He can play the guitar and that's it. He was my hero until I was about eight and then I realised that he was a bit old-fashioned."

Tally still sees her mother quite regularly. "Our parents have mixed ideas about us, they can't place us."

"They don't agree with what we do, they would prefer us to be in the Family," says Ben.

However, all of them have firmly renounced religion in any form. "I don't believe anyone knows the answers, no religion has it right," says Nat.

"Why ask questions when you know no one has the answers?" asks Ben.

"Dad will be in till he dies," adds Nat thoughtfully.

"He's far too proud to admit he's wrong," says Jez.

"To admit he's been wrong all his life," says Ben.

Visit www.jynxt.com for more information on the band

The Children of God

History: It was set up in 1968 by the former pastor David Berg in Huntington Beach, CA. Later known as the Family of Love, the Family, and currently the Family International.

Family: Interview: In 1971, Fleetwood Mac guitarist Jeremy Spencer left the band to join the Family, a notorious cult. Here, his children reflect on their bizar....

Teachings: Berg openly advocated sex with outsiders and with children. **Women** members went "flirty fishing" to draw in potential converts by having sex with them. This practice ended in the 80s.

Current membership: There are now 8,000 cult members worldwide, including 400 in this country.

Famous members: Jeremy Spencer and the late River Phoenix Linda MacDonald

Load-Date: November 26, 2005

End of Document

Despair in paradise; End of ceasefire means Sri Lanka's renaissance is over, too

The Record (Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario)

August 4, 2007 Saturday

Final Edition

Copyright 2007 Metroland Media Group Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: FRONT; Pg. A8

Length: 1092 words

Byline: Associated Press

Dateline: KILINOCHCHI, SRI LANKA

Body

Palani Amma Subramaniam sits in quiet despair, surrounded by woven baskets and terra cotta pots in her deserted market stall in rebel-controlled territory in northern Sri Lanka.

Just last year, her business was booming amid a ceasefire in the decades-long war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels. Customers drove from hours away to buy crafts from her and other vendors in the market in Kilinochchi.

Now, that truce has all but collapsed, and so has her business, leaving the 66-year-old exasperated with both sides in the conflict.

"It doesn't matter who wins, whether it is the government or the LTTE. What we want is peace, to live," she said.

The recent return to open warfare between the government, dominated by the Sinhalese Buddhist majority, and Tamil rebels demanding a separate state for the Hindu minority, has plunged the already poor people of the rebels' mini-state in parts of the north into financial despair.

The government restricts access to the rebel areas, but in a rare visit by reporters, residents -- usually frightened into silence by the authoritarian rebel regime -- expressed growing frustration with the renewed fighting after a ceasefire from 2002 to 2005.

"That small period was the best time of my life. And now I'm getting close to dying and I don't know how things will turn out," Subramaniam said.

A partial economic blockade of the rebel areas that has been in place for nearly a year has badly damaged the economy. Unemployment has exploded, incomes have fallen and the price of everything from chicken to baby formula has soared.

With a gas embargo imposed by the Sri Lankan government, the streets are nearly empty of cars and trucks. Instead, they are filled with bicycles and motorcycles that are rigged to run on kerosene and trail a thick, syrupy smell behind them.

Despair in paradise; End of ceasefire means Sri Lanka 's renaissance is over, too

With no fuel, the electrical system has shut down. Only hospital generators and small generators run by the rebels and powered by smuggled fuel are still running, residents said.

Construction has also ground to a halt with a government ban on importing cement and other building materials to the area.

"Economically, it's a disaster," said Kandiah Mylvaganam, a Tamil activist.

Many families are only able to survive on remittances from relatives who work abroad, he said.

Despite the growing suffering, the rebels are unlikely to face a popular revolt, said Jehan Perera of Sri Lanka's National Peace Council, a think-tank.

"The problem is the people are very powerless. They are living in the midst of armies . . . There is no real possibility for public dissent," he said. "The people are just stranded. They are alienated from everything, they are helpless."

The head of the Tigers' political wing gave only vague assurances the situation would get better.

"We have established a system to improve health, education and the economy, and to encourage people to produce goods with the resources available here," S.P. Tamilselvan said without elaboration.

If the Tigers achieve their goal of establishing an independent Tamil state in northeastern Sri Lanka, the people here will have to get used to being self-sufficient, he added.

The residents of Kilinochchi and the surrounding rebel-controlled areas have grown used to the economic hardship of a civil war lasting more than two decades, which has killed 70,000 people.

During that time, Subramaniam suffered deeply. Her husband abandoned her in the late 1980s. A government air strike killed three of her children in 1995. A year later, she fled her home -- abandoning her shop and all the goods inside. She didn't return for five years, surviving on one meal a day and taking loans to afford even that.

But everything changed when the rebels and the government signed a ceasefire in 2002.

The roadblocks were opened and goods came through. Prices fell and salaries rose. Entrepreneurs broke ground on building projects and opened restaurants and shops.

"Business was booming," Mylvaganam said. "People were not scared to invest, because peace was in sight. That was what they thought."

Subramaniam wasted little time restarting her life. She came to the market in Kilinochchi, staked out a spot in the shade of a tree and was back in business. She quickly made enough money selling her pots and woven crafts to buy roofing and rafters and build herself a stall, she said.

She made \$3.80 to \$4.75 Cdn a day in the crowded market. Her son, who along with his wife and baby lives with her, made \$28 to \$38 a week transporting goods on his small tractor.

"We ate well, dressed well and even invited our relatives over for dinner," she said. "The roads were full, the markets were full, there were people everywhere."

Fighting flared 21 months ago, and last August the government again put strict restrictions on travel into rebel-controlled territory. Now the market is nearly empty.

On a good day, Subramaniam makes 95 cents. Often she makes nothing. Her son's business has dried up as well.

She pawned the gold jewelry she had bought during the heady days for money to eat.

Despair in paradise; End of ceasefire means Sri Lanka 's renaissance is over, too

For dinner, she now makes soup out of bread or rice and the cheapest local vegetables. Chicken, which has doubled in price to \$5.70, is out of the question. For breakfast, the family eats leftovers. There is no lunch. Every other day, she gets some eggs from her five hens.

With so little food, her daughter-in-law has been unable to produce enough breast milk to feed the baby, forcing the family to buy expensive infant formula, she said.

Sivapiragasam Jegatheeswaraw, 37, who manages a dry goods store, said the price of formula has risen nearly 70 per cent in recent months, while that of flour has increased 40 per cent. One-third of his customers stopped coming, and many of those who still do find they don't have enough money to buy what they came for, he said.

At the same time, the price of rice and other locally grown crops has plunged because of a market glut caused by travel restrictions that make it difficult to export goods. That means at least people don't starve, but farmers' salaries are tumbling.

Kamalam Sinarasa, 57, sits under a long thatch hut behind a pile of coconuts she is trying to sell. The price of the fruit has also collapsed, and her daily take has fallen from 250 rupees to about 100 (about 95 cents), she said. Behind her is a makeshift bunker she and her fellow coconut vendors dug as shelter from government air strikes.

Like many others, she has taken out loans to survive, betting that a better future will allow her to repay.

"We have to endure," she said.

Graphic

Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS , A Tamil civilian rides a bicycle the other way as **female** Tamil Tiger fighters return to their base after guard duty near Kilinochchi, 270 kilometres northeast of Colombo.; Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS , Palani Amma Subramaniyam is surrounded by baskets and terra cotta pots in her deserted market stall in the Tamil Tiger-controlled town of Kilinochchi.; Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS , S.P. Tamilselvan (foreground), head of the political wing of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, attends a funeral service for two Tamil fighters in Kilinochchi.

Load-Date: August 4, 2007

**CORRUPTION, THEFT, WASTE THE TSUNAMI A YEAR ON; THE UN DISASTER
ENVOY BILL CLINTON IS DUE TO ARRIVE IN SRI LANKA TOMORROW. BUT
HE WILL FIND THAT DESPITE THE PLEDGES OF POUNDS 1.8 BILLION IN AID
HAS BEEN DONE FOR THE VICTIMS**

The Evening Standard (London)

November 28, 2005 Monday

Copyright 2005 Associated Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

London
**Evening
Standard**

Section: A MERGE; Pg. 10

Length: 1686 words

Byline: ANDREW GILLIGAN

Body

IT TOOK about four minutes for the Sri Lankan tsunami to destroy Mr Kandasami's life, livelihood and property. It has taken, so far, 11 months for his government and the international aid community to fail to solve his problems.

Kandasami, a fisherman, used to live in a proper house next to the water where he took his boat out to fish. Now, like thousands of others along Sri Lanka's east coast, he lives, and will for the foreseeable future remain, in a small shed made of corrugated tin, one of more than a hundred lined up like barracks in the "transitional resettlement camp" of Salapaiaaru, near Trincomalee.

There are no windows in the huts here, no trees to give shade, no running water, no electricity, no sewers. When the sun shines on those hot tin roofs, the huts become unbearable. When it rains, puddles form on the concrete floors. Worst of all, although you can hear the sea in the background, it is cut off from the camp by bushes and barbed wire.

Dozens of bright new orange-and-white fishing boats with names like International Friendship" and Global Harmony", the gifts of wellmeaning Westerners, are scattered around the place, but nobody seems to be using them.

"We live on government rations," says Kandasami. "I fish a little in the river, but it is not like when I had my own place. We just want a permanent home so we can live our lives again."

That, for the moment, seems

CORRUPTION, THEFT, WASTE THE TSUNAMI A YEAR ON THE UN DISASTER ENVOY BILL CLINTON IS DUE TO ARRIVE IN SRI LANKA TOMORROW. BUT HE WILL FIND THAT DESPITE THE PLEDGES....

unlikely. At Salapaiaru, they're building a children's nursery, a health centre, a community hall. The temporary camps are taking on all the attributes of permanence.

Nearly a year after the devastation of Boxing Day 2004, the uncomfortable truth in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere in the region, is that nothing like enough has changed.

According to Kenro Oshidari, the World Food Programme's deputy director for Asia, 350,000 Sri Lankans are still receiving food aid from the WFP alone. Ninety thousand are in the "transitional camps" and nearly half-a-million are believed to be living with relatives.

In the hours immediately after the tsunami, there was a second, human wave of public concern, compassion and cash. More than Pounds 1.8 billion was pledged in aid to Sri Lanka, enough to rebuild it twice over. But in the weeks and months that followed, that flood of money has been reduced by the dams of bureaucracy, corruption and incompetence to more of a dribble.

The temporary tin roofs - tens of thousands of them - glitter from the air as you approach Trincomalee, or any other Sri Lankan coastal town.

According to government figures from the Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN), 5,737 houses in Trinco were damaged or destroyed by the tsunami.

By the same figures, the number of permanent houses so far completed to replace them is just 70. Actual physical building work (foundations, walls or roofs) has begun on a further 662 new houses - little more than 10 per cent of the number needed.

The picture is equally bleak, or worse, in most of the 13 areas affected by the tsunami - with just one shining exception.

In the south-coast district of Hambantota, only 1,057 houses were wrecked.

But so far 1,400 permanent homes have been built to "replace" them - 350 more than the town actually needs. Agreements for 3,000 more new homes have been signed.

Hambantota just happens to be the constituency of the Sri Lankan prime minister, last week elected president, Mahinda Rajapakse.

That, however, may not be the limit of Mr Rajapakse's largesse. A few months ago, Sri Lankan police began a criminal investigation into him after international funds intended to help tsunami victims in Hambantota allegedly ended up in private bank accounts controlled by Mr Rajapakse and his family.

The courts stopped the investigation after Mr Rajapakse argued that it might bias voters against him in the presidential election.

In the world outside Hambantota, matters are going less well. The town of Kiniya, a short ferry ride from Trinco, was devastated by the tsunami, and remains devastated.

The hospital is still in ruins, with mangled beds, surgical equipment and dentists' chairs piled up in the forecourt and sacred cows living in the children's ward.

On the other side of the country, the touristy west coast, the cleanup operation is further advanced, and more new houses have been built, but there are still many upsetting sights.

At a point along the Galle Road

CORRUPTION, THEFT, WASTE THE TSUNAMI A YEAR ON THE UN DISASTER ENVOY BILL CLINTON IS DUE TO ARRIVE IN SRI LANKA TOMORROW. BUT HE WILL FIND THAT DESPITE THE PLEDGES....

about 60 miles from the capital Colombo, the tourist buses of returning holidaymakers pass the same sort of ruins as there are in the east, some with angry banners hung from them demanding permanent homes.

If you live round here and want a temporary tin shack, possibly several miles inland, you can have one. But if you want to carry on living near your old livelihood of the sea, you have to be content with camping out in the ruins of your former house, underneath a tarpaulin.

"The government has given us nothing for months," says Ajith Bandula, who is trying to live with his wife and four children in the single room which remains of his old house. "All we have left is the floor, a wall, and one of the bedrooms."

A few miles down this same road, Peraliya, where the tsunami tore a packed train off the tracks, has become a ghastly kind of disaster theme park, sure to feature prominently in the TV anniversary coverage next month. Three of the carriages remain as a memorial to the hundreds who died. Some, though not the Sri Lankans, call it the country's "Ground Zero".

But the tourist coaches that call in are besieged by crowds of bereaved women, begging for money, in a spectacle many locals find deeply distasteful.

"We are becoming a beggar village," says Alappu Darunadasa, Peraliya's self-appointed chief. "Some of the women even exaggerate their losses to make more money." The women, in turn, accuse Darunadasa of embezzling funds meant for them to build himself a house.

The arguments in Peraliya symbolise how the tsunami, which once looked like uniting this deeply fragmented country, is pulling some of its people further apart.

Attempts by the government to share aid with areas of Sri Lanka controlled by the separatist Tamil Tigers resulted in hardline anti-Tamil parties quitting the ruling coalition.

The ceasefire with the Tigers, brokered in 2002, is starting to fray. In parts of the east, families bereaved by the tsunami have been bereaved again by a gradual, stealthy growth in political violence. Mr Rajapakse won the presidency by adopting a hardline tone towards the ceasefire.

And the aid effort, invested with so many hopes last year, is viewed by many Sri Lankans with the deepest cynicism.

A report by Sri Lanka's own auditor-general, Sarath Mayadunne, which received almost no publicity outside the country, found that as of the end of July only 13.5 per cent of the foreign aid money donated to the government had been spent.

He said there had been "widespread misappropriation of funds", along with "waste" and "corruption". Initially, he said, it was understandable because proper systems and controls were not in place, but "even after the emergency phase was over, the irregularities continued".

Shipping containers of aid took weeks or even months to clear, he said, with the result that nearly 700 containers were simply abandoned at the Colombo port after the donors lost hope of being able to clear them.

"Blatant violations" of procure-

ment codes were observed, Mayadunne said, detailing the disappearance of goods including 65 electric generators and 78 water tanks in one district alone.

Some people were paid 250,000 rupees (Pounds 1,500) as compensation for lost houses that were worth only 10,000 rupees. Others had been paid compensation, even though their houses were not damaged at all.

Patrick Fuller, of the Red Cross in Sri Lanka, admits the process is slow.

CORRUPTION, THEFT, WASTE THE TSUNAMI A YEAR ON THE UN DISASTER ENVOY BILL CLINTON IS
DUE TO ARRIVE IN SRI LANKA TOMORROW. BUT HE WILL FIND THAT DESPITE THE PLEDGES....

"We have committed to building up to 15,000 houses on government-owned land, but it took the government until July to allocate that land to us."

But he cautions against expecting results too quickly. "When you are building thousands of houses it does take a long time, anywhere in the world."

It's very misleading to drive down the Galle Road and think nothing has changed in the last year - actually quite a lot has changed."

Aid agency wars haven't helped, either. The emergency relief effort was hampered by rivalries, and there still seem to be problems. Geoffrey Dobbs, of Adopt Sri Lanka, a small agency in the south-west, says they erected six new toilets at a school in Tangalle. These were then promptly demolished by Unicef, who put up 24 new toilets of their own instead.

Yet not everywhere is without hope.

A key issue holding up progress might soon be resolved. After the tsunami, the government banned any new building within 100 metres of the shore - one of the reasons that those houses and hospital in Kiriya are still in ruins, along with so many thousands of other coastal buildings.

Now, however, given the needs of fishing communities to be near the sea, President Rajapakse has pledged to abolish the buffer zone. If the promise is honoured, it will allow the development of some of the devastated areas to restart.

At Beruwela, on the west coast, a highly effective project by the Red Cross is funding tsunami survivors to rebuild their own homes, giving out the funds in gradual chunks.

Once you've built the foundations, you get the money for the walls, and so on. There are engineers and architects on site to advise. "Psychologically it is so much better for them, and they are receiving money direct without any corruption," says the site co-ordinator, Milton Pereira.

And on the other side of the country, at the Trincomalee hospital, we found that dozens of **women** from Kiriya, Nilaveli and other devastated areas were coming in to the maternity unit to have their sterilisations reversed.

"They want to replace the children they lost in the tsunami," said Jamuna Arudparigasam, the medical officer in the special care baby unit.

"The children will repopulate the country and will care for their parents when they grow old."

Where government bureaucrats are failing to deliver, it is comforting to learn how much people can still do for themselves.

Load-Date: November 28, 2005

ONE-STOP MOVIE PICKS

Sunday Herald Sun (Melbourne, Australia)

November 30, 2003 Sunday

Copyright 2003 Nationwide News Pty Limited

Section: TV GUIDE; Pg. X10

Length: 1750 words

Byline: CLARK FORBES

Body

TONIGHT

Principal Takes A Holiday

4pm, Seven (G)

Daft blackboard jungle comedy with silly parents promising their delinquent son \$10,000 to behave throughout his final school year. Of course, he mucks up and tries to cover up. Why did they ever ban corporal punishment? *

The Story Of Us (1999)

8.30pm, Seven (M)

Or, When Harry Broke Up With Sally. Director Rob Reiner looks to the dark side with Bruce Willis and Michelle Pfeiffer in the domestic doldrums. They and the picture need more of what Meg Ryan had in that cafe scene from When Harry Met Sally. **

All The King's Men (1999)

8.30pm, ABC (M)

At Gallipoli, a company of volunteers advanced into Turkish fire and disappeared. Eyewitnesses spoke of a strange cloud that enveloped the men before they vanished, and Winston Churchill described it as "the greatest unsolved mystery of this century".

The Fifth Element (1997)

8.30pm, Ten (M)

What luck Bruce Willis just happens to be the driver of a cab an alien flags down in Manhattan. There is so much high-voltage fun running through this comic sci-fantasy -- gleefully engineered by director Luc Besson -- it is hard not to be pleurably shocked. ***

Payback (1999)

ONE-STOP MOVIE PICKS

8.30pm, Nine (M)

This brutal crime drama adapted from the novel *The Hunter* could have been less brutal and more entertaining. Mel Gibson role-reverses from his lovable loose cannon into a murderous, nutter. Lee Marvin made a better fist of it in John Boorman's *Point Blank*, adapted from the same book. **

French Kiss (1995)

10.30pm, Seven (PG)

Meg Ryan overcomes her fear of flying, cheese, second-hand smoke and the French and learns Paris really is the city of love in this frothy romantic romp. While not as sexy as the title suggests, Ryan and Kevin Kline, as her attractive opposite, make a saucy pair. **

Surviving Picasso (1996)

1.10am, Nine (M)

The Merchant-Ivory machine glams up this gorgeously mounted portrait of the artist as a dirty old man. Picasso (Anthony Hopkins) is framed through the eyes of Francoise (Natascha McElhone), a 23-year-old painter who gave him 10 years more than he deserved. **

MONDAY

Black Hawk Down (2001)

8.30pm, Showtime (MA)

PAY The raid by US Rangers against Somali warlords in Mogadishu on October 3, 1993, turned out to be the darkest hour for American arms since Vietnam. For Eric Bana this rapid-fire, full-metal-jacketed actioneer turned out to be his finest hour. ***

Things Change (1988)

8.30pm, Encore (PG)

PAY Gino the elderly shoe repairman (Don Ameche) agrees to take the fall for a mob hit, but before rolling over to the feds has to spend three days at Lake Tahoe with Jerry the Mafia low-life (Joe Mantegna). The twist? Jerry takes a shine to the old geezer and the two paint the Tahoe red. **

Metro (1997)

8.30pm, Seven (M)

Eddie Murphy's shameless attempt to recreate the Beverly Hills Cop vibe: maverick cop seeks revenge, nutso villain with a double-life, girlfriend-in-danger, mismatched partner, shootouts, car chases, and big bangs. Hey, all that and Eddie too. What's wrong with that? **

Dead Man Walking (1995)

10.25pm, Movie Extra (MA)

PAY Sean Penn's killer has a quiff and a swagger that makes him hard to like. Susan Sarandon's nun looks like a saint and acts like one trying to save the creep's life and when that fails, his soul. Evil and forgiveness collide on death row. ****

Hiroshima, Mon Amour (1959)

ONE-STOP MOVIE PICKS

10.30pm, World Movies (PG)

PAY Film students love it; you may hate it. Supposedly the high-water mark of the French "new wave" movement, this film about a French director making an anti-war film in Hiroshima examines the fallout from all the big issues -- love and annihilation. **

Girls Can't Swim (2000)

10.45pm, SBS (M)

These two girls may not be able to swim, but they have plenty of fun floundering about in the shallows of life as summer comes to Brittany. Trouble is, the tide is rushing in and one is about to be tragically swept away. **

TUESDAY

Love, Murder And Deceit (1996)

noon, Seven (M)

A rich, sick man marries his nurse; she then has an affair with his stepson and the pair plan the old geezer's removal from life support. Rachel Ward must have needed the pay cheque. *

The Golden Bowl (2000)

8.15pm, Showtime 2 (M)

PAY Merchant-Ivory's lavish but suffocating adaptation of a Henry James novel, filled with fabulous frocks, heaving bosoms and tightly-laced corsets. The story concerns -- as they all do -- love, betrayal, and cracked facades. *

Mercury Rising (1998)

8.30pm, Ten (M)

Bruce Willis as a loose cannon FBI agent who stands up for an autistic child targeted for death by a government agency. Bruce does what he always does -- plays the loner with only true grit and a Glock against technology, technicians and state sanctioned terror. Guess who wins? ***

Blink (1994)

8.30pm, Movie Extra (M)

PAY One of any number of films about disabled women stalked by nutters. This off-the-shelf mystery about a cynical Chicago cop and a vulnerable murder witness is saved by Aidan Quinn and Madeleine Stowe steaming up like windscreens in winter. **

This Is My Moon (2000)

10.50pm, SBS (M)

Weird Sri Lankan drama about a soldier pursued by a village woman. The back story is simple enough -- the impact of the Tamil Tigers insurgency on rural life -- but the way the film is edited may stump some viewers. *

Old Nags (2000)

12.35am, SBS (M)

Four women eking out an existence in the "new Russia" hit back when one of their number is tricked out of her apartment by a crooked fishmonger. Part musical, part comedy, part farce and more fun than Perestroika. ***

ONE-STOP MOVIE PICKS

WEDNESDAY

Hidden In Silence (1996)

noon, Seven (M)

The Anne Frank of Warsaw. A Catholic maid hides her Jewish employers in her attic for two

years under the very noses of the German soldiers. Compelling, and compassionate tale of resistance against impossible odds. **

High Tide (1987)

6.45pm, Encore (M)

PAY A woman with no future discovers the past she's never had. Judy Davis in the perfect role: a back-up singer for an Elvis impersonator who lives in a caravan park. Director Gillian Armstrong keeps everyone in tune. ***

CONTINUED Page 11

Mulholland Drive (2001)

8.30pm, Movie One (MA)

PAY Planet Lynch where reality is never what it seems. David Lynch's (Blue Velvet, Twin Peaks) fantasy demands we surrender disbelief and take a walk on the wild side with this exotic parable about Hollywood and the toll it exacts on innocents. ****

My Sweet Home (2001)

10pm, SBS (M)

Bruce from Chicago falls for Anke of Berlin in this strudel-sweet love story. Lacking family for a pre-wedding get-together Bruce rounds up the patrons of a bar for a knees-up. Will the wedding go ahead? Worth it for the great gypsy band. ****

THURSDAY

Monsoon Wedding (2001)

6.35pm, Movie One (M)

PAY A movie that wraps you in a warm embrace as it cheerfully tackles the chaos of a Bombay wedding. Mira Nair's film hits the bullseye on family affairs, spicing up the mix with just the right blend of laughter and tears. ***

The Lavender Hill Mob (1951)

8.30pm, Fox Classics (PG)

PAY More fun than you can have melting down gold bars. Classic Ealing comedy caper with Alec Guinness, Syd James, Stanley Holloway and Alfie Bass helping themselves to a load of bullion and being almost foiled by a group of schoolgirls. ***

FRIDAY

Tequila Sunrise (1988)

8.30pm, Nine (M)

ONE-STOP MOVIE PICKS

Two lifetime pals, Mel Gibson and Kurt Russell, both from the wrong side of the tracks and on opposite sides of the law fall for cute and respectable restaurateur Michelle Pfeiffer. Nicely shot with mature performances, but far too long. **

Stripes (1981)

8.30pm, Ten (M)

Bill Murray signs up for Uncle Sam because he has nothing better to do and discovers life in the army is not as rosy as the recruiting ads claim. Murray at his laid-back best while the company includes heavy comic artillery in the shape of John Candy and Harold Ramis. **

Behind Enemy Lines (2001)

8.30pm, Showtime (M)

PAY This slick action flick. Owen Wilson as a Marine jet jockey shot down and on the run behind enemy lines makes the most of this gung-ho nonsense, but Gene Hackman as his CO is just chasing a pay cheque. *

The Caine Mutiny (1954)

8.30pm, Fox Classics (G)

PAY A naval officer (Van John-son) takes command of a World War II destroyer from Capt Queeg (Humphrey Bogart), his nutter skipper and later faces court-martial. Force 10 drama both at sea and in the dock. ***

Thirteen Days (2001)

8.30pm, Movie One (M)

PAY Who will blink first: Ken-nedy or Kruschev? For 13 days in 1962 the world prayed someone would. This political drama tri-umphs with raw emotion and as a test of the limits of human endurance. ***

Sex, Lies And Videotape (1989)

8.30pm, Movie Greats (M)

PAY Steven Soderbergh's daz-zling debut, which proved he was a writer and director of uncommon gifts. A movie of great power and emotion that also manages to be funny and scorchingly erotic. ***

SATURDAY

Billy Madison (1995)

7.30pm, Ten (PG)

The film in which Adam Sandler unleashed the moronic low-life that would soon become his trademark on an unsuspecting public. Love him or loathe him, you really have to laugh at this tale of an idle rich kid sent back to school to prove he is worthy to inherit the family firm. **

Milk Money (1994)

8.30pm, Nine (M)

After befriending a prostitute-with-a-heart-of-gold (Melanie Griffiths), a 12-year-old kid (Michael Patrick Carter) attempts to set her up with his widowed father (Ed Harris). Plays better than it sounds. **

Star Wars: Episode 2 Attack Of The Clones (2002)

ONE-STOP MOVIE PICKS

8.30pm, Showtime (PG)

PAY More wooden performances than in a first growth forest cannot dim the fact that there are enough thrilling and massively enjoyable moments to silence a chain-saw. "Clones" redeemed George Lucas's reputation after the woeful Phantom Menace. ***

Faithless (2000)

9.30pm, SBS (M)

Art imitates life in actor-turned-director Liv Ullmann's tale of marriage and betrayal. This tale, as bleak as a December day in Oslo, reminds us of Ullmann's infidelity with legendary director Ingmar Bergman. Love can be a bitch. **

Kiss Of Death (1995)

10.20pm, Encore (M)

PAY The high-wire thriller that delivered the kiss of death to David Caruso's (NYPD) film career. The film's OK, but why did Caruso allow himself be upstaged by appearing with Nicolas Cage who sinks his presence faster than cement boots? **

Load-Date: November 29, 2003

End of Document

Feeding on conflict

Hindustan Times

March 20, 2005 Sunday 1:14 PM EST

Copyright 2005 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 1236 words

Byline: Hindustan Times

Dateline: NEW DELHI, India

Body

NEW DELHI, India, March 20 -- Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, has said that the death toll from small arms "dwarfs that of all other weapons systems, and in most years exceeds the toll of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms could well be described as weapons of mass destruction - yet there is no global non-proliferation regime to limit their spread".

Now consider these facts.

There are more than 650 million small weapons in the world today or one for every ten persons and growing at the rate of 7-8 million per year. This includes assault rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, light mortars, land mines and explosives.

There are 16 billion bullets available or two bullets per man, woman, or child in the world.

More than 500,000 people are killed by these small firearms every year or one every minute. Nearly 60 per cent of the weapons are in private hands. Men hold most of the weapons and women are victims of homicide, armed violence and degradation.

The world's most powerful countries, the US, Russia, China, France and Britain, account for 90 per cent of the conventional weapons exports. Between 1999 and 2003, the US, Britain and France earned more from exports to Latin America, Africa and Asia than the aid they provided to these regions. On an average, developing countries spend about \$ 22 billion a year on arms imports. Half of this amount would have been enough to send every child to primary school. Instead 300,000 child soldiers are involved in conflicts all over the world.

Africa has been the worst hit by the spread of small arms. In Sudan, for instance, you could exchange a chicken for an AK-47 a few years ago; in north-east Kenya, the price was two cows. In June 2003, there were 24 million guns in Iraq, one for every man, and available for \$ 10. There are about 70-100 million AK-47s that have been produced so far; 7 million American M-16s and 7 million German G-3s. Assault rifles have a life of 30 to 40 years.

More than 1,000 companies located in 98 countries produce these weapons.

Twelve of the world's biggest arms-producing companies are in the US. The global military procurement industry is worth \$ 800 billion annually - the largest in the world. The US's share of this market is about \$ 360 billion, slightly less than the size of the illicit drugs market that is worth \$ 400 billion. In 2003, the US exported \$ 741 million worth of small arms and imported about \$ 602 million. There are about 83 to 96 guns per 100 persons in the US, virtually one per person.

Feeding on conflict

Given the size of the global arms industry, the US share in this and interests of not only the gun lobby, but of the manufacturers, it is difficult for the arms industry to agree to any curbs. Arms sales abroad help maintain global dominance and there are domestic economic considerations. The West worries that an irresponsible or, worse, a failed State, usually to be found in Asia, would use a WMD or pass it on to even less reliable but more fundamentalist elements. Yet in the rest of the world, the reality of a death every minute by small arms does not lead to a commensurate seriousness in imposing restrictions.

It is, therefore, not surprising that at the UN-sponsored Conference on Small Arms and Weapons in July 2001, the US played spoilsport and wanted the very weapons that caused the most deaths excluded. The Americans were going to be forcefully unilateralist, even before September 11, 2001.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are the other two countries where lethal firearms were inducted both by the Soviet Union and the US. Once the conflict was over, everyone packed up and left, leaving behind one of the most dangerous of the small arms problems. Jehadi groups in Pakistan and warlords in Afghanistan were left extensively equipped with these lethal small arms. So massive was this infusion that it is estimated that there are 5.8 people per gun in Pakistan today. Pakistan has a population of 140 million, which means that there are about 25 million guns in that country. Indian security forces say they have recovered 30,000 AK-47s from terrorists operating in J&K. Many more could still be inducted into the region or elsewhere in India.

Those who smuggle contraband of one kind do not hesitate to diversify their trade. Illicit trade in guns, gems, drugs from this region to Central Asia, Russia and beyond is now rampant. Russian and Chinese arms find their way from the Far East to Cambodia and Laos, then are smuggled into Thailand to reach Chittagong for supply to Indian insurgent groups in the North-east and the Left extremists or the highly weaponised political set-ups, especially the student organisations, in Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka, the **LTTE** runs a well-organised maritime arms import establishment. Pakistan, India and Bangladesh now have a domestic and illegal handicraft industry in the manufacture of small weapons. An entire covert system thrives and the cancer is spreading.

The main concern for the US, however, is only about MANPADS - Man Portable Air Defence Systems like the Stinger or the Russian SA-7. Easy to conceal, carry and use, relatively inexpensive, MANPADS could easily be the terrorist's favourite weapon, particularly against commercial aircraft that are vulnerable at take-off and landing. Thousands of these shoulder-fired weapons are in circulation

in the black market. There may be some that have been cannibalised or some others sent out by recipient countries for attempts at reverse engineering. While the US and Russia have recently agreed to share information about what they supply to other countries, there is no agreement to curtail production or export.

Poverty and conflict feed on each other. Armed groups prevent access to hospitals and schools or markets and land, leading to further conflict. Perhaps the comment by The New York Times in its editorial of August 11, 2003, was the most telling: "The ease of obtaining AK-47s helps turn grievance into wars."

James Wolfensohn, the World Bank president, had pointed out the fundamental imbalance in the world, where \$ 900 billion is spent on defence, \$ 325 billion on agricultural subsidies and only \$ 50 to 60 billion on aid. A correction of this imbalance would go a long way in finding the ultimate solution.

Quite often weapons once sold legally get transferred or resold or shipments get rerouted to clandestine buyers. An essential component of the war on terror would have to be tightening of export regulations, curtailing production, standardised serial marking of weapons and stricter end-user certification. Instead, what we have today is that in pursuit of its war on terror, the US has begun to supply more arms to countries considered to be their allies in the war on terror, but in many cases, are also States from where terrorist groups operate.

The UN is to hold a follow-up conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2006. Unless the conference seriously takes up the issues of production, distribution, serial marking, end-use guarantees and stock registers, it will not lead to any solution. The legal and illegal trade must be tackled together. If drug abuse is sought to be tackled through reduction in supply, why not do the same for small arms too?

Feeding on conflict

The Hindustan Times is provided through HT Syndication, New Delhi.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: March 22, 2005

End of Document

Travel: The Big Trip: East in Eden: Mimi Spencer on how Sri Lanka is healing, growing, moving on

The Guardian (London) - Final Edition

October 22, 2005

Copyright 2005 Guardian Newspapers Limited

Section: Guardian Travel Pages, Pg. 4

Length: 1762 words

Byline: Mimi Spencer

Body

It has been said that if all the inhabitants of Sri Lanka were to leave the island for six months they would return to nothing but a vast consuming blanket of vegetation. You can almost feel this island growing beneath your feet. The intensely orange earth is home to giant bamboo, rubber trees, fat pineapples, towering teak, king coconut, coffee, tea, cocoa, bananas - red, yellow, green - and some of the warmest, most welcoming people on the planet.

And this is where the contradictions begin. It is also an island nation haunted by the violence of the ***Tamil Tigers***, still intent on their separatist agenda. With a presidential election looming, this vital, vibrant place seems more fragile still. And then, of course, there's the tsunami, which devastated a thin crescent of coastline to the east and south.

Yet this flawed jewel is more than worth the 11-hour flight from London. On arrival, you feel as though you have stepped into a biome at the Eden Project. And, in truth, it is some sort of paradise, an immediate assault on the senses, particularly if yours have been dulled by the ubiquitous grey of western city life. A snake of schoolchildren pass by in snow-white uniforms, their feet bare; men in slacks stare from shacks; ***women*** in emerald saris dodge tuk-tuks. A roadside glass cabinet houses a weeping Jesus; another is home to Buddha. Next door, a Hindu temple is overrun with carvings of the gods, executed in random paint-box colours. Motorbikes careen past, laden with boxes of fish and bolts of batik. A snake crosses the road. I could have sworn he looked left and right first, which is more than the human inhabitants seem to manage.

The easiest - and safest - way to get around Sri Lanka is to hire a driver, who will also act as your guide, money changer and translator. Mine is Karu, a man well versed in the history, traditions and quirky driving practices of his native land.

Driving through this country is ideal in many ways, so long as you don't have a problem with triple-overtaking. It gives the foreign observer time to stop and stare, to drink in this stew of colour and sound. A man squats in the dust, fixing the long-broken spokes of a bicycle wheel. Bungalows huddle beneath the shelter of palms, a jumble of coconuts, stray dogs and tall lilies at the gate. A kingfisher sits on a telegraph pole.

There is something jarring about stepping from this into the rarefied atmosphere of a top-notch resort hotel. The Beach at Negombo, 20 minutes drive from Colombo airport, is a five-star affair, designed in a breezy, modern style. The rooms are generous, with vast baths, waterfall showers and impressive views over the Indian Ocean. In the morning, square-sailed catamarans fill the view as far as the eye can see, out early to secure the catch of the day.

Travel: The Big Trip: East in Eden: Mimi Spencer on how Sri Lanka is healing, growing, moving on

On the three-hour drive to Kandy, we stop at Spice Garden Number 27. A genial gentleman ushers me past his specimen chillies and cardamom, vanilla pods and sandalwood, ingredients in his Ayurvedic cures for acne and flatulence, baldness and erectile dysfunction. I spend 2,000 rupees on a slimming tonic made from unripe pineapples and lime juice. It is the least I can do, having enjoyed a complimentary cup of hot chocolate and an invigorating scalp massage, while macaque monkeys larked about in the coconut palms overhead.

Villa Rosa, our next overnight stop, is perched at the peak of the hill in Asgiriya near Kandy, looking out over the lush, deep valley of the Mahaweli, Sri Lanka's longest river. From its lookout balcony, you can spot the white tip of a stupa rising above the trees. Or herons, cormorants or a green parakeet soaring above the men on bamboo rafts who dredge illegally for sand at the water's edge.

In the evening, the idle visitor can sit beneath Venus, serenaded by a chorus of exotic nocturnal sounds. Excellent curries are brought to your table at a time of your choosing: pumpkin, green bean, aubergine, with sambals of onion or coconut, chutneys and pastes made from coriander and curry leaf and sweet, heavy mango.

The villa itself is laid-back rather than chic, comfortable rather than cool - which is all to its advantage. This place is an organic, rightful part of its environment, not some hotel-chain imposition grafted on to the landscape. It's what appealed to its German owner Volker Bethke who arrived in Sri Lanka 20 years ago and has taken root. And it's what delights visitors, most of whom arrive here on a journey of discovery rather than tourism.

Villa Rosa can arrange week-long Ayurveda courses, combining massage, yoga and meditation - great news for a massage junkie like me. I've been massaged halfway round the world - in a dimly lit room at the base of Nepal's Annapurna range; by twin masseurs in an uptown spa in New York; by Buddhist monks in a Bangkok monastery. Sri Lankans, I discover at the Villa Rosa, go in for plenty of oil and a lot of simian-style scratching, followed by herbal steam baths.

The next morning, after blissful sleep, Karu accompanies me to the captivatingly named "Temple of the Tooth" in the centre of Kandy. It houses Sri Lanka's most sacred Buddhist relic, a molar of the Lord Buddha himself, said to have been smuggled out of India in the hair of a princess in 1542. Today, it resides in a seven-deep nest of gold caskets, locked behind silver doors. The faithful, curiously, bring it breakfast and lunch, queuing to offer curry and rice and, perhaps, coconut sambal.

That night, I succumb to my inner tourist and take in the Kandyan dancers at the city's cultural centre. Euro-tourists watch as the traditional mask dance is performed - symbolising the killing of a cobra by a Gurula bird. "This is usually performed to drive away evil spirits," my programme notes tell me, "and is still being used today as a method of psychiatric treatment." We all stand for the Sri Lankan national anthem and file out into the cool night.

I leave Kandy on the morning train, meandering through forests of pine and eucalyptus towards the hill stations of Nuwara Eliya and Bandarawela in the southern Highlands. For 500 rupees, the observation carriage at the rear of the train offers fantastic views, softer seating and the chance to share spiced chickpeas with a family of Sinhalese on their way to a wedding in the hills.

The clickety-clack is meditative, and your eye seeks out the incongruous in the landscape. A man sits on a discarded sofa in the middle of the rainforest. Vermillion hibiscus grows lazily over a pile of mattresses dumped beside a waterfall. A woman breaks rocks with a chisel, her washing strung out overhead like prayer flags. Another makes bricks by hand, beneath a sign saying, "This way to the Giga Hut, the leading edge in superhighway". A water buffalo treads rice, watched by a man on a mobile phone. This is where eras and worlds collide. In Sri Lanka, computers are switched on at an auspicious time, as decreed by the local astrologer. Marriages are ordained by horoscope.

The train climbs. Boys in blue shorts play cricket on dusty fields. Butterflies dance. In Bandarawela, Karu meets me from the train for the short journey up to Kirchhayn Bungalow - once a 700-acre tea plantation, now reduced to the 50 still owned by the Bostock family after the government's nationalisation of the industry in the early 70s. The tea

Travel: The Big Trip: East in Eden: Mimi Spencer on how Sri Lanka is healing, growing, moving on

place it was grown, while a manservant delivers spiced ginger biscuits on a china plate. Had the wireless been broadcasting an address from George VI, I wouldn't have been at all surprised.

Kirchhayn doesn't deal in fluffy towels or well-stocked mini-bars. But it does have vast wooden four-posters and a sense that time will leave you be. It has double-height ceilings and bags of authentic charm. The books are dog-eared and well-loved; the silver-framed photos are of the Bostocks on the croquet lawn. The interior has changed little since the 30s - though the bathrooms are being updated, and a swimming pool and tennis court are being added. Nice. But it's unnecessary. The place has a pace and a charm all of its own. As we head back to the coast, a hand-painted sign overhead reads, "Thank you for preserving the salubrious climes of Bandarawela." Salubrious climes indeed.

We pass through the gem-mining area of Ratnapura, past relics of the Dutch, Portuguese and British rule, past the art deco theatre, which stands to attention beside a series of ramshackle huts that might blow down in a stiff wind.

Of course, Sri Lanka got more than a stiff wind. On my final night, I stay in Bentota, on the south-western coast of the country, where there is no avoiding the legacy of the Boxing Day tsunami. Taru Villas is right on the beach, small and perfectly formed, slim and chic, like a fashion model. Each of its nine rooms faces a different direction, ensuring a fabulous degree of privacy for guests. Its arched, whitewashed architecture is furnished with antique stone carvings, saffron drapes, Indian silks and Kithul palm wood. The result is harmonious and serene. The paintwork, I am told, is retouched daily.

My veranda looks out on tall coconut palms and beyond to the ocean, and 5pm brings tea and a delicate slice of coconut cake, accompanied by the chants from a nearby temple. The Colombo-to-Galle train trundles past the end of the garden - its cargo of men hanging from open doors and windows. They wave, you wave, your lives cross briefly, the touch as light as the wings of a moth.

It's only when you cross the track to reach the ocean's shallows - the water is so warm and benign, it feels like a dog licking your toes - that you truly realise the appalling cost of the tsunami. It took 38,000 lives on this island. One of the waiters accompanies me to the water's edge and recalls how the sea disappeared that day. "It was gone for 10 minutes," he says. "We walked out over the rocks and the coral. After five minutes, I became afraid. It didn't seem right. So we walked back towards the hotel and then the wave came."

It came, but remarkably, it spared Taru Villas entirely, despite devastating an area a few miles up the coast. Down the coast, of course, Galle took the hit. There's no doubt that scars remain - the flattened buildings at the roadside, the temporary camps still home to many. But, like the land itself, the country seems to be healing, growing, moving on. Tourists are returning, and rightly so. Sri Lanka may be shaped like a tear-drop, but the beauty of this place will make you smile.

Load-Date: October 22, 2005

'The tsunami generation' : Orphan's worst days may be in the past

USA TODAY

November 21, 2005, Monday,

FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2005 Gannett Company, Inc.

Section: NEWS;; COVER STORY

Length: 1749 words

Byline: Paul Wiseman

Dateline: GALLE, Sri Lanka

Body

GALLE, Sri Lanka -- Thushari de Silva grew up wild on the beaches of this southern town. Her family couldn't afford to send her to school.

She spent her days running in the surf, playing loudly with her brothers and getting into trouble.

Then tragedy changed everything.

As the ocean started rising off Galle on Dec. 26, Thushari, then 14, and her two brothers climbed to the roof of their beachside shanty. The water roared in and carried away their parents, who were downstairs trying to lock up: two more dead in a tsunami that claimed nearly 200,000 lives and left an arc of death stretching from Indonesia to Sri Lanka and beyond. Like tens of thousands of Sri Lankans, Thushari had lost everything.

USA TODAY met Thushari on Jan. 5 on what was perhaps the second-worst day of her life. Local child-welfare officials had summoned her older half sister from the Sri Lankan capital Colombo, 70 miles north, to decide what to do with Thushari and her two brothers, Sanjeewa, 17, and Sandayuwan, 10.

Thushari was desperate to join her half sister, Aathiligoda Vithanage Wasanthi, 21. But Wasanthi lived in a crowded factory dormitory in Colombo with no room for the girl. Only Sanjeewa was old enough to go to Colombo and find work; Thushari and Sandayuwan would have to stay behind in government children's homes.

Sobbing and screaming, Thushari begged Wasanthi to take her. In a rage, she tore off the earrings Wasanthi had brought her as a gift and threw them away.

As the first anniversary of the tsunami approaches, Thushari is still living in a government children's home in this fishing and tourist town of 90,000. "I'm sad about my mother and father," she says. And the child who romped in the ocean just a year ago is now terrified of the water.

The tsunami's devastation still marks Thushari and thousands of others here, but in many ways the teenager's life has changed for the better. She is attending school for the first time and has begun to read and write. Scrawny and disheveled in January, she has put on weight and looks neat, her hair in black ribbons and braids. "She fatter and she's prettier," her sister Wasanthi says. "She's much better off than she was at home. Her mother didn't send her to school. Now she is getting educated."

'The tsunami generation' : Orphan's worst days may be in the past

In some ways, Thushari is a typical teenage girl: She giggles uncontrollably and wears a T-shirt that proclaims: "I love horses." In the confusion last January, officials had said she was 12. Thushari, who was 14 then, is now 15.

The Senehasa Children's Home, where Thushari lives with 30 other girls, has opened a bank account for her: The government deposits 1,000 rupees (\$10) a month and individual donors give more. A Sri Lankan couple started sending money to Thushari after the couple's relative in the United States read USA TODAY's account of her story. Officials hope she will have enough money to get off to a good start when she has to leave the government home by age 18. So far, she has more than \$300 in savings -- not bad in a country where laborers earn \$50 a month.

Thousands still live in shacks

The Dec. 26 tsunami killed more than 30,000 Sri Lankans and devastated the island nation's eastern and southwestern coasts, leaving 500,000 homeless. In and around Galle, a pleasant tropical town famous for the 350-year-old stone fort built by Dutch colonists, most of the debris has been cleared. But thousands of Sri Lankans still live in "transitional" wooden shacks.

Construction of permanent housing has been delayed by bureaucratic wrangling and controversy over whether to restrict building near the sea to prevent a repeat of the tsunami tragedy. The government also has been squabbling with the separatist Tamil Tigers, who control parts of northeastern Sri Lanka, over how to divvy up aid.

Fear of exploitation

So in at least one way Thushari is doing better than many other victims: She has a permanent place to stay and doesn't have to worry about where she's going to get her next meal. Tens of thousands of Sri Lankans have been unable to return to work; they depend on aid for their basic needs.

Nine hundred Sri Lankan children lost both parents to the tsunami. Only 10 -- including Thushari and her brother Sandayuwan, now 11 -- remain in government homes. Nearly all the rest have found refuge with relatives, says Yasmin Haque, an official with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Colombo.

Reports that child traffickers and pedophiles were abducting child tsunami victims proved exaggerated, but worries remain. Child-welfare officials in Galle refused to let USA TODAY take photographs of Thushari or the girls' home.

Their caution is understandable: Earlier this year, an American volunteered to work in a Galle orphanage. Sri Lankan officials later learned he was listed as a sex offender in California under a different name, says Harendra de Silva, who was chairman of Sri Lanka's national child protection authority when the story broke. The man fled the country before Sri Lankan authorities could detain him; no children are believed to have been harmed, but the incident rattled local child welfare officials.

To help the tsunami kids recover, the Sri Lankan government reopened schools quickly. In fact, UNICEF's Haque says, attendance is now 90% to 95%, higher than before the tsunami.

"Children recover much faster than adults," says Maleec Calyanaratne, spokeswoman for Save the Children in Sri Lanka.

"They had the opportunity to get back to school. Education means normalcy, hope for the future."

Difficult adjustment period

Thushari wasn't ready for school when she moved into the government girls' home in January, says Kusum Liyanage, one of two women who run the Senehasa house.

"She wasn't used to living in society. She was not orderly in her way of dressing. She shouted a lot. Very loud. She fought with other kids. ... When she came here, she couldn't even write her name."

'The tsunami generation' : Orphan's worst days may be in the past

The Senehasa home is a two-story building set part way up a hill on a dirt road. Just inside the front door a sign reads: "We are the beauty of the universe." Downstairs is a common room where the girls sit around tables to study. Upstairs is a dormitory where they are paired off in cubicles with bunk beds. Eighteen of the 31 girls, ages 10 to 18, attend one of two government schools nearby. The rest are considered too old or too slow academically to go to class; they receive some vocational training.

None of the other Senehasa girls is an orphan. In most cases, they were sent to the home by local courts because their families were abusive. Thushari is one of four tsunami victims living here and the only one who lost both parents.

At first, Thushari couldn't stay with the other girls; she slept in the office of the other woman who runs the house, Kalumediriya Kankanamge Piyaseeli.

"She'd wake up screaming about the water," Kalumediriya says.

The dorm mothers decided to treat Thushari gently, meeting her tantrums with patience. She began to show an interest in traditional Sri Lankan dance and in karate, a martial art she says taught her discipline and patience.

"I don't shout as much as before," she says. "I felt it would be better for me to tone down. It would help me grow up."

By March, Thushari was beginning to write and was asking when she could start going to school. Liyanage and Kalumediriya were eager to see Thushari in a classroom, but worried that she was so far behind that she'd have to start in first grade. A nearby school agreed to let her learn with girls her own age and has provided special tutoring. Every morning after breakfast, she sets out on the half-hour walk to school with two classmates.

Her younger brother, Sandayuwan, lives in a nearby boys home. They see each other once a month when they go to collect their checks from the government, which are deposited in local bank accounts. Thushari holds him tightly and asks how he's doing. And then they go their separate ways.

Big brother Sanjeewa tired of factory work in Colombo after just three months. He returned to Galle, where he does odd jobs and lives near the beach. He has not been in touch with his siblings for months.

Thushari has reconciled with her big sister. On the wall next to her bunk bed, Thushari has proudly hung up a colorful postcard Wasanthi sent to mark a Buddhist holiday last spring. For a while, Wasanthi visited every few weeks. But when USA TODAY found Thushari recently, the two hadn't spoken since July.

Thushari was upset. "I had a photograph of my sister, but I got angry and tore it up," she says.

Hoping for reunion soon

Sitting in a gazebo in the Senehasa home's small yard, Thushari asks to borrow a cellphone to call her sister in Colombo. When Wasanthi answers, Thushari's eyes fill with tears. "When are you coming? Why haven't you come to see me?"

Wasanthi explains that she's been busy working in the factory. She says she'll visit in December. By the time Thushari hangs up, she's smiling: "She promised to bring me a cake and a dress."

"I want to go where my big sister is," she says. "She works in a garment factory. I want to work there." In fact, many girls leave government homes for work in low-wage garment factories.

Wasanthi became a domestic servant at age 7, spent her early teens in a government home and wound up working for low wages at a garment factory in Colombo. It's a common fate for a girl who is raised by the state: Unable to provide potential in-laws with a dowry -- still a widespread custom in Sri Lanka -- their prospects for marriage are poor.

'The tsunami generation' : Orphan's worst days may be in the past

Wasanthi earns \$50 a month, plus room and board, making clothes for Wal-Mart. She sleeps in a dorm with 35 other young women, most of them from poor families and broken homes. The girls aren't allowed to leave the grounds by themselves. They need a chaperone to go shopping on Sunday, their day off. Otherwise, they could fall prey to dishonorable men and ruin their chances for marriage, says Parakrama Wijemannethe, the factory's managing director.

Where should Thushari go when she leaves the girls home in Galle, perhaps to Colombo to work in the factory alongside her big sister? "No," says Wasanthi, who wants more for her little sister. "If she studies, someplace better."

Tsunami toll

The tsunami last December left nearly 180,000 people dead and 50,000 missing. Number of dead by country:

Bangladesh2

Burma 90

India 10,749 (5,640 missing)

Indonesia131,029 (37,066 missing)

Kenya 1

Malaysia68

Maldives82

Somalia 298

Sri Lanka31,229 (4,093 missing)

Tanzania10

Thailand5,395 (2,817 missing)

Source: The Associated Press, June 23

Graphic

PHOTO, Color, USA TODAY; PHOTO, B/W, Elizabeth Dalziel, AP; PHOTO, B/W, Martin von Krogh, WPN; GRAPHIC, B/W, USA TODAY (MAP)

Load-Date: November 21, 2005

Lessons of the tsunami: 'For some, the aid business is just that -- a business. When each NGO is out for itself, everyone loses'

Ottawa Citizen

December 18, 2005 Sunday

Final Edition

Copyright 2005 Ottawa Citizen, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publication Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: THE CITIEN'S WEEKLZ; Pg. B9

Length: 1816 words

Byline: Marc Kielburger and Craig Kielburger, Citizen Special

Body

More than \$2 billion promised, but next to nothing to show for it. Forget Gomery. Here's the real scandal: 37,000 dead, half a million homeless, one year after the tsunami, and little reconstruction in Sri Lanka.

We all saw images of the devastation -- poorly constructed homes and schools cast aside as though smashed to the ground by a giant hand; burial sites out of mere mounds of sand. A sea of tent communities appeared almost overnight, while survivors kept watch by the ocean for loved ones washed away. Without boats, fishermen could not fish. Without irrigation equipment and seed money, farmers could not farm.

Sadly, the same can be said of Sri Lanka today.

We were in Sri Lanka, shipping school and health supplies, when the tsunami hit. We didn't seek out the crisis.

During the past 10 years, our work with Free the Children has taken us to challenging regions -- from war zones to rural, indigenous communities. Rarely have we worked with the world watching on TV in a spotlight that inspired an outpouring of billions of dollars and brought aid organizations to an area en masse.

In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, every organization on the ground responded. Many more would follow.

Lloyd Hanoman, our director of operations, had contacts thanks to his work setting up women's co-operatives in the area. We had existing projects and connections from our anti-child labour efforts in Southeast Asia. So we were well acquainted with the area.

More than that, we now know first hand the challenges of development work in post-tsunami Sri Lanka.

The arrival of international help was heralded by new SUVs that rolled off planes. Boxes and boxes of bottled water were unloaded and delivered to hotels along the coast, which were fully booked -- not with tourists but rather with aid workers from around the world.

Most were soon embroiled in the cut-throat politics of non-governmental organizations -- each group eager to nail down projects in areas frequented by the media. Consequently, the disbursement of aid was chaotic.

Now, one year after the tsunami hit Sri Lanka, we can reflect and identify challenges that hindered the help.

Lessons of the tsunami: 'For some, the aid business is just that -- a business. When each NGO is out for itself, everyone loses'

THE AMAZING RACE

It was a free-for-all from the start, despite the Sri Lankan presidential task force assigned to co-ordinate aid.

Like a Wild West gold rush, there were no rules in the mad dash for a piece of reconstruction pie. The country was flooded with more than 36,000 NGOs -- some legitimate, some bogus -- forcing the government to temporarily suspend the registration of groups in the country.

Aid workers rushed to plant their signs in devastated communities, staking their claim and promoting their organization. It didn't always matter if another agency was on the case.

At times it felt like an election campaign. The constituents were not those in desperate need, but rather those back home watching the evening news.

Aid money rolled in. All the while, pockets of poverty, untouched by the tsunami, remained forgotten.

Such is the nature of crisis-based aid: short-term emergency relief takes precedence -- as it should, temporarily -- while long-term needs suffer. Without ongoing aid, however, emergency response becomes a mammoth task.

SHOW THEM THE MONEY

The numbers are vast, but they don't add up.

Almost \$2.1 billion was pledged in foreign aid for reconstruction estimated to cost

\$1.5 billion. To date, according to the Sri Lankan development assistance database, only \$914 million has been disbursed.

The World Bank reports that half a million lives remain in limbo.

Communities cannot rebuild if the foundation of their recovery -- the money -- sits in bank accounts.

This is the case not only in Sri Lanka. In Indonesia, the hardest-hit country, the UN office of the special envoy for tsunami recovery shows that \$4.5 billion of the \$6.5 billion pledged from the international community has been put toward rebuilding. Reconstruction costs there are pegged at \$6 billion.

Red tape is to blame in cases that require setting up partners or determining which government agency will oversee a project. In other instances, development has yet to begin because NGOs are still completing paperwork and assessment reports.

It doesn't have to be this way.

After the tsunami, Free the Children raised more than \$1 million for medical supplies and another \$1 million in direct aid through our Adopt-a-Village program. Lloyd Hanoman quickly established contacts with all stakeholders -- government officials and the local communities -- to get projects approved and under way.

Almost one year later, all of our funds are in Sri Lanka. Work on all our projects -- water, sanitation and alternative income programs, plus the construction of a new vocational school and primary school -- will be complete by Jan. 28, 2006.

NOT ALL AID IS EQUAL

We focused our efforts on the Ampara District, far from the capital city of Colombo in a region that attracts few organizations. It is an area that has gone back and forth between Tamils and Sinhalese during a 22-year conflict in which more than 60,000 have died.

Lessons of the tsunami: 'For some, the aid business is just that -- a business. When each NGO is out for itself, everyone loses'

Rather than uniting the country in the wake of disaster, tsunami-relief efforts fuelled tensions. Because aid was channelled through the government in the immediate aftermath, the **Tamil Tigers** felt marginalized.

The U.S. military refused to work with the Tigers, having identified the group as terrorists. As a result, some regions, both Tamil and Sinhalese, were left without aid.

NGOs failed to co-operate and co-ordinate efforts as they flocked to some regions instead of spreading out in highly affected areas.

Instead of objectively assessing human needs, many NGOs allowed regional politics to influence aid allocation. At best, the organizations missed a historic opportunity to build bridges. At worst, the unequal distribution of aid exacerbated tensions.

Since the earthquake in Pakistan and India, we've seen efforts to open borders between historic rivals to ease delivery of aid.

WHY WAIT FOR A TSUNAMI?

In one of the poorest regions in the world, one in five is malnourished. The infant mortality rate is 17 in 100. More than 90 per cent of all buildings are damaged or destroyed. Homes have been burnt to the ground. Walls are riddled with bullet holes. We've seen terror in the eyes of children. We've met four-month-old babies with amputated limbs.

But this is not Sri Lanka. This is the small West African country of Sierra Leone.

When we last visited, aid agencies were packing up. Where were they headed? To tsunami-affected areas and to Afghanistan or Iraq.

So many organizations are trapped in the chase for aid dollars. The news of the day generates funding. Constant poverty and civil war are old news in Sierra Leone, so there's little money.

So, too, in the Democratic Republic of Congo where malnutrition and disease have killed 3.8 million people. Or in Darfur, Sudan, where four million have been displaced.

In Africa each day, 2,700 people die from malaria and 8,500 from AIDS -- a tsunami of death around the clock.

FOLLOW YOUR MONEY

Some voices in the NGO community are speaking out to develop a strategy that would co-ordinate aid on a consistent basis. Some, though, remain silent, afraid that criticism will slow donations.

We need more aid, but we also need to target where it goes. To get there, we must reflect on how NGOs operate.

For starters, donors must hold groups more accountable.

Here in Canada it's dog-eat-dog during a crisis. Groups woo donations with expensive ad campaigns, instead of spending the money where it's desperately needed. This is unlike the crisis-based charitable system in the United Kingdom where donors give to a central group -- one phone number, one website -- which allocates money to projects.

Why doesn't Canada create such a system? It is a step in the right direction that four Canadian aid groups -- CARE Canada, Save the Children Canada, Oxfam-Canada and Oxfam-Quebec -- have joined forces to raise funds and provide relief for Pakistan earthquake victims.

NGOs must put aside egos and co-operate in delivering aid on the ground.

Lessons of the tsunami: 'For some, the aid business is just that -- a business. When each NGO is out for itself, everyone loses'

After the tsunami, so much aid arrived so quickly but there was no effective distribution mechanism. In the rush, NGOs dole out projects where they can, allocating little time, patience or ability to work with all parties to build a system that might lend itself, in the case of Sri Lanka, to building peace.

Every organization has core competencies. Not one can be everywhere.

Donors should take the time to ask with whom organizations are working. Are they building local capacity and local skills so that aid groups will exist long after the NGOs move to the next headline-grabbing crisis zone? Are they working with other NGOs?

The sad reality is that for some groups the aid business is just that -- a business. When each NGO is out for itself, everyone loses -- beneficiaries, the donors and, even, the NGO.

So donors must hold aid groups accountable.

NOT YESTERDAY'S NEWS

NGOs must focus on long-term empowerment. In the scramble after a crisis, communities are overlooked. For this reason post-emergency aid is not nearly as effective as empowering development aid.

Long-term help works to alleviate the causes of poverty, illiteracy, women's disempowerment and infant mortality. This is not "crisis aid," "flavour-of -the-month aid" or "front-page headline aid."

Donors have to be willing to give to both -- to the crisis of the day and also to ongoing poverty-alleviation projects which are more effective over time.

That way, when crisis strikes, fewer people will be vulnerable. Long-term aid helps a country deal with its own crisis instead of reaching out to the international community.

In this spirit, we can't forget Sri Lanka. One year later, we have shifted from short-term aid to projects that may take another year, five years, even 10. The story is out of the news, but the need remains.

Donors and NGOs must shift their focus from media-heavy zones to other parts of the world.

In the past year, people were captivated by the hurricanes in Central America, the earthquake in Pakistan and the tsunami in Southeast Asia. But beyond the front-page stories, famines and violence and war and the ever-ravaging scourge of AIDS are annihilating Africa.

AGAINST ALL HOPE

The true heroes to emerge from the devastation in Sri Lanka are those who have endured and are rebuilding.

We first sensed this hard-won optimism in the city of Pottuvil at a ceremony for a school the community will build with Free the Children. It will be the first building to be reconstructed in the city, the first vocational training centre to be rebuilt in all of Sri Lanka.

Everyone turned out to celebrate the groundbreaking. After a moment of silence, community leaders spoke about the future and children released 12 white doves. As we watched them soar, we were reminded that there is always reason to hope.

Canadians Marc and Craig Kielburger are founding members of Free the Children.

Graphic

Lessons of the tsunami: 'For some, the aid business is just that -- a business. When each NGO is out for itself, everyone loses'

Photo: AP Photo; Boxes of relief supplies in Jakarta are loaded into a container ship bound for Banda Aceh. Despite promises of disaster aid for such regions, much of the money still sits in the bank.

Load-Date: December 18, 2005

End of Document

**THE BIG TRIP: IT'S SMALL. BUT IT'S GOT IT ALL;
WITH ITS UNMISSABLE SCENERY, WILDLIFE AND ANCIENT SITES, SRI
LANKA IS**

Independent on Sunday (London)

January 18, 2004, Sunday

Copyright 2004 Independent Print Ltd

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 6,7

Length: 1781 words

Byline: JULIET CLOUGH Walking with giants: children visit Sigiriya, above. No visitor to the island should miss the cave temples of Dambulla, top right, and the tea factory, right. REUTERS

Body

Peace and cricket, that's what's done it." Niaz Maharoot manages Helga's Folly, in Kandy, a hotel whose eccentricities speak volumes for the confidence growing within Sri Lanka's tourist industry. Let's hope he is proved right in his prediction that this year will be one of the best seasons ever for Sri Lanka's hoteliers.

Early in November, I found them poised to receive not only devotees of the imminent test cricket series against England, but an army of visitors. "Bookings for 2004 are up 30 to 40 per cent over last year's" reckoned Sarath Wickremasinghe, the manager of the chic Saman Villas at Bentota - a figure echoed by the Taj Group.

Nearly two years after the signing of a formal ceasefire between the government and the separatist **Tamil Tigers**, international tourism seems at last to be prepared to overlook Sri Lanka's political troubles and allow the country to step into the upmarket gap left by the Bali bombing. Two big highways are under construction; Sri Lankan Airlines is opening several new internal flights and international hotel groups are making heavy investments. Angsana Resorts and Spas, a sister brand to Banyan Tree, has taken over the delightful Deer Park near Polonnaruwa. Tea country guest houses and historic seaside villas are being expensively converted.

On 5 November, the day I left the island, all certainties wobbled once again. In her Prime Minister's absence abroad, President Kumaratunga, widely believed to feel that too many concessions were being made to the Tigers, suspended parliament, dismissed three members of the cabinet and declared a state of emergency. But this was lifted two days later and, two months on, the blip appears to have had little effect on the projected boom in tourism.

Which is all to the good: Sri Lanka packs in a bigger share of sheer gorgeousness - more dazzling archaeological sites, more lavish scenery and ravishing beaches, more elephants, more leopards, more almost everything - than any small island (it's about the size of Ireland) has a right to claim.

More interesting hotels, too. The recent building spree has resulted in high levels of comfort and considerable contemporary style. Overlooking the sea at Bentota, Saman Villas has the champagne-on-arrival, the open-air bathrooms and the frangipani-on-the-pillow considered de rigueur in contemporary Serendipityland. "Too much effing good taste," grumped one of my travelling companions, a celebrated photographer, confronted with the lazily revolving fans, the old Dutch furniture interspersed with witty contemporary takes, the designer fabrics and

THE BIG TRIP: IT'S SMALL. BUT IT'S GOT IT ALL; WITH ITS UNMISSABLE SCENERY, WILDLIFE AND ANCIENT SITES, SRI LANKA IS

bathroom fixtures which grace the Sun House and the 18th-century Dutch House. I could see what he meant but, hey, I'm not proud: lead me to it.

It's inland Sri Lanka, however, that has my heart. "India designed by the Swiss" observed the photographer. Here is the same green profligacy that you find in Kerala, only more so. Cathedral-sized bubbles of rock swell up from a lavishly clothed landscape, its trees noisy with birds; its waterways stalked by pelicans and herons. Butterflies flop like silk hankies through air scented with incense, wet tea, gardenias and ripe- to-bursting fruit.

What's missing is the hassle. Compared with India, Sri Lankan roads are miracles of sobriety, their most dashing drivers pilot motorised rickshaws sporting rickety names: Strange Boys, Innocent Bird or All That Glitters. Beggars are fewer and eventually leave you alone; the same, glory be, goes for the salesmen.

"Give me your hand, Madam," said an idler at Sigiriya: "You are a heavy person". I'm a what? The tone was of spurious concern, the message ill calculated to appeal to one who reaches neurotically for the Weight Watchers cookbook the minute the scales creep over 8 stone. Only my heart felt heavy; it was already doing the lumbering somersaults which only the vertiginous endure.

For, ahead loomed a cheesewire-sliced precipice, 590ft (180m) high and studded with metal ladderways, some of them connected by superannuated London Underground spiral stairs. Citadel of a 5th century playboy king, whose good-time girls still frisk across the rock face, as fresh as the day they were painted, Sigiriya occupies star position in the cluster of World Heritage sites at the centre of the island.

At Polonnaruwa, a group of schoolgirls, looking good as gold in their white dresses, drifted barefoot through the ruined temples and pavilions of the old capital. Their teacher, the Rev Beragama Anananata Thero, a Buddhist monk, asked me to take a class photograph. "If people want to know about Enlightenment", said my guide, Gamini Mendis, "this is where I bring them." We contemplated three colossal stone statues of the Buddha, their serenity enhanced by the rippled effect of layered granite and not at all disturbed by the crowds of irreverent monkeys.

The same sense of tranquillity reigns at the cave temples of Dambulla, where the roofs billow softly as canvas, decorated with a thousand Buddhas, looking down from the biggest rock painting in the world. "These people are lazy" said Gamini, severely, when I asked him to translate some of the prayers written on the rags hanging from the nearby bodhi tree: "They think a tree can remove their troubles without any effort of their own".

Views of both Sigiriya and Dambulla form part of the backdrop to the Kandalama Hotel, one of the last works of the Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa, who died in May. Set against an overhanging cliff, the building salutes the drama of the landscape, blurring the distinctions between outdoors and in by allowing living rock to thrust through the floors, by draping one of its three pools over a cliff and by cloaking the facade in so much greenery as to make it almost invisible from across the ancient reservoir on which it sits. Bawa's airy Lighthouse Hotel at Galle, which provided the best meal of the week, exuded both style and family-friendliness.

The Elephant Orphanage at Pinnawela looks after more than 60 deserving cases. Ranging in age from whiskey infants to venerable tuskers, they form the largest group of captive elephants in the world. We timed our visit for one of the four daily bathing sessions when the whole gang have a bit of a revel in the river before swaying majestically back to their feeding stations. The sight of a baby elephant siphoning up the first of seven giant milk bottles in five seconds flat is one to cherish.

In Kandy, Sri Lanka's last pre-colonial capital, I took a morning walk past some of the whitewashed pavilions and colonial mansions which ring the artificial lake. Stork-billed pelicans roosted in the rain trees; red flowers fell on police cadets, exercising a cohort of alsatians.

It was the first of the month. At the Temple of the Tooth it's the day for pilgrimages, for fresh beginnings, for babies, flowers and patience. Content to sit quietly among the pilgrims, enjoying the drums, the clouds of incense, the heady scent of lotus, I was lucky to be passing the golden doors of the shrine at the very second they flew open, revealing to the surging crowd the jewelled caskets which house Sri Lanka's holiest relic.

THE BIG TRIP: IT'S SMALL. BUT IT'S GOT IT ALL; WITH ITS UNMISSABLE SCENERY, WILDLIFE AND ANCIENT SITES, SRI LANKA IS

Helga's Folly embodies everything that is flossiest about Kandy. Wax gutters from gothic candlesticks; beds come swathed in mosquito netting and gold sari fabric; murals of dubious quality loom from walls hung with mildewed family photographs and newspaper cuttings detailing the doings of Helga's Kandyan forebears. According to one of these, Vivian Leigh had an affair with Peter Finch here and Larry left them to it; perhaps he felt like a breath of fresh air.

The flavour of the Raj lingers most tenaciously in the tea country around the resort of Nuwara Eliya, in the highlands southeast of Kandy. Complete with golf course, mock Tudor hotel and a sprinkling of double-fronted villas, Nuwara Eliya looks a bit like an escaper from Godalming. Even the weather played its part, growing wetter as we climbed towards tea slopes quilted from horizon to horizon in rumpled, chenille-effect green.

I talked my way into the Hill Club, the old planters' hang-out, now reputedly colonised by the Colombo jetset. Heritage, or a strongly developed sense of the absurd? Either way, the Hill Club stoutly holds its ground, backing its insistence on jackets and ties and Men Only in the bar with all the props: an elephant foot umbrella stand, hunting prints by "Snaffles" and a crested chamber-pot in a glass case. "Ladies shall wear suitable attire, befitting the attire of gentlemen" thunders a prominently displayed notice.

A 1930s industrial building, silent for 20 years and recently converted into an award-winning hotel, the Tea Factory at Kandapola offers a light-hearted contemporary take on the same theme. I liked the respect shown to the building's past: the 1936 steam generator puffing like a wounded beast in the cellar; the two giant wooden fans which once cooled the withering lofts, now creaking over the central atrium. The hotel has a tiny tea factory of its own; a railway carriage parked out back serves dinner to incurable nostalgics.

Leaving the hills for the southeast coast, the road leads through the Uva Valley, gothic mountain country, its gorges opening on to blue distances stretching all the way to the sea. In November the banks streamed with morning glory and wild sunflowers; purple-faced monkeys perched in the rhododendrons; tree ferns reached for the sun from jungle-choked valley floors. By the Rawana Falls, children sold lumps of quartz, pink and cloudy yellow, like Turkish delight.

The lakes, lagoons and low scrub of Yala National Park support one of the highest densities of leopards in the world. No, I didn't see one. But I saw elephants wandering across the sunset, against the murmur of the Indian Ocean. And I saw a peacock dancing, flaunting his Lalique-style assets in front of a dowdy and unimpressed-looking female.

She would never have made it into the Hill Club.

The Facts

Getting there

Juliet Clough travelled to Sri Lanka as a guest of Abercrombie & Kent (0845 0700 615; www.abercrombiekent.co.uk), which offers an 11-night trip to Sri Lanka including direct flights, accommodation on a b&b basis, transfers, sightseeing and entrance fees from pounds 1,235 per person.

Where can I get more information?

The Sri Lanka Tourist Board, 22 Lower Regent Street, London SW1Y 4QD (020-7930 2627; www.srilankatourism.org). The Foreign & Commonwealth Office says "The vast majority of visits to Sri Lanka are trouble-free" but advises caution and says that the north and east should be avoided. See www.fco.gov.uk.

What should I read?

Footprint: Sri Lanka by Edward Aves, priced pounds 13.99

THE BIG TRIP: IT'S SMALL. BUT IT'S GOT IT ALL; WITH ITS UNMISSABLE SCENERY, WILDLIFE AND
ANCIENT SITES, SRI LANKA IS

Load-Date: January 18, 2004

End of Document

**WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM RULED BY FEAR;
TOURISTS ARE STILL BEATING A PATH TO NEPAL AS ITS BLOODY CIVIL
WAR**

The Independent (London)

August 23, 2004, Monday

Copyright 2004 Independent Print Ltd

Section: First Edition; FOREIGN NEWS

Length: 1845 words

Byline: MALIKA BROWNE AND JAN MCGIRK REPORT Trekkers and pack horses, above, make their way undisturbed up a 14,000ft pass near Tange, Nepal. Some tourists continue to visit the kingdom despite continuing violence and instability. 20,000 supporters of Nepal's main political parties, left, demonstrated in Kathmandu yesterday against the city's blockade, while, right, tourists take a bus to the resort city of Pokhara, on the fourth day of the blockade, protected by military escorts APNepalese soldiers and police keep armed watch over the western

...

Body

Trekkers on Nepal's remote mountain trails last spring would return to Kathmandu with a cherished souvenir: a receipt for "donating" to the Maoist guerrillas' campaign to overthrow the monarchy. The receipt was in danger of beating the pashmina to become the most treasured memento of their stay in the Himalayan kingdom.

Now, for the first time in their eight-year revolt, the Maoists are at the gates of the capital itself. They have blockaded Kathmandu for five days, forcing the authorities to bring in supplies by lorries guarded by military helicopters.

Yesterday, more than 20,000 businessmen and travel trade officials marched through the city in a peace rally, holding up banners reading, "We want peace. Withdraw the blockade".

Yet, despite government travel advice from Britain, the US, France, and Australia, some young backpackers still appear unfazed by the impact of Nepal's eight-year civil war that pits peasant revolutionaries against King Gyanendra and the country's elite.

Some of the travellers, watching **female** soldiers of the Royal Nepalese Army search the insides and roofs of their buses, said that they had not met Maoists, not even on the road between the trekking centre of Pokhara, Nepal's third city, and Kathmandu.

Lana Stonebrook, from London, said news of the blockade had not affected her decision to travel to Nepal last week. "When I heard about the blockade I panicked. But then I realised that the Maoists have been doing what they do for a while so it's no big deal. It's actually bliss for tourists at the moment, because there are not many people around."

WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM RULED BY FEAR; TOURISTS ARE STILL BEATING A PATH TO NEPAL AS ITS BLOODY CIVIL WAR

The tourist season, which lasts from mid-September till late April, seems to take a break in June with the monsoon, when leeches and heavy rain make trekking near-impossible. Most tourists who fly to Nepal in July and August are passing through to Tibet, the "roof of the world" which sits in the Himalayan rain shadow and remains dry.

Although the Maoist rebels have never attacked tourists, nor announced their intention to do so, their energetic "donations" campaign was waged last winter and spring.

Trekkers were stopped by well-spoken young men, most of them former teachers who had joined the People's Army. Rebels would give a well-rehearsed speech about their "People's war", and demand "donations" of between 500 and 1,000 rupees (pounds 3.60 and pounds 7.30). Although the rebels were polite, tourists said they did not feel they had a choice of whether to donate, because the men may have been armed. In return, they were handed a receipt they could show if they were stopped again so they did not have to pay a second time.

Kristjan Edwards, managing director of the Tiger Mountain Group, which owns several jungle lodges and trekking operations, said: "In the past month, bookings doubled but business is down 25 per cent on a normal year. There have been no group cancellations in the past few days, and I don't expect there will be. There's a lot of trouble elsewhere in the world, not just in Nepal, so people are not that worried about a few invisible rebels any more."

Nepal is still a popular destination for backpackers and gap-year travellers, but mountaineers and wildlife enthusiasts are among the older, wealthier visitors. Thick jungle in the south offers wildlife safaris, and the snow-melt from the mountains allows some of the world's best white-water rafting.

Last year, the Nepal Tourism Board directed successful marketing campaigns at South Asian tourists in an attempt to boost flagging visitor figures. Nepal is home to Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, which could and should attract many more of the world's 350 million practising Buddhists.

Indian tourists come on pilgrimages to the Pashupatinath shrine in Kathmandu, one of Hinduism's holiest sites, and pass through Nepal on their way to Mount Kailash in Tibet, a major pilgrimage site for Buddhists, Hindus and Jains. Indians also come to Kathmandu to gamble in casinos, an activity banned in India.

The small bomb at Kathmandu's five-star Soaltee Crowne Plaza last Monday, described by Basanta Raj Mishra, president of the Nepal Association of Tour Operators, as "no stronger than a cracker", was a reminder by the Maoist rebels to 10 of the country's businesses to close. The hotel has financial links with King Gyanendra, whom the rebels are trying to overthrow. Nobody was injured.

King Gyanendra, who suspended parliament in 2002 and now appoints his ministers, has become the principal hate figure for the rebels. They label him a "royal dictator", and condemn the political swings and roundabouts which have ensued since he took power. Nepal's five major political parties abhor the king's dismissal of the elected government in October 2002. He reappointed as prime minister in June the same man he sacked for "ineptness" at not holding elections.

Months ago, security forces arrested thousands of street protesters, including senior political party leaders. "Yours is just a rubber-stamp monarchy," a Nepalese protester told a BBC reporter at an anti-government rally. "But ours is a tiger which drinks the blood of the people. This king is not living in our hearts."

King Gyanendra is reviled by many who believe he manipulated his bloody accession in June 2001 after most of the royal family was massacred in a shooting spree by the drunken Crown Prince Dipendra, who then put a bullet in his head and died the next day. The Shakespearean orgy of regicide, patricide, matricide, fratricide and suicide placed King Birendra's brother on the throne.

Maoists increased the level of violence but restricted most attacks to the rugged hinterland. Since the palace slaughter, Nepal's ruling class has been in continual crisis, squabbling over how to deal with the growing insurgency. The Maoist rebels, reinforced by rural militias they forcibly conscript, are estimated to number between 10,000 to 15,000. They have vowed to fight until a Communist republic replaces the world's only Hindu monarchy.

WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM RULED BY FEAR; TOURISTS ARE STILL BEATING A PATH TO NEPAL AS ITS BLOODY CIVIL WAR

At least 80 per cent of the country is now under rebel control. In just eight years, the Maoists have evolved from a small group of insurgents armed with knives and homemade shotguns to a formidable fighting force. Booby traps, "pressure-cooker" bombs, remote-controlled devices and rocket-propelled grenades are weapons of choice. Much of the western countryside is mined.

Washington has classified the Maoist insurgents as "terrorists", although grave human rights violations have been reported on both sides of the conflict. The United States provides Nepal with military aid and weapons worth a total of \$ 22m (pounds 13m).

Britain is contributing pounds 35m in aid, this year and has urged other countries to support the government. But the Government has announced plans to increase development aid to pounds 47m in 2006-07, "provided that increased support can continue to reach the poorest in Nepal". India, which wants to prevent its local separatist groups from sharing weapons and intelligence with the Maoists, provides helicopters and arms. The Maoist rebels are now the second-best organised threat on the sub-continent, after the **Tamil Tigers** in Sri Lanka.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Bharat Mohan Adhikary, has urged the rebels to negotiate an end to the conflict that has sent the economy of the landlocked country plummeting.

"We have urged businesses and the public not to bow to rebel threats and assured them security," Mr Adhikary said. "What else can we do? We are ready to solve the problem peacefully. We are ready to talk to them without any condition."

Many Indian and British Army Gurkha soldiers have retired in rural areas controlled by the Maoist rebels. Authorities suspect that some now train the guerrillas, who have become more professional. The worst spate of violence was last March, when thousands of guerrillas bore down on Nepalese soldiers and police at Beni, a town west of Pokhara. There were massive casualties and hundreds dead. The Maoists do not spare government offices, private companies or public bus stations, though occasionally, the rebels will warn civilians to evacuate the area before launching an attack.

Yesterday there was further violence in the west of the country when hundreds of rebels attacked the mountain town of Khalanga, killing one soldier and seizing six policemen hostage. The rebels set buildings on fire as they retreated after troops returned fire. The army is combing the area backed by helicopters in search of the attackers.

In the capital, although flights are unaffected, many businesses remain shuttered. Vegetable prices have doubled as farmers speculate on potential shortages, although there has been no panic-buying in the capital. Kathmanduites have experienced many national transport strikes in the past few months. Although the Maoists have called this strike a "blockade" it has failed to incite the city's residents to excitement or panic. The only tangible difference in the air is that the traffic, which normally chokes the Kathmandu Valley with fumes, was nearly non-existent.

India is said to be preparing to airlift food supplies to Kathmandu. Analysts say that until there is substantial political change, and a new constitution, the blood will continue to flow.

TOURISM IN TROUBLE

In 1999, 500,000 foreign visitors travelled to Nepal, making it a peak year for tourism. But the figure was halved by 2002 because of the Maoist-led insurgency which began in 1996.

So far this year, 167,400 tourists have visited the kingdom.

The US State Department has warned against all non-essential travel to Nepal since 2003, while the British Foreign Office advises "there is a high threat of Maoist violence, including bombing and shooting, in public places and tourist areas throughout Nepal ... Tourists and other visitors risk being caught up in such violence."

WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM RULED BY FEAR; TOURISTS ARE STILL BEATING A PATH TO NEPAL AS ITS BLOODY CIVIL WAR

Maoists have threatened tourist facilities throughout Nepal, and the Maoist leader, Baburam Bhattarai, warned travellers that they could be "caught in the crossfire of the contending armies", while perversely encouraging them to visit anyway.

Lonely Planet urges tourists in Nepal to remain vigilant, keep a low profile and avoid demonstrations. It warns them to adhere to curfews in Kathmandu and to take especially good care during bandhs (strikes). "If a bandh is called, do not travel during it and keep an extra low profile until it is over," it warns, citing the districts of Banke, Dang, Syangja, Surkhet, Rukum, Kalikot, Jajarkot, Rolpa, Salyan and Gorkha as particularly hazardous.

Army and police checkpoints can make travel in Nepal slow and there are reports that rebels threatening violence - and bandits posing as rebels using actual violence - occasionally target travellers for revenue-raising purposes.

The bulk of tourists to Nepal are Indians (34%), followed by Britons (7%), Americans and Japanese (6%) and Germans (4%).

The 50th anniversary of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay's successful ascent of Mount Everest last year took place during the seven-month ceasefire that held from January to August.

Load-Date: August 23, 2004

End of Document

Letters & emails

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

May 4, 2007 Friday

First Edition

Copyright 2007 The Age Company Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 12

Length: 1923 words

Body

BILL HEFFERNAN

Bedfellows of strange politics

SENATOR Heffernan's latest tirade against women should not be seen in isolation. His previous comments that "Priests should be able to marry because like the rest of us they wake up with a horn at 4am" tells us he sees women as sexual vessels. There is no place in Parliament for any man who shows no understanding of the complex nature and ambitions of women in Australia. The fact that John Howard considers him to be "a good friend" shows us that these conservative men are still deeply in the 1950s.

Carol Reed, Newport

Kitchen hot? Get out

SO, IT'S OK to slander the PM over his age for the past two election campaigns, but as soon as somebody criticises Julia Gillard's childlessness, all hell breaks loose. Yes, we do live in a strange political environment. Frankly, those that dish it out and can't take it, shouldn't be in the business to start with.

Edwin Dyga, Artarmon NSW

Take that, you breeders

CHEERS to Julia Gillard for leading the way and choosing to remain child-free. More people, and especially politicians, should take her lead. The world's problems of water shortages, war, conflict over oil, environmental degradation and so on, are due largely to overpopulation.

J. Redwood, Goongerah

Dumping a bucket

SENATOR Heffernan has now twice publicly called into question the capacity of Julia Gillard to represent the electorate. His observations do not go to her formal qualifications, nor do they critique her years of experience or her demonstrated leadership qualities. Instead, they are based on whether she has had sufficient experience in handling "a bucketful of nappies". In addition to being vulgar and improper, his comments have missed obvious trends in Australia's demographics, which indicate that the fastest growing household type is that of the single

Letters & emails

person living alone. Living on one's own without children is hardly the alien, non-conformist lifestyle. Evidently it still needs to be said: whether it is by virtue of circumstance or choice, having children or not is a private matter. Not only are Heffernan's comments insulting to Gillard, they are demeaning to other women (and men) who, for a range of reasons, do not and may not ever have children. Why do sidelined parliamentarians make such attention-seeking comments? Some might call them impotent. I wouldn't, of course. That would be quite inappropriate.

Laura Smyth, Glen Iris

Gone to water

THE Victorian Government seems to be doing as little as possible to solve the water crisis. It has mooted four possible "solutions" to be considered. These are desalination, recycling, a Gippsland-to-Melbourne exchange of water or (not and) a pipeline from the Goulburn Valley over the Great Dividing Range to Melbourne.

These are all good ideas and should not be alternatives. They should all be undertaken now. Funding could be state and federal, including increased water taxes and perhaps a reduction in the huge amount being spent on promoting Victoria as the sports capital of the world. Mr Bracks, you are fiddling and Rome is burning.

Louis Roller, Fitzroy

Dam fools

MINISTER Thwaites advanced the argument on radio yesterday that it is no use building new dams because there is less rain falling. Logic dictates the opposite conclusion: the less the rain falls the more important it is to capture and store what little is available.

A logical extension of Mr Thwaites' thesis is that other forms of water storage that depend on rainfall are equally pointless. Why, then, does his Government offer rebates on the installation of rainwater tanks? The true reason for not building a new dam is fear of offending the environmental movement that helps to keep him in government. The current water crisis requires a solution beyond encouraging responsible usage of this precious commodity.

John Allsop, Mont Albert

Think tank

DO EITHER of the major political parties have a clue what to do about our water crisis? Here's a simple idea and it's not nuclear science. State and Commonwealth governments combine to install, free of charge, a household water tank to all low-income people who want one. The current subsidy on household tanks is useless for people who just don't have \$1000 lying around. The state budget had nothing to help the water-conscious people in Victoria. Will Mr Costello do any better with his budget next week?

Joan Rice, Newcomb

Falling water, sinking state

THIS week our water catchments have plummeted to 29.9 per cent of capacity. In just 16 months, storage levels have dropped by 28.1 per cent. You do not have to be Einstein to realise that in just over one year we will have no water left in Melbourne's catchments. Mr Bracks says this is the worst drought in 1000 years, and Mr Thwaites keeps forecasting significantly reduced future rainfall patterns. Yet the State Government has not released a single action plan to address this crisis, despite having had various proposals on the table for discussion for several years. We need not just to pray for rain, we may need to pray to have Sir John Kerr resurrected and installed as governor of Victoria.

Simon Wildes, Kallista

It's the people

Letters & emails

SURELY "climate change" is only one of the many inconvenient, potentially lethal byproducts of ongoing and increasing human pollution of this planet. Others involve human necessities such as food, water and space. This planet cannot sustain its present population, let alone the projected growth without these devastating byproducts. Is the topic taboo or just politically or economically incorrect?

Tom O'Connell, Pascoe Vale

Hitting the roof

HOORAY for the 10 new trains the State Government is going to buy in 2009. But what are we to do with our chokingly overcrowded peak-hour trains until then - given yet another breathtaking shambles on the rail system with the derailment at Oakleigh yesterday? Maybe Mr Bracks could draw some inspiration from Bangladesh and allow the installation of upturned milk crates on our trains' roofs - then some inner-city commuters might be able to board their preferred train and even sit down (!) before the end of the decade. The rooftop ride would be both breezy and horribly dangerous. But none of that should deter Melbourne's regular commuters. After all, not much else about our current peak-hour train service feels safe, comfortable or convenient.

Paul Duggan, East Brighton

Laws of disorder

DERAILMENT at Oakleigh . . . Melbourne can lead the way by instituting "Connex Law" in place of Murphy's Law.

Kye-Lyn Tan, Cheltenham

Give us the names

THE business-uber-alles clique in the Canberra press gallery are enthusiastically quoting unnamed ALP sources who criticise Julia Gillard for "botching" Labor's IR policy. As Margaret Thatcher said to George Negus: Names please. Just who are these roosters? Are they from Breakfast Creek in Brisbane, Sussex Street in Sydney (or visiting there for a surrogate birth), or over in Perth chloroforming Labor's education policy?

Tony Roberts, Northcote

Time warped

WE MORTALS have long suspected it, but Paul Keating's latest utterance on ABC radio puts it beyond doubt. Politics is indeed a parallel universe. Labor's IR policy, it seems, has done away with compulsory arbitration "forever, as I did". Politics: the domain where weeks are long and forever is remarkably short. Probably just as well.

Lance Lawton, Werribee

Beware the brutes

WHO'S the bully now, eh? While Mark Latham was physically threatening, the new Labor warns big business it risks injury in a fight and the ACTU tells businesses to "back off". What's happening to our democratic rights? Kevin Rudd might not slam his fist on lecterns, but beware those who cross him.

Ian Teasdale, Kew

Confused, me?

THE Federal Government has been telling us it did the right thing in not ratifying the Kyoto treaty, because the sky would fall in, our economy would dip and a lot of us would lose our jobs. Yesterday, it told us that we had reached the reduced emissions targets that would have been given to us if we had signed. That is confusing, or am I just stupid? Or, as Bill Heffernan might say, "Well, there you go."

Letters & emails

John Gourlay, South Yarra

Ever alert

ALEXANDER Downer was apparently aware of the \$20 million a year siphoned through Australia to the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. But he was never aware of the \$300 million siphoned through the AWB to Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. How much credibility does he have as Foreign Minister of Australia?

John Doherty, Richmond

Budget tick

THERE are many ways to spend extra cash in the budget, and I think the State Government has got it about right. Peter Costello next week should look past the election and into the future.

Bernard de Jonk, Westmeadows

Horror without end

WARWICK McFadyen's commentary ("The writing's on the wall", Age 3/5) on the situation in Iraq could only have been written from the heart. I am, though, more pessimistic than McFadyen. I believe that the worst thing about this war is that it is never going to be over. Even when the fighting stops, the Iraqis will never be the same. No people can possibly go through this killing and destruction and not come out differently.

S. Nona, Burradoo, NSW

Unreal estate

THE article "Real estate chief angers with 'naive buyers' claim" (Age 3/5) shows the complete contempt and disrespect Mr Enzo Raimondo, head of the Real Estate Institute of Victoria, has for the public, and the absolute lack of direction the REIV has in policing its members. Buyers of real estate do have rights, but Mr Raimondo is of the opinion that all real estate agents are saints - and even the rogues need to be protected. Regrettably, underquoting is endemic in the real estate industry. Wake up, Mr Raimondo. It's high time you started fining the offenders instead of proffering lame excuses.

David Morrell, South Yarra

Kicking a goal

THE Age has achieved the recruiting coup of the football year with the engagement of Western Bulldog Robert Murphy to pen a weekly think piece in the sports section. My advice to readers generally: don't miss it each Thursday.

Cameron Baldwin, Sandringham

A word devalued

BOTH last year's AFL premiers and wooden-spooners have a player described in the media as a "flawed genius" - West Coast's Brownlow medal winner Ben Cousins and Carlton's Coleman medallist Brendan Fevola.

Carl Keeney, Sunshine North

Thirsty work

IN ALL the discussions on uranium mining and nuclear power, the vital need and use of water has been overlooked. Water has never been abundant in Australia, but now we are in drought and predictions are that it will get worse. The Age (1/5) reported that a gold/copper mine in NSW may close because the supply of water has reached critical

Letters & emails

levels. All processes of nuclear activity, from mining to power stations, use enormous amounts of this precious resource. So, to expand and develop this form of export commodity or energy is irresponsible and dangerous.

Pauline Mitchell, Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament

Yet more Bill

APPARENTLY Bill Heffernan's test to prove one is in touch with their community is to understand "the relationship between mum, dads and a bucketful of nappies". Given that probably less than 10 per cent of parents still use cloth nappies, I guess his last good idea also came from black-and-white TV!

Frank Smith, Oaklands, NSW

THE most barren thing in Canberra is the space between Senator Heffernan's ears.

Robert Pizzari, East Brunswick

YOU said it. Senator Heffernan's so-called apology ended with the words "So there you go". I rest my case. He should - without question.

Gordon Fisher, Glen Waverley

Graphic

CARTOON BY LEUNIG

Load-Date: July 3, 2007

End of Document

Escape: SRI LANKA: The red road to island's secret side: Hidden temples, dense jungle, vibrant wildlife and a unique eco-retreat built from mud: Gemma Bowes journeys north to a part of Sri Lanka rarely visited by tourists

The Observer (London)

February 25, 2007

Copyright 2007 Guardian Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

TheObserver

Section: OBSERVER ESCAPE PAGES; Pg. 2

Length: 1777 words

Byline: Gemma Bowes

Body

It's pitch-black and we're waiting for elephants. We've had word from the villagers, the elephant tipsters, that a herd has been coming to this jungle clearing for the past few nights to drink at a watering hole. Sniff deeply, and something thick and animal hangs on the breeze; look down to the mud and there's the occasional big, round footprint.

Our mini-van, a few hundred yards up the dirt track, has turned invisible, and all we can see are beady constellations and glimmer-eyed, spotlighted faces when someone wields a torch. Jungle-issue butterflies dodge around our stomachs, jangled nerves make us giggle and we swig from beer bottles for courage. Even our guide, Sid, who has been telling tales of murderous trampling elephants and petrified locals, is teetering on the edge of fearful over-excitement.

'This area was once infested with elephants, 15,000 or more,' he whispers. 'The old kings were using elephants to execute people. They would toss the victim up into the air with their trunks so every bone in his body is broken but the heart is still beating, then stamp on the fellow until he is nothing but a ball of flesh.' With this in mind, we head off into the bushes towards the musky smell.

In the end, we don't manage even to glimpse an elephant, but it doesn't matter: the adventure is all in the anticipation and, anyway, we are in Sri Lanka where you are never more than 10 minutes from a new dose of amazement.

Here in the Puttalam district, the north-western dry zone just south of the Tamil Tiger-run area to which the Foreign Office advises UK nationals not to go, you can experience raw, unadulterated Sri Lanka. The area is rarely visited by tourists, so even though it's just a couple of hours' drive from Colombo, the interior feels wild and undiscovered. A vast spread of coconut palms and unruly jungle, it is veined by occasional thin red roads and flecked with small villages and prehistoric outcrops of rock, some topped with temples and forts. No trip to Sri Lanka should omit the epic ruins of the Cultural Triangle, the tea plantations and southern beaches, but a few days exploring this outback area gives you a real sense of life.

Escape: SRI LANKA : The red road to island's secret side: Hidden temples, dense jungle, vibrant wildlife and a unique eco-retreat built from mud: Gemma Bowes jo....

This morning we spotted eagles' nests, cormorants, buzzards and jungle fowl - a wild chicken which it is illegal to hunt but that every Sri Lankan will confirm, with first-hand experience, is 'very tasty' - in the Anawiludawa Reserve. It's hard to believe this secret nature sanctuary is rarely visited by Sri Lankans, never mind tourists, considering the potentially ark-filling array of wildlife that breeds here, and that it's free to visit. It's Magaluf for migratory birds, which flock here from India and Afghanistan on avian 18-30s holidays to mate when the monsoon rains fill the tanks (man-made lakes). In the lush groves between the open flats of water, it's not hard to spot the poisonous crimson rose butterfly, black-hooded orioles and cranes.

Villagers also farmed prawns in the mangroves here, until the Department of Wildlife banned them because their chemicals were killing the fish. But there are plenty more prawn farms in this area, so we head to the lagoon, a huge expanse of water between the region's west coast and a spike of peninsula that juts up into the Indian Ocean. At the end of the spike is a collection of white sandy islands that will perhaps one day rival the Maldives if they are ever developed for tourism.

We call at a family farm and sit drinking ginger tea on plastic chairs in the yard, while cockerels, pigs, dogs and children scuffle around us. I guess this is what you'd call community tourism, but the situation is too informal for titles. The guys from our hotel have pre-arranged this, and of course we'll repay the family with cash, but it feels like we're just some nosy folk who've popped round for a chat and a cuppa.

Do we want to see the prawns? The man of the house, who looks like he's been carved from oak, with muscles that bulge like mangoes, beckons us down to his raft - a kind of flat, triangular surf board - and four of us scrunch up cross-legged while he punts into the shallows. Nets segregate the water and when we reach his section, there's a bit of bank to climb on to. Sid translates for us: there's a tonne and a half of prawns to collect every three months, and during those last few weeks, when they lie fat and juicy beneath the surface, he must keep watch for thieves every night. He proudly shows us his shotgun; from the bullet scars on his arm and the look in his eye, it's obvious that protecting his valuable harvest is a matter of life and death. How big do the prawns grow? He holds out his hand, pointing first to the tip of his index finger, then to some two inches below his wrist: this year the biggest might reach 31cm.

From the farm we float down into one of the many Dutch-built canals that skewer the Puttalam district and were once important colonial thoroughfares. This one leads all the way to Negombo on the coast, but now you are less likely to find industrial narrowboats than young boys diving for shellfish. 'They easily avoid the six-foot water snakes because they're like water creatures themselves,' says Sid. We see piles of shells and firewood on the banks, where women have extracted the meat then boiled the shells to produce 'channa', a gum used in paint and medicine.

Back on the red road again - the A12, which according to Foreign Office advice we should not venture north of because of the threat from Tamil Tigers. The locals do not see the significance of the A12, which back in the UK is being portrayed as a territorial border; they say it has simply been chosen for ease, because it is a neat horizontal line spanning the breadth of the country in the north. The rebel group rarely comes anywhere near it. It's such a shame that some of Puttalam's most amazing sites - Wilpattu National Park, where you used to be able to take a luxury safari, and Anaradapura, one of the country's most important and vast historical ruins - lie beyond it. But our insurance won't be valid if we go there, and our tour operator won't go.

Driving around the winding roads - where sari-draped women wander by day and giant fruit bats dive at night - making the odd stop to climb to a Buddhist temple or rock fortress, such as the amazing Yapahuwa, a former Sri Lankan capital with vertigo-inducing stone steps, or to buy cinnamon and batik dresses from a market, I fall under the island's spell. It's gutting that people might feel worried about coming here because of the terrorism. I've never felt safer or further from danger. It's funny that when we pass bicycles loaded like removal vans, with a chest of drawers, a wrought-iron headboard or a family of five, often with a baby balanced on the handlebars, I think less about the risk they are taking than the nannying restrictions at home.

Escape: SRI LANKA : The red road to island's secret side: Hidden temples, dense jungle, vibrant wildlife and a unique eco-retreat built from mud: Gemma Bowes jo....

We stop off at a roadside shack for some toddy (vinegary fermented coconut sap), which in the mountains men drink through their purposefully long beards to filter out any bits of flotsam. I prefer the fresh coconuts, slashed open by the side of the road and adorned with a straw, pina colada-style. Puttalam town itself proves to be an attraction-free zone, but its ramshackle shops selling anchors, spices or strung-up packets of Tippy Tips crisps are photogenic, and it's fun to call in at a 'hotel' for a snack. Not bearing any resemblance to a Hilton, these mini cafes are a focal point; the place to pick up gossip and a plateful of steaming 'short eats', such as deep-fried lentil and sweetcorn cakes.

Another part of normal Puttalam life that will stay in the visitor's mind is the daily dip in a local tank. As an indigo cloak buttoned with stars is pulled across the dusky sky, we join the villagers who pedal and stroll to the water's edge with their shampoos and sarongs, creep blindly into the shallows and float out on our backs.

We are staying in The Mud House, a boutique eco-retreat on the outskirts of Anamaduwa village, surrounded by open land and tanks and near to a hill temple overseen by a moody monk, where we climb to watch the sun rise over the warm rocks.

The Mud House is run by cool guy Kumar, always laughing and saying, 'Quality, quality', and Pani, who looks like a corrupt-but-lovable policeman from a Mexican movie, with a giant 'tache and a desiccating wit. Tom and Sam, founders of Experience Sri Lanka, befriended these two when they worked as English teachers in Anamaduwa many years ago. Their experience inspired them to set up the company, and many people we meet know of them, and seem to admire what they've done and are grateful that they are bringing tourists to Sri Lanka.

Kumar and Pani literally pulled the lodge up from the ground, shaping the red mud into curvy walls and bed bases, then adding Thai-style conical thatch roofs, bowls of floating candles and frangipani flowers and weird-shaped bits of wood hung up like sculptures. It is totally remote, yet immensely stylish. Gas lamps and candles are the only light source, the shower is a stone tub with a scoop, and one of the rooms is simply a canvas cube with a double bed and mosquito nets, so you wake right in the midst of the dawn chorus of frogs, monkeys and birds. Down weaving paths through the trees, there are larger rooms for groups and families, a mini farm and a tree house overlooking a tank, where you can also borrow a raft .

Staying here might be a little rough around the edges - magically so - but still, Experience Sri Lanka tops and tails the Puttalam itinerary with luxury; a night in The Beach hotel in Negombo, or a couple at the amazing Horathapola, a gorgeous luxury villa in a working coconut plantation. We drank G&Ts in the Jacuzzi, looking up at fruit bats hanging in the trees, swam in the silent infinity pool, ate fragrant curries on antique tables and reclined on huge verandas listening to the owner recount tales from childhood at this family home.

One day my friend and I relive Tom and Sam's early days in Puttalam by teaching English in a school for a couple of hours. I imagine I'll be sitting in a corner with three kids for five minutes, but instead we are each given 30 kids, from the sweetest five-year-olds to sulky teens, to entertain for two hours. I'm bombarded by a rapid-fire mixture of incredibly smart and down-to-earth questions: 'What do you think about the war?' 'What is your favourite colour?' 'Do you like our President?' 'What are your ideas about love?' 'What are your future dreams?' It's the hardest interview I've ever done, but the kids are wonderful and it's another rich and fulfilling afternoon. 'Will we come back soon?' they ask. We promise we will.

Load-Date: February 26, 2007

Making of Muriel the suicide bomber

The Sunday Times (London)

December 4, 2005

Copyright 2005 Times Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; News Review; Pg. 3

Length: 1849 words

Byline: Nicola Smith and Francoise Tihon

Body

Her school friends and neighbours remember her as 'a good little girl'. So what made her turn into the first **female** European suicide bomber. Nicola Smith reports.

On the quiet streets of Charleroi, a bleak industrial city in southern Belgium, residents are in a state of shock. Just as the city was starting to recover from playing unwitting host to the crimes of the child murderer Marc Dutroux, it woke on Thursday to news of another horror.

Muriel Degauque, a pretty blonde 38-year-old brought up in a modest redbrick house in the shadows of the coal tip, had become the first European **female** suicide bomber. Her parents, a crane driver and hospital secretary, had known nothing of her violent mission.

On November 9 Degauque detonated explosives she had strapped to her body in an attempt to wipe out a convoy of American soldiers north of Baghdad. According to conflicting reports, she either killed six people or succeeded merely in blowing up herself.

Early last Wednesday, after being informed by police, her mother Liliane knocked on her best friend's door in tears. "I've lost my daughter," she wept. "I now have no children."

There were more tears as residents of the social housing complex where Muriel spent her formative years struggled to understand how the little girl who had played with their children had chosen to end her life so brutally in the name of jihad.

"I feel sick when I think about it," said one. "It's so sad for all her old friends and I can't imagine what it must be like for her parents," said another.

Serge Beghin, a local councillor, knew her well as a child. Muriel had celebrated her first communion with his sister and he had been in her brother's class at school. "She was just like all the other girls, dreaming I suppose about becoming a teacher or a nurse," he said.

In fact, the general consensus in Charleroi was of a "lovely, good little girl" who adored to play in the snow. She had, it was said, perhaps fallen in with a bad crowd in her adolescent years.

Andrea Dorange, who had known Muriel from the age of five, said: "She was an adorable little girl, smiling all the time. But then, later, everything became ...

Making of Muriel the suicide bomber

different. She was really weak and very easily influenced."

By the time she had left school at 16, Muriel was experimenting with drugs and often running away from home, one time disappearing to the hilly Ardennes region 100 miles away without her parents' knowledge. One neighbour recalled how she had found Degauque sleeping on the doorstep of the local community centre, having spent the night out in the open.

Like some teenagers, she had a turbulent and distant relationship with her parents, who found her difficult to control. She was pretty, her mother says, and so popular with boys she wasn't even sure how many boyfriends she'd had.

Those who knew her best believe a defining moment was the death of her brother in a motorbike accident in 1989. Jean-Paul Degauque died on his 24th birthday when a car crashed into him after running past a stop sign.

It was Muriel who had to break the news to her parents, and friends say the family never quite recovered from his death.

Muriel was very close to her "charming" brother, who was the first-born and adored by their parents and everyone who knew them.

Andrea Dorange said the young girl broke down at her brother's funeral, consumed with grief and guilt.

"When Jean-Paul died, she completely changed. She was always sad and she told me that it was unfair that her brother had died and that she should have died in his place," she said.

A downward spiral began. She worked for a short while in a bakery, where she was remembered mostly for her frequent absences and displaying signs of drug abuse. Later she had a job in a cafe, but that was the only employment that people remember her ever having. Her mother said she had an irregular work history and was claiming state benefits.

Her childhood friends seemed to lose track of her when, in her early twenties, she moved to Brussels. She married a Belgian man of Turkish origin but later divorced him. She converted to Islam four years ago when she struck up a new relationship with an Algerian man.

It was the beginning of a new life.

Her former school friend Manuela, 39, remembers her last meeting with Muriel more than eight years ago at a bus stop. She failed to recognise her because her face was concealed by a veil.

"She called over to me and asked if I still knew her. It was a shock to see her like that but she seemed to be happy," she said.

But Degauque's apparent happiness soon came to an end when she married Moroccan-born Issam Goris, seven years her junior. She changed her name to Myriam and her parents began to worry about the radical turn her Muslim faith had taken, fearing she had been brainwashed.

Goris tried to impose his own rules when visiting her parents, insisting the women and men ate separately and banning beer and television.

"The last time we saw them we told them that we had had enough of them trying to indoctrinate us," said Liliane. Her outstanding memory of her daughter's increasing remoteness was when she spent two weeks in a hospital just a few hundred yards from where Muriel was working.

"She did not come to see me once," said Liliane. "When I got out I asked if she still remembered she had a mother. She looked at me and I said, 'Well, you didn't come to see me'."

Making of Muriel the suicide bomber

In Brussels the couple were keeping a low profile in their rundown apartment block on Rue de Merode in the heart of an immigrant quarter near the main railway station. Muriel cloaked herself in a burqa, wearing gloves that concealed her pale hands. Last week many of her neighbours were astonished to learn she had been the suicide bomber who was dominating headlines. Most had not even realised the unassuming woman next door was a white Belgian.

One neighbour, a 22-year-old woman from Sierra Leone, said she had not got to know the couple, but every week noticed a pile of shoes in the hallway when many people came to their flat to pray.

Neighbours of Muriel's parents rarely saw the young couple, but were taken aback when they did: on a couple of occasions they arrived at the family home in a luxurious white Mercedes.

"I had to ask myself where they got the money from," says Christiane Calwaerts, the next-door neighbour. The last time the Mercedes was seen on the street was in August, shortly before Muriel headed to the Middle East with her husband.

The couple gave no indication to Muriel's family that they would not be returning, though they told the local postman to deliver their mail to a postal box without leaving any forwarding address.

Their landlord believed they were heading to Kenya. A local cafe owner said Goris had "said goodbye and that they were going to Morocco, to Meknes, where he apparently came from".

"The last time I spoke to my daughter on the telephone was a month ago. She told me she was in Syria," said Liliane. She tried her mobile on several occasions but the calls went through to voice mail. She tried on Tuesday at 10.30pm, again without success.

"I had a bad feeling when I was watching the news on television and they were talking about a Belgian," she said.

Her fears were realised when police officers turned up at the doorstep at 6am on Wednesday. They broke the news of their daughter's suicide bombing at Baquba, 30 miles northeast of Baghdad.

Muriel herself had not died immediately after detonating the bomb. Her husband had suffered a less painful end, a single shot to the head fired by American soldiers in a separate incident on the same day.

At her local mosque in Monceau sur Sambre, imam Fadel Abdallah did not fear a backlash against Muslims.

"We have good community relations," he said. "This was caused by her own problems and those who pushed her to do this." Nevertheless, Belgium, home to many thousands of immigrants of north African descent, is now asking itself if it can expect more tragic stories like Muriel's.

Claude Moniquet, from the Brussels-based European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre, admitted Muriel Degauque could become a "model"

for other fanatical young women to follow.

"She had a classic profile for a convert to radical Islam," he said. "She had a drug problem when she was younger, she had no real job, and was not very close to her family. Maybe she thought that she had no future and she was clearly under the influence of her husband who was a radical. What is surprising is that she was a young European woman, but we could maybe expect more cases."

Public fears are growing that this was not an isolated incident after police swooped on several households in Charleroi, Antwerp, Tongres and Brussels last week. Five north Africans are still in custody. One couple in Antwerp, of Moroccan origin, were reportedly arrested before they headed on a similar journey of death.

Mohamed Reha, a Belgian of Moroccan origin who was arrested earlier in November, told police there were several wives of imprisoned Islamic extremists who were also prepared to take their own lives, and others with them.

Making of Muriel the suicide bomber

It was revealed on Friday that Pascal Cruypennick, also a white Belgian of European origin, had been arrested on suspicion of having sent suicide bombers to Iraq. He too had suffered a troubled childhood through the divorce of his parents and being beaten by his father. He later spent time in prison before finding work as a kitchen hand and marrying, then divorcing an African woman.

Cruypennick converted to Islam three years ago. His neighbours never suspected this quiet man may have harboured deadly intent.

Meanwhile, the distraught parents of Muriel Degauque have been left to mourn. By Thursday morning Liliane was too exhausted to talk. Looking defeated and haggard, with the door only slightly ajar, she said she had just returned from hospital and the police had told her not to talk to anyone else.

"She's broken, crying, ill and seems close to a nervous breakdown," said her neighbour Andrea Dorange. "They are good people and they never deserved this to happen."

THE DEADLY **FEMALES**

In conflicts around the world, the stereotype of the suicide bomber as male is changing.

IRAQ

In September this year a woman in her early twenties became the first **female** suicide bomber to strike successfully against the coalition forces. Disguised as a man, she killed six and wounded 30 in Tar Afar.

CHECHNYA

During a four-month period in 2003, six out of seven Chechen suicide attacks were carried out by **women**. Rebel commander Shamil Basayev spoke proudly of his regiment of Black Widows.

ISRAEL

Palestinian mother of two Reem Raiyshi, 22, became Hamas's first **female** suicide bomber in January 2004. She killed four Israelis at a checkpoint.

TURKEY

Kurdistan separatists have used **female** suicide bombers, reasoning they are less likely to be searched. It was believed to have been a woman who bombed the tourist bus in the resort of Kusadasi last July, killing a British holidaymaker.

SRI LANKA

The **Tamil Tigers** have recruited **women** for suicide missions. Most dramatically, one delivered the bomb in the 1991 killing of former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Load-Date: December 5, 2005

Global Warning

The New York Times
February 6, 2005 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2005 The New York Times Company

Section: Section 7; Column 2; Book Review Desk; Pg. 28; CHRONICLE / POLITICAL ISLAM

Length: 2018 words

Byline: By Noah Feldman

Noah Feldman, a professor at the New York University School of Law and fellow of the New America Foundation, is the author of "What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation Building."

Body

GLOBALIZED ISLAM

The Search for a New Ummah.

By Olivier Roy.

Columbia University, \$29.50.

THE WAR FOR MUSLIM MINDS

Islam and the West.

By Gilles Kepel.

Harvard University, \$23.95.

UNHOLY ALLIANCE

Radical Islam and the American Left.

By David Horowitz.

Regnery, \$27.95.

AT THE HEART OF TERROR

Islam, Jihadists, and

America's War on Terrorism.

By Monte Palmer and Princess Palmer.

Rowman & Littlefield, \$24.95.

PAKISTAN'S DRIFT

INTO EXTREMISM

Allah, the Army, and

America's War on Terror.

By Hassan Abbas.

M. E. Sharpe, cloth, \$69.95; paper, \$25.95.

Global Warning

The globalization of Islam is nothing new. The Prophet Muhammad himself confronted Jews, Christians and pagans in his Arabian milieu -- and within a couple of generations, Islam, spread by conquest and conversion alike, came into fruitful contact with the legacies of Persian, Greek and Roman civilizations.

Nevertheless, since 9/11, the pace of the engagement between global Islam and other, mostly Western, forces and ideas has quickened, and the stakes have grown. The latest round of books on Islam and the West attempts to make sense of this most recent and intense episode of global interaction and conflict. Mostly, these books reveal a powerful undercurrent of concern -- ripening into panic -- about the unintended consequences of civilizational encounters played out in an environment of violence. They offer diagnoses, but few prescriptions.

In an influential pre-9/11 book, "The Failure of Political Islam," Olivier Roy, a French student of contemporary Islam, argued that utopian Islamic revolutions in Muslim countries failed during the 1980's and 90's. Now, in "Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah," he pushes the point farther, suggesting that the important events in the world of Islam are taking place not in the regions we ordinarily think of as Islamic but in Europe. As Exhibit A, Roy points to today's global terrorists, who, he says, are overwhelmingly likely to have studied and lived in Europe (or occasionally the United States) and to have embraced radical Islamic ideas there, not in the Muslim countries where they were born.

Indeed, he traces contemporary Islamic terrorism itself to the European terror of the Baader-Meinhof gang and other leftist movements of the 1960's and 70's. Global Islamic terror, for Roy, is not only born of the interaction between Islam and the West, but also reflects the aspiration of displaced Muslims living in Europe to create a transnational Islamic identity, forged in revolution.

Roy is right to focus on the ways that both the techniques and ideologies of terror have crossed borders and grafted themselves onto an Islam that, in the past, was largely unfamiliar with them. (He points out, for instance, that suicide bombing was popularized not by Muslims, but by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, and adopted by Al Qaeda only after it had been borrowed, to devastating effect, by Palestinian radicals as part of their intifada.) It is also true that the small number of Muslim terrorists who have committed acts of terror in Europe or the United States includes several who were radicalized in Europe. (As Roy notes, however, this was not true of the 15 Saudis who were the muscle, not the pilots, on 9/11.)

Roy's Eurocentric focus and his impulse to link Islamic terror to Marxist-inspired radicalism obscure the extent to which satellite television and the Internet have spread Western ideas into the Islamic world. Utopian violence may arguably be on the decline in most majority Muslim countries (although Saudi Arabia is a notable exception, and the Iraqi insurgency includes its share of jihadis); but ideas from free speech to text messaging to brand-name consumerism are affecting the daily lives of larger and larger numbers of non-Western people, who remain fully comfortable with their own national as well as religious identities. Surely the future of global Islam is to be found where most Muslims live, and where today's ideologies of both radical and moderate Islamism are developed, even if they are adopted by emigres abroad.

If the United States seems missing from Roy's story at times, Gilles Kepel puts America's reaction to 9/11 front and center in "The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West." Kepel's central thesis can be summed up simply: the United States is losing the war, and badly. Instead of encouraging resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Bush administration has played directly into Al Qaeda's hands by invading Iraq. It failed to recognize that the war would further inflame the Muslim world, convincing more Muslims than ever before that the United States was their enemy. Now, Kepel says, Europe will inherit the whirlwind, in the form of growing Islamic extremism and terrorist acts like the Madrid bombings.

Kepel and Roy are frequently mentioned in the same breath -- because of their French nationality and their tendency to publish books at the same time -- but their approaches are starkly different. Kepel, one senses, is addressing an American audience, in order to show us the error of our ways through an outsider's critical evaluation. One chapter is devoted to an analysis of the neoconservatives, and another of comparable length to what he considers "the calamity of nation-building in Iraq."

Global Warning

But Kepel is best when on familiar ground, as when he analyzes the growing skill of European Muslim leaders like the controversial Tariq Ramadan, who defend religious freedom while demanding special recognition for their religious community as a distinct group within Europe. Kepel barely suppresses his frustration with this two-sided political strategy, or with the French government's willingness to play along by recognizing quasi-official clerical spokesmen for Muslims in France.

Forbidding Muslim girls to wear headscarves in French schools while simultaneously trying to control French Muslims through officially recognized Islamic organizations gets matters exactly backward, as most Americans will easily see. Our constitutional combination of freedom to practice one's religion, coupled with the strong separation of church and state, has worked far better in accommodating religious diversity than anything Europe has yet dreamed up. The United States may be alienating Muslims worldwide with its foreign policy; but at home a new generation of Muslim-Americans is demonstrating the ability to criticize American policy while maintaining steadfast loyalty to the democratic values they share with other American citizens from different backgrounds.

It would be nice if the extremes of the American right and left showed some of the same measured ability to argue against mistaken American policies without impugning the integrity of the other side; but perhaps this is asking too much of ideologues caught up in the past. David Horowitz is one such relic of traditional left-right struggles (and like many of the toughest grapplers, he has been on both sides). In "Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left," this leftist-turned-conservative provocateur aims to discredit his old allies by arguing that the left is in bed with Osama bin Laden because of their shared anti-Americanism. He writes that "self-described progressives" have formed "inexplicable alliances . . . with Arab fascists and Islamic fanatics in their war against America and the West."

Horowitz's book would be little more than a tiresome exercise in quote-gathering and guilt by association were it not for the fact, noted by Roy, that the Islamic extremists have indeed drunk from the well of old-fashioned Marxist anti-Americanism. Militant Islamists do in fact share some common themes and language with homegrown radicals, especially in their condemnations of American imperialism. What is interesting about this is not that it demonstrates some alliance between the old (once the new) left and Islamic terror, but that it shows how ideas lose their provenance as they travel across time. The worldwide critics of American empire today are no more likely to think of themselves as Marxists than the antiwar critics of the 1960's thought of themselves as belonging to the American anti-imperialist movements of 1900 or 1790.

A more sensible and productive set of proposals for understanding Muslim extremism comes to us from two Americans who have considerable experience in the Middle East. An academic and a World Bank consultant respectively, Monte Palmer and Princess Palmer are particularly good at describing the Lebanese and Palestinian jihad movements. In "At the Heart of Terror: Islam, Jihadists, and America's War on Terrorism," they analyze jihadi strategies with a nuanced common sense all too hard to come by in the sometimes sensationalist literature on the topic. They provide, for example, a detailed chapter on Israeli counterterrorism efforts that identifies both its successes (large numbers of suicide bombings thwarted) and its shortcomings (no significant reduction in Palestinians prepared to undertake terrorist acts).

These authors pose an increasingly tough question for United States policy: Will we, can we "accept rule by Islamic parties dedicated to the establishment of an Islamic state"? In Lebanon, for example, Hezbollah has made itself into a political party without abandoning its violent stance toward Israel or its willingness to use terror; in Palestine, Hamas may well follow a similar course. The Palmers call such groups "radical-moderates." Unlike the Shiite Islamic democrats poised to take power in Iraq, or Turkey's thoroughly Islamic-democratic Justice and Development Party, Hezbollah has been prepared to pursue simultaneous strategies of violence and political participation.

The Palmers opt for engagement with Hezbollah -- not because they trust them, but on the realist grounds that "efforts to eliminate them will only increase terrorism and push the United States into a war with Islam." In fact, it may be possible to negotiate with the radical-moderates on the condition that they abandon any active involvement in terror. This approach would require us to distinguish true Islamic democrats, who reject violence as a mechanism of political change, from fellow travelers like Moktada al-Sadr, who haunt the edges of participatory politics. But, as

Global Warning

the Palmers note, Muslim support for jihad against enemies perceived as oppressing Muslims is ubiquitous, even among moderate-moderates.

Even more specific is an engaging, quirky book on terrorism's largest growth market: Pakistan. Hassan Abbas, the author of "Pakistan's Drift Into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror," served in the Pakistani police in the still-wild North-West Frontier Province, and did stints in the governments of both Benazir Bhutto and Pervez Musharraf. He therefore has an insider's angle on the story of the gradual infiltration of Islamic ideology into the government over the last several decades.

What's most significant about this book, however, is its insight into the Pakistan military's perspective on the country's politics and history. Each time we are introduced to a new character from the military, we hear the opinion of the officer class. And every officer has a precisely calibrated reputation: this one a drunkard, this one an honorable man, this one a brave soldier with a weakness for women. Increasingly, after the ruling general, Zia ul-Haq, died in an airplane crash in 1988, the newly promoted senior officers had reputations as Islamist sympathizers or activists. These reputations matter crucially for questions ranging from promotion to coup d'etat. For Abbas, the Pakistani Army is political Pakistan itself.

The picture that emerges from the details of Pakistan's military politics is one of the transformation of a traditional, British-trained and British-inflected professional army into a more complex institution that both permeates politics and, in turn, falls under the influence of political movements like Islamism. This, too, is an instance of globalization - the kind that comes after the empire has folded itself up and gone home.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Drawing (Drawing by Viktor Koen)

Load-Date: February 7, 2005

End of Document

Karunanidhi pays floral tribute to Rajiv Gandhi

Hindustan Times

August 18, 2006 Friday 4:19 PM EST

Copyright 2006 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 110 words

Byline: Report from the Asian News International brought to you by the Hindustan Times

Dateline: Chennai

Body

Chennai, Aug 18 -- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi today remembered former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in Chennai ahead of his 61st birth anniversary, which falls on August 21.

Lauding his invaluable contributions in different fields, particularly Panchayati Raj, IT (Information technology) and **women's** empowerment, Karunanidhi offered floral tributes before the portrait of Rajiv Gandhi at a function here.

Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on May 21, 1991 by a **LTTE (Women)** of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) **female** suicide bomber during an election rally at Sriperumbudur.

Published by HT Media Ltd. with permission from Asian News International.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: August 19, 2006

Pious people with lost souls

The Toronto Star
August 13, 2006 Sunday

Copyright 2006 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: IDEAS; Pg. D10

Length: 4323 words

Body

Language, like terrorism, keeps evolving.

So when the media cite the menace of "jihad", the word is now used without translation and understood to mean Islamic Holy War against infidels.

Except that it doesn't, not quite.

To mainstream Muslims, jihad also translates as "struggle"; a personal striving.

It also describes what I experienced during two overseas postings for the Toronto Star - a journalistic journey that evolved into a personal struggle, a kind of journalistic jihad, to understand the roots of religious radicalism and the pull of ethnic extremism.

How does faith mutate into fundamentalism? What motivates young men to massacre innocents in pursuit of martyrdom? Why does ethnic identity - and the quest for self-determination - descend into intolerance or tribalism?

These questions became the focal point of my decade-long odyssey, leading me down blind alleys and into the occasional dead end. There are no certainties when faith, ethnicity and extremism are involved.

I watched these volatile ingredients form a combustible mix that fuelled terrorism. Together, they are the transcendent forces of our time.

And much misunderstood. Many Canadians still equate fundamentalism almost exclusively with Islam; more often than not, Muslims get all the bad press thanks to the gruesome exploits of groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Al Qaeda.

My travels exposed me to the reality that no one is immune to religious radicalization. I encountered the pogroms of Hindus against Muslims in India, the bloody-mindedness of Buddhists against minority Hindus in Sri Lanka, the misplaced messianism of Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank, and the deep-rooted intolerance of Christians towards Muslims in the Philippines.

From the desert religions of the Middle East to the mystical faiths of Asia, fundamentalism holds a powerful, universal appeal for people of all faiths.

Leaving Canada for Jerusalem in the mid-1990s as the Star's Middle East correspondent, I landed in the middle of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: a tale of two faiths fighting a Hundred Years War. In the battle between Jewish settlers and Palestinian martyrs, rivals became soulmates by jointly undermining the fledgling peace process.

Pious people with lost souls

Fundamentalist Jews took land, Islamic jihadis took lives. And each side dehumanized the other.

Amid the symbiotic self-destructiveness, both claimed spiritual justification for their transgressions and profited from the fallout: a renewed Palestinian intifada and predictable retaliation from Israel's armed forces. And as the peace process unravelled, terrorism moved into the void to capture the world's attention.

In Jerusalem, terror had its own special sound: the dull thud of a suicide bombing followed by the wailing of sirens and the moaning of victims.

The most unnerving part of my job was rushing to the scene of a bomb blast, like the one that exploded at a crowded food market near our office. I remember threading my way past throngs of panicked shoppers fleeing in the opposite direction. Using my notebook as a kind of psychological shield, I moved through the carnage: Cobs of corn strewn among severed limbs and shards of glass. Bits of human flesh splattered on market stalls. Chunks of watermelon immersed in pools of blood. Elderly victims slumped amid the detritus of the daily market, groaning in pain or eerily silent from the shock. The charred, decapitated torso of a bomber splayed on the street alongside the corpses of his victims. United in death.

Surrounded by the misery, I tried to fathom the method behind the madness. The bomber's family, brimming with pride, would invariably erect a mourning tent to celebrate the good deed, distributing sweets to mark the happy occasion. There would be talk of how the "martyr," by righting Israeli wrongs, could look forward to 72 virgins in paradise.

I had presumed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict placed me at the epicentre of terrorism, but it didn't take long for the growing popularity of suicide bombings to create an arc of terror stretching across the Middle East, with Muslims slaying Muslims over theological disputes.

The next leg of my journey took me to Algeria and Egypt on the trail of mujahedeen Holy Warriors who thought nothing of planting bombs in holy places. On assignment in Yemen, I visited the tribal battleground that doubled as a recruiting ground for Osama bin Laden. In Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam and latter-day crucible of intolerance, I found a place of faith and loathing, where pious bombers attacked civilians with impunity. In Sudan, I covered the civil war over the imposition of Sharia (Islamic law) and brutal mistreatment by tribal militias.

In Iran, the testing ground for an Islamic revolution that promised a kinder, gentler theocracy, I saw a regime lapse further into brutality toward its own citizens. In Lebanon, I listened as Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, defiantly laid out his anti-Israel agenda from his heavily guarded South Beirut headquarters, and vowed never to disarm his Iranian-backed fighters. Across town in his fortress-like prime ministerial offices, a fearless Rafik Hariri described his vision of peaceful coexistence - a patriotic voice silenced, last year, by Syrian assassins.

Posted four years later to the Asia Bureau, I felt the puritan terror of Taliban Afghanistan and the menace of Pakistan's jihadis well before 9/11. Their rudimentary reading of Islamic scriptures, superimposed upon centuries-old tribal laws, wrought intolerance toward both family and foreigners. Afghanistan became the breeding ground for the conspiracies of Al Qaeda and fostered the Talibanization of Pakistan, where attacks against minority sects were rife.

It is nightfall in Karachi, October 2001; time for evening prayers as American warplanes rain bombs across the border in Afghanistan. A month after the carnage of 9/11, the United States is at war next door, and this port city of 12 million people is on edge. Pakistan is a flashpoint in the West's fight against the neighbouring Taliban, but it is also a country at war with itself: Muslim against Muslim, moderate against extremist, Shiite against Sunni.

Together with my translator, I am awaiting a rendezvous on a dimly lit street with one of Pakistan's most notorious militant groups: the Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet, soon to be banned by Pakistan's military government for inciting hatred and assassinating enemies. A spotter in flowing robes and sandals looks us over from a distance. Satisfied, he leads us through winding alleys to the group's headquarters in a heavily guarded mosque. After a final invocation of "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great), the head of the Karachi wing emerges from evening prayers and summons me for an audience.

Pious people with lost souls

With his untrimmed beard and white skullcap, Ilyas Zubair is a picture of piety - and possessed of a charismatic brand of Islam that can be lethal. His group accuses Christians and Jews of conspiracies against Islam and condemns fellow Muslims from the minority Shiite sect as infidels. Inconveniently for my translator and me, we fit both descriptions: Shiite Muslim and Canadian Jew collaborating on a reporting assignment.

"The Shiites are anti-Islamic," Zubair complains bitterly in rapid bursts of Urdu, rendered into English by my increasingly nervous translator.

"They are not Muslims, they are kaffirs (infidels)," he continues, fingering his prayer beads reflectively. "They should not be allowed in mosques, nor in Mecca. My feeling is the same as if a Jew were entering Mecca."

With Zubair's blessings, assassins have gunned down dozens of Shiite physicians in the waiting rooms of Karachi. Thousands more Shiites have been slain in the city's honeycomb slums or soaring mosques. Young disciples sit at Zubair's feet on the carpeted floor, listening raptly as he outlines a jihad against perfidious Jews and heretical Shiites.

The sermon concluded, we are offered sweet tea and pleasantries before being escorted to the door. A guard clutching an AK-47 springs to attention as farewells are exchanged in the courtyard. Unfamiliar with my Jewish surname, the militants offer a warm embrace and tell me to go in peace. But my translator, Hussain Askari, tarred by his identifiably Shiite name, is refused a handshake or a glimmer of eye contact. On this occasion, at least, the Jew felt safer than the Muslim.

But such luck cannot always be counted on. A few weeks later, another Jewish journalist attempting a story about Karachi's tangled web of terrorism meets a different fate: Wall Street Journal correspondent Daniel Pearl is kidnapped by the Islamic extremists he sought to interview. Instead of the Islamic salutation and hug bestowed upon me, he is beheaded.

I had crossed paths with Pearl on assignment in Iran - where we shared the same translator - and again in Israel. As his death sank in, fellow journalists warned that my own conspicuously Jewish surname put me in danger: Along with my notebook and Nikon, I carried the extra baggage of being a Cohn in the lion's den. No longer could I venture into hostile territory with the comforting assumption that a Canadian passport granted any kind of protective immunity.

Years earlier, when I had ventured into Hezbollah's South Beirut headquarters to interview Nasrallah, his personal gatekeeper, Ibrahim, had questioned me closely about the Toronto Star. Oblivious to my own background, he demanded to know whether my newspaper was "pro-Israel," if any Zionists worked there, and how many Jews were on staff.

"About average for Canada," I deadpanned. Thus reassured, he gave armed guards the signal to hustle me into a utility vehicle with black curtains drawn for the drive to Nasrallah's salon. For more than an hour his protectors meticulously checked my belongings for any incriminating evidence, until at last I was ushered into a room with his translator.

The encounter seemed to go well until my post-interview chat with the trusty Ibrahim. The press aide caught sight of my official Lebanese government press card listing my surname, "Cohn," ahead of my given names, "Martin Regg." He had approved the interview on the assumption that my surname was "Reggcohn."

Turning pale, Ibrahim interrogated me feverishly.

"Cohn - is this really your name?" he sputtered. "Isn't this a Jewish name?"

I nodded, Yes.

"But are you a Jew?" He seemed in a state of shock. I wasn't sure who was in greater peril - me for being Jewish or Ibrahim for having allowed a Jew into the inner sanctum. After an interminable silence, he calmed down.

"No problem, we are not fanatics here," he mused.

On other occasions, my surname had a calming effect, like the time I encountered a gun-wielding Jewish settler in the West Bank. No one had ever pointed a gun at me before, not until Noam Shapiro came speeding down from his hilltop settlement of Yizhar to confront us. With his wife and baby watching blithely from the back seat, the bearded settler was dressed for battle: a machine gun in hand, a kippa prayer cap on his head, and the prayer fringes of an orthodox Jew on his waist. Shapiro was the first fundamentalist of any faith to take aim at me, only to remove his finger from the trigger upon inspecting my press pass.

In Beirut and the West Bank, I had come a little too close for comfort. Now, in the wake of Pearl's death, the comfort zone was narrowing even more.

Leaving the Middle East behind to travel through the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, I was reminded that far more Muslims live in Asia than the Middle East, and that they tend to be more moderate. The often violent Islamic extremism of the Middle East - radiating out of the Arabian Desert as far as Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan - is quite unlike the nuanced, mystical Islam practised in most of Asia.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Islamic country with 200 million Muslims, remains a bulwark of moderation and pluralism. Islam came to the archipelago only in the 14th century, long after Hinduism and Buddhism had taken root, so Indonesians adapted Islam's more mystical Sufi strain and melded it with their own animist beliefs to forge a tolerant faith that endures to this day.

India's Muslim population, the world's second largest, has been heralded as among the most progressive, democratic and successful anywhere. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reminded me in an interview, Indians "take pride in the fact that these 150 million Muslims live as peaceful citizens of our country, that there is not a single incident of their being involved in Al Qaeda and other international terrorist groups."

Despite the relative restraint shown by India's Muslim minority, the same could not always be said for its Hindu majority, nor for the Buddhists in its northern territory of Ladakh and in neighbouring Sri Lanka.

My first exposure to India's religious extremism came in Ayodhya, a graceful town of temples and mosques. The streets are lined with gentle Hindu priests and sadhus (ascetic holy men), marking it as one of Hinduism's holiest sites - but also its bloodiest.

Overflowing with pilgrims, it brims with hate. Fifteen years ago, zealots demolished a mosque to make way for a Hindu temple. Hindu fundamentalists have camped out at the site ever since and taken the entire nation hostage. I listened as the Hindu hardliners taunted the Muslim minority with fundamentalist slogans.

"Hindi Hindu Hindustan," they chanted, which translates roughly as "India for the Hindus and the Hindi-speakers."

"Katua Bhago Pakistan," they continued: "Circumcised (men) run to Pakistan" - a reference to Muslim men for whom circumcision is a religious obligation.

Hindutva, or Hinduization, has been dubbed the "saffronization" of India: the rooting out of Islamic or Western influences that are deemed "foreign" to the population of one billion.

Back in 2002, Hindutva was the declared ideology of the governing BJP party in New Delhi and the western coastal state of Gujarat, where tensions over Ayodhya culminated in anti-Muslim pogroms that claimed as many as 2,000 lives.

At the scene of the Gujarat massacre, I came upon one of the survivors, Abeda Begum. From her perch along the muddy, garbage-strewn alley where chickens and cows jostled for space with pedestrians, Begum had witnessed the slaughter that spared the domestic animals but claimed her loved ones. There is a dead end where the Hindu mob doused her Muslim neighbours with kerosene and burned 92 of them to death. Among them were the mother and sister of Begum's husband.

Pious people with lost souls

When I visited, she was looking after one of the orphaned survivors, 12-year-old Samina Begum. Together they rolled incense sticks with their blackened hands for 30 cents a day, their only income since Begum's husband was let go by Hindu employers in an economic boycott.

"I'm doing all this work because the Hindus won't keep Muslim workers any more and our houses were destroyed, so we have to start from scratch," Begum told me plaintively, adjusting the folds of her purple sari.

I was struck by her clothing and manners. The flowing saris worn by women like Begum often leave their midriffs partly exposed, which might appear immodest for Muslims elsewhere in the region. But in Gujarat it was the local Hindu fashion, and so it had been adopted by Muslims as their own in a state where people of both religions wore the same clothes, spoke the same local dialect, and watched the same movies.

Yet they remained worlds apart in Gujarat, fearing for their lives in the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi. The killing fields of this coastal state were a reminder that nearly six decades after Gandhi's dream of a pluralist state for Indians of all faiths, the country is still haunted by the ghost of communal violence.

India's disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir, where Muslims are in the majority, adds another dimension to the country's religious tensions. It is not only the minority Hindus who feel besieged here, but also the Tibetan-Buddhists living along Kashmir's northern border with China.

In the high-altitude enclave of Ladakh, I listened to Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, the 86-year-old chief lama, explain why his fellow Buddhists were struggling to separate from Kashmir's Muslims. Swathed in scarlet robes in his monastery residence, he argued passionately that Buddhists wanted nothing to do with Muslims, because their religions were so utterly incompatible with one another: "We have nothing in common."

I had a chance years later to recount those xenophobic musings to Tibet's Dalai Lama at his residence-in-exile in the nearby Indian hill town of Dharamsala. His Holiness tried to laugh off the chief lama's combative remarks but later turned deadly serious about the subject of Buddhist fundamentalism:

Every religion, he acknowledged, is susceptible to extremism, and Tibetans are no exception. The only difference, he argued, is that Buddhist fundamentalists tend to take potshots within their own faith, rather than attacking others.

Not so in Sri Lanka, where warmongering monks have long raised a battle cry against the Hindu minority. This small South Asian island of 18 million people, which claims to be the centre of Buddhism, has transformed itself into a textbook case of religious radicalism and tribal identity run amok - a microcosm of the planet's ethnic conflicts.

When I visited their temples, Sri Lanka's most influential religious leaders cast the Sinhalese majority as custodians both of Buddhism's sanctity and the island's territorial integrity. To be sure, they feared separation by the Hindu Tamils in the northeast, but they bitterly opposed the very policies that could easily have fostered national unity, such as equal rights, official bilingualism and local empowerment for the minority. The monks cited a mythological prophecy that Buddhism would be entrusted to this island off India's southeast coast for 5,000 years, with the Sinhalese deemed a chosen people on a sacred mission.

Years of incitement against the minority Hindus gave rise to one of the world's most feared guerrilla movements, the Tamil Tigers. Rebelling against Buddhist chauvinism, government discrimination and army atrocities, ordinary Tamils rallied to the guerrillas despite their often grisly tactics that plunged the country into two decades of blood-curdling violence.

The Tigers claim credit for pioneering the phenomenon of suicide bombers long before it became identified with Islamist visions of religious martyrdom. They are an avowedly secular fighting force, yet they encourage cult-like loyalty toward their supreme commander, high-school dropout Velupillai Prabhakaran. Cyanide pellets dangle from the necks of recruits to avert capture. Female fighters, pledging blind obedience to their leader, are selected for the most daring suicide attacks.

When I travelled to the jungle headquarters of the Tigers' political leader, S.P. Thamilselvan, he painted a portrait of earnest young women yearning to be selected for the elite Black Tigers force so they might lay down their lives

Pious people with lost souls

for the leader. Unlike Islamic suicide bombers, he stressed, the Tigers don't martyr themselves in hopes of entering paradise. They do it so their fellow Tamils can walk freely in their own homeland.

I let his words sink in during a stroll through the nearby Tiger cemetery, where a calligrapher was adding names to the thousands of headstones bearing the bones of slain guerrillas. Some had swallowed their cyanide capsules, others had incinerated themselves as suicide bombers.

They didn't do it for Allah. They did it for their kin, their cause, their cult - in the thrall of ethnic extremism.

We forget, amid today's heightened fear of fundamentalism, that so-called freedom fighters seeking ethnic and religious homelands have all evoked their own brand of terror in our time: not just the **Tamil Tigers** of Sri Lanka, for example, but the Sikh warriors who took up arms in India's Punjab in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Canada endured a bitter taste of their tactics in 1985 when the terrorist bombing of an Air India flight claimed the lives of all 329 people aboard. Now, the fight for a separate Khalistan seems a footnote to history, one of the few violent separatist movements ever to fizzle out.

On a visit to Amritsar's Golden Temple, the centre of Sikh worship, the ordinary voices of the devout told the tale: alienated by the gratuitous criminality of so many separatists, the local populace gradually sided with the iron fist of the Indian security forces, providing vital intelligence to wipe out terrorism in their own land.

The pacification of the Punjab is a rare exception to the rule that old self-determination movements fade away but never die. Nearly six decades after independence, India is still struggling to wipe out perennial rebellions along its border regions. Apart from Kashmir, more than 30 rebel armies clustered in five tribal states along India's northeastern fringe still bitterly resist central rule; in the east coast state of Andhra Pradesh, Maoist Naxalite rebels wage ideological warfare with a peasant-style rebellion.

And the list goes on. The Indonesian archipelago was the battleground for three distinct separatist movements - in East Timor, West Papua and Aceh.

In southern Sudan, the Christian minority wanted to break away from an Islamic government, while on the southern Philippines island of Mindanao a Muslim minority tried to separate from the Christian majority.

In China's remote western frontier province of Xinjiang, Uyghur Muslims wanted a separate state of their own.

Covering the competing claims for nationhood in India and beyond, I soon found myself suffering from self-determination fatigue.

Throughout my travels, Muslim intellectuals would not let me forget the plight of their peoples, but I couldn't help noticing their lack of empathy for that of non-Muslims - be it the suffering of southern Sudan's Christian minority at the hands of Islamic militias, or the military occupation of East Timor and West Papua by Indonesia's Muslim soldiers.

Deal with our demands, Islamic intellectuals averred, and the violence would vanish. Yet the grievances invariably depended on the geography of the aggrieved: to Pakistanis, the suffering of Kashmiris was the strongest evidence of Western perfidy; in the Arab world, the Palestinian cause was the priority; Indonesians blamed the West after "losing" sovereignty over East Timor; Arab sympathizers of Al Qaeda cited the presence of American troops on sacred Saudi soil as justification for Osama bin Laden's attacks. Today, Iraq and Lebanon top the Islamic world's list of grievances.

To be sure, resolving these problems would reduce resentment against the West; but the Islamic perception of victimization - and the Islamist path of violence - won't magically melt away if any or all of those perennial trouble spots recede from the horizon.

Pious people with lost souls

After a decade abroad, I came to the view that fundamentalism, tribalism and terrorism cannot be so easily explained away or wished away. It's not just about poverty. It's not solely about schooling. It's not entirely about injustice. And it's not really about Islam or other religions.

Craving status and purpose, aspiring martyrs find a *raison d'être* in their jihad - a mission, an opportunity to rise above their dreary surroundings. The closer I came to these pious men, the more they looked like lost souls. They sought death not so much as a shortcut to paradise but as a quest for purpose in a mundane life.

We learned shortly after 9/11 that the roster of bombers was dominated by well-off Egyptians and Saudis leading privileged lives abroad. And we now have an inkling, after the arrests of 17 accused terrorist plotters in the GTA, that young Muslim men living comfortably in the banality of suburbia can become intoxicated by fantasies of saving the world by blowing up targets in Toronto.

Much has been written in recent times about the fight for Islam's soul, manifested by a battle between moderates and fundamentalists. We pay great attention to the small number of bombers who do the most damage, but it is also the believers - who make up the mainstream among the world's 1 billion Muslims - who must be engaged, along with those of other faiths.

In my travels across Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, I had always assumed that the fanatics were on the fringes. In fact, it was not only the foot soldiers of fundamentalism who had been pedalling poisonous ignorance, but many of the best minds, as well - either for what they said or left unsaid.

Most condemned the violence, but I found a surprising number who condoned it, excused it, or lapsed into denial. On assignment, I came across prominent, educated Muslims in every walk of life - scholars, doctors, politicians, generals - who blamed 9/11 and other attacks on Israel's Mossad secret service while exonerating Al Qaeda.

Quite apart from their readiness to vilify Jews, I marvelled at the willingness of so many in the Islamic world to besmirch one another as apostles, infidels, or inferior Muslims.

Equally, ultra-orthodox Jews excelled at self-hatred when vilifying their fellow Jews; Hindus excoriated their brethren of lesser castes or questionable orthodoxy; and Buddhists spouted insults at believers from rival sects.

Fundamentalism, like revolution, eats its own children.

Canadians can no longer turn a blind eye to the world beyond our borders; the globalization of terrorism has shattered our splendid isolation. Overseas, there is a different mentality: You are your tribe, and your tribe is you.

Fundamentalism and tribalism, once so alien to the Canadian psyche, have migrated from foreign war zones to our own shores. If we want to maintain our Canadian values of tolerance and harmony at home, we need to wake up to the terror and hatred abroad - not only infecting the Middle East but now poisoning the rest of the planet.

Martin Regg Cohn is the Star's Deputy City Editor.

Graphic

photos by martin regg cohn Above: A hardline Hindu sadhu (sage) stands near soldiers deployed in Ayodhya, India, to keep fundamentalists from praying on the site of a mosque they demolished in 1992. Left: A Muslim boy poses with a toy gun at a pro-Taliban street rally Lahore, Pakistan, shortly after 9 11. The rally was organized by religious groups. Martin Regg Cohn A village girl in Sri Lanka is guarded by local Buddhist militia against attacks by Tamil Tiger fighters.

Pious people with lost souls

Load-Date: August 13, 2006

End of Document

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for them. Do they get value for money? Charles Starmer-Smith investigates.

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

August 19, 2006 Saturday

Copyright 2006 Telegraph Group Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: TRAVEL; GAP YEAR SPECIAL; Pg. 11

Length: 4413 words

Byline: Charles Starmer-Smith Additional reporting by Robert Norden

Body

For many school-leavers and their parents, a volunteer placement with one of the established gap-year companies might seem an ideal option. It offers the excitement of working somewhere exotic, the chance to do something worthwhile and the security of having everything arranged by a Western-based, professional company.

This year, more than 40,000 young Britons, encouraged to do something "constructive" with their year off by university admissions officers and employers, will embark on volunteer placements in all corners of the globe - often at considerable expense. For the majority, it will be a positive experience; but others will return home disappointed that the roles they were assigned, and the support they received, were not what was promised when the cheque was signed.

It might seem churlish to talk about voluntary work and value for money in the same sentence, but gap-year placements have become big business. A three-month trip - whether working on a conservation project or for an aid agency, teaching English or doing zoological fieldwork - can often cost as much as pounds 5,000, plus flights. For that money, students are entitled to expect a certain level of support and service.

When questioned about the cost of some placements, gap-year organisations argue that the price enables volunteers to have experiences they would find difficult to organise themselves. Administration can be costly, as can sourcing and marketing new projects. The companies also claim to offer a network of advice and support - from instruction courses before travelling, to the help of staff on the ground - and, for parents, some peace of mind.

Nevertheless, an increasing number of volunteers are returning from charity placements dissatisfied. And whereas in the past complaints tended to be voiced in private, people are beginning to speak out.

Tom Whipple, 22, was disillusioned by his time in Sri Lanka under the auspices of one of Britain's largest gap-year companies, I-to-I. "I went to gain experience as a news reporter for a Sri Lankan paper, but most of the other I-to-I volunteers taught English or helped with tsunami relief," he said. "A lot of us felt that our money was being wasted. The deal, as I understood it, was that I had to pay for my flights and give I-to-I pounds 1,850. In return, it would arrange a worthwhile job and accommodation for three months. I discovered that my lodging cost pounds 250, so how was the other pounds 1,600 spent?"

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

He found out that some of his fee went on I-to-I support staff in Sri Lanka, but as much as 60 per cent stayed in I-to-I's UK office. "Other volunteers had their own gripes," he said. "One woman went on an elephant-conservation project, which cost her pounds 1,700. She lived alongside other volunteers who had booked direct for the same length of time for just pounds 825. Their food and visas were included in the price, moreover, while she had to pay extra."

Tom did not, however, have a terrible time. "Quite the opposite, most of us loved our work. As a news reporter, I covered the general election and incidents involving the Tamil Tigers. I wrote editorials and features and had a fascinating trip. But the whole time I had a nagging feeling I was paying too much.

"My contact with I-to-I staff was limited to three or four chance meetings. If, as they claimed, they were largely there to serve as a safety net then I would have liked the company's representatives to inquire about my safety now and then. In the course of my job, I narrowly avoided arrest twice, was trailed by the Tamil Tigers' secret police and was metres away from a fatal bombing."

A spokeswoman for I-to-I said their fees are necessary in order to offer the level of service customers expect from a commercial company. "We recommend that anyone who is thinking of volunteering abroad - whether with a commercial company such as I-to-I, a non-profit organisation or a charity - examines what their fee covers and how open their travel provider is to disclosing this information.

"We go to great lengths to be as transparent as possible about what each project fee covers and what it provides for our travellers. A detailed breakdown is available both on our website and in our brochures."

She added that volunteers were regularly contacted throughout their time abroad. "All volunteer travellers are introduced to our in-country team through an induction at the beginning of their placements. After this they are encouraged to contact our co-ordination team should they encounter any problems. Our research has shown that most of our travellers do not want a hand-holding service and are happy to know that the support is there should they need it, rather than being frequently contacted while overseas."

Gap years are not without danger. There have been several high-profile deaths in recent years, including the murder of Katherine Horton, a 21-year-old British backpacker, in Thailand earlier this year. The Foreign Office recently revealed that one in four gap-year students is involved in a serious incident while travelling. In this context, it is understandable why many people opt for organised placements.

In a survey of more than 30,000 of last year's gap-year placements, the trade association The Year Out Group found that two thirds of volunteers were female.

"Girls mature earlier than boys and tend to have a more caring attitude for the young and for the developing world," said David Smith of Africa and Asia Venture, which offers unpaid teaching and conservation placements. "Girls also feel threatened by media reports of dangers abroad, and therefore feel more secure with an organisation."

But after the "disastrous" three months her 24-year-old daughter, Martha, spent at a children's refuge in Peru under the auspices of Gap Challenge, Carole Sedgwick of Brighton wanted to warn parents against sending their children abroad on a gap-year scheme.

"Martha's placement was badly organised and she was unclear what she was supposed to be doing," she said. "There was little supervision from Gap Challenge. We allowed her to go because we were led to believe she would be staying with a family, but she lived in a hostel in a seedy part of town where volunteers were continually getting mugged.

"If we had known what lay ahead, we would not have let her go. Many gap-year organisations charge a lot of money for not very much in return."

Gap Challenge said: "The feedback received from the majority of participants on the [Peru] programme was that they had a very worthwhile experience. We are sorry to hear that Martha did not feel this way."

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

In Mongolia, some volunteers with another gap-year organisation, Teaching & Projects Abroad (TPA), also expressed dissatisfaction with their placements and with the support they were offered. Volunteers' requests for information often went unheeded and appointments were missed, while some felt their placements lacked structure.

On two occasions, newcomers were not met on arrival in the country. For Trish Sexton, 33, that meant being harassed by men in the middle of the night and having to take refuge in the airport toilet. She eventually found a hotel room, for which TPA later paid.

"Of course, no one truly expects everything to run like clockwork," said Trish. "This is a Third World country and we come here to experience the difference. But the point is that volunteers pay Western prices and expect a Western standard of service."

TPA acknowledged that it had slipped up in some areas and that there had been a lack of communication in the case of Miss Sexton, but said the majority of volunteers in Mongolia had had successful placements.

"The reason why they are good value is that it would be extremely difficult for the thousands of young people that we send around the world every year . . . to organise efficient and legal voluntary work in developing countries such as Mongolia," a spokesman said.

He added that roughly 70 per cent of all the money that TPA receives is spent directly in developing countries.

"We don't attempt to mollycoddle our volunteers or to control their lives but we do provide an effective framework through which they can develop themselves and contribute a great deal to the local community."

Sophie Robinson, 20, from Portsmouth (see page 10), agreed, arguing that in her three months in Africa under the auspices of Camps International she experienced more than she could ever have hoped had she tried to organise the trip on her own.

Yet for others, the whole notion of paying to be a volunteer is questionable. Several organisations, such as Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), run their programmes in a very different way. Volunteers with VSO receive a local wage for their two-year stint. The organisation spends months, sometimes as much as a year, setting up a placement in co-operation with local NGOs (non-governmental organisations). And, on arrival, VSO workers receive months of training in the culture and local language. By contrast, all TPA provides in Mongolia is a tour of Ulaanbaatar, the capital - even though its volunteers tend to be younger and need more extensive induction and training.

Judith Brodie, a director of VSO, this week accused many year-out programmes of being no more than a form of neo-colonialism, with the schemes being less about helping host communities and more about the volunteer's enjoyment. Some gap-year providers seem to pay little attention to whether young people are making a long-term difference to the communities they are working in," she said. "There seems to be a colonial attitude whereby it is assumed that just because the young people are from the UK, they will benefit from their host community."

UNA Exchange, which hosts international volunteers on projects in Wales and sends British volunteers to assignments all over the world, is run on similar lines to VSO. Kirsty Marsh, once a volunteer and now on the organisation's staff, also questions how worthwhile a lot of projects are: "Travelling abroad to take part in community projects is often seen as a predominantly middle-class venture and has been scorned as a way of relieving Western guilt and imposing Western values on other countries. A lot of businesses capitalise on volunteering.

"But we are part of an international network of around 120 voluntary organisations that arrange projects in their home countries, the focus being on inter-cultural learning. We then all send volunteers to take part in each other's projects, with thousands of volunteers being exchanged each year."

The benefit, she adds, is that these projects have been organised by a local person who knows and understands the needs of the community where the projects will take place. The cost of the project is administrative only -

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

between pounds 110 and pounds 140 - and the money goes to the development of training and education of volunteers.

Organisations such as UNA Exchange are not as well known as the larger, commercial gap-year companies. They do not work for profit and they have little cash for marketing. "They are run by people who are there for the experience and not the money," said another volunteer, Lisa Stagg, 24, from Berlin. "The major thrill for me was to meet and mix with people from all walks of life not just people who can afford it."

Going it alone is also an option worth considering if you are prepared to do your research. Oliver Smith, 20, from Nottingham (see right), suggests that if you are happy to invest time organising your trip, a worthwhile placement can be arranged at far less expense and be a more rewarding experience .

Richard Oliver, the director of the Year Out Group, which provides a code of conduct for 38 gap-year organisations, admitted there were some poor operators. "They exist but they tend not to last long. When providing placements in several continents, often in remote and undeveloped areas, it is inevitable that things will go wrong from time to time.

"Prospective volunteers should get under the skin of an organisation. They should shop around and talk to former volunteers. They should list everything they wish to achieve and then match them to the right company. They should also be aware that whatever they do they will experience problems."

Who does what - 100 ways of filling your time off

TEACHING AND TRAINING

Africa and Asia Venture (01380 729009, www.aventure.co.uk). Teaching placements of four to five months from Tanzania to India. From pounds 2,740, including full board, transport, insurance and safari.

Art History Abroad (020 7731 2231, www.arthistoryabroad.com). Six-week courses in Venice, Verona, Florence and Rome studying the Italian masters. From pounds 2,350.

BUNAC (020 7251 3472, www.bunac.org). Working programmes ranging from paid summer-camp work in the US or teaching in Ghana to volunteering in Cambodia. From pounds 280.

Cambridge Certificate of English Language Teaching (01223 553355, www.cambridgeesol.org). Four-week courses, enabling you to teach (privately) across the world. From pounds 800.

Camp America (020 7581 7373, www.campamerica.co.uk). Nine-week placements in US summer camps from pounds 390, including flights, full board, insurance and pocket money.

Flying Fish (0871 250 2500, www.flyingfishonline.com). Training and placements in water and winter sports. From pounds 465.

Gap Activity Projects (0118 959 4914, www.gap.org.uk). Teaching and environmental placements of up to 12 months from China to Malawi. From pounds 950.

Gap Guru (0800 032 3350, www.gapguru.com). Over 30 projects in India - from business and community to conservation and teaching - running up to 48 weeks. Four-week projects from pounds 990, including transport, food, lodging and visa.

Itime Experience (0845 3551183, www.itimeexperience.com). Professional ocean sports training in the Caribbean - including surfing, kitesurfing and windsurfing. Courses from one to six weeks and Spanish lessons also available. One week, including accommodation, from pounds 500.

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

Nonstopski (0870 2418070, www.nonstopski.com). Ski- and snowboard-instructor training in the Rockies. A three-week course in Fernie costs from pounds 2,950, including full board, flights and lift pass.

Peak Leaders (01337 860079, www.peakleaders.com). Ski- and snowboard-instructor courses in Canada, New Zealand and Argentina. A 12-week Canadian course costs from pounds 6,450, including flights, half board and lift pass.

Project Trust (01879 230444, www.projecttrust.org.uk). Year-long voluntary placements in 22 countries. From pounds 4,190 inclusive.

Ski-le-Gap (0800 3280345, www.skilegap.com). Snowboard- and ski-instructor training in Canada from January to March. From pounds 6,375.

Students Partnerships Worldwide (020 7222 0138, www.spw.org). Health, education and environment programmes in Africa and India of up to nine months. From pounds 3,600.

Tante Marie (01483 726957, www.tantemarie.co.uk). Cookery skills for work in ski or beach resorts. Four-week courses, from pounds 2,300.

Teaching & Projects Abroad (01903 708300, www.teaching-abroad.co.uk). Teaching, community and conservation work, plus journalism and medical-based programmes, from Bolivia to Swaziland. From pounds 895, including full board, transfers and insurance.

Ticket to Ride (01428 707287, www.ttride.co.uk). Three-month surf adventures to South Africa offering surfing and lifesaver qualifications, plus work in local schools and sports centres. From pounds 4,850, including accommodation, transfers, instruction and social events.

The International Academy (02920 672500, www.international-academy.com). Qualification courses in winter and water sports, from Canada to South America. Five-week skiing course from pounds 4,390, including flights, full board and lift pass.

CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY

Across the Divide (01460 30456, www.acrossthedivide.com). Seven- to 22-day challenges from climbing Kilimanjaro to trekking along the Great Wall of China, while raising money for charity. Registration fee only.

African Conservation Experience (0870 241 5816, www.conservationafrica.net). Conservation work on game reserves in southern Africa. Four-week expeditions from pounds 2,800, including flights and full board.

AFS International Youth Development (0113 242 6136, www.afsuk.org). Six-month community projects in 50 countries. From pounds 3,300, including flights and insurance.

BSES (020 7591 3141, www.bses.org.uk). Science fieldwork, conservation and adventurous expeditions of up to three months, from Greenland to Lesotho. pounds 2,750, including full board, flights and insurance.

BTCV (01302 572 244, www.btcv.org.uk). Conservation holidays in more than 25 countries. From pounds 350, excluding flights.

BUNAC (020 7251 3472, www.bunac.org.uk). Adventure trips and voluntary work worldwide. From pounds 280.

Camps International (0870 2401843, www.campsinternational.com). Placements and expeditions in Africa - from teaching and trekking to conservation and community. One-month expedition including Mount Kenya trek, flights, accommodation, transfers and insurance, pounds 3,100.

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

Changing Worlds (01892 770 000, www.changingworlds.co.uk). Placements from Chile to Tanzania. From pounds 1,775, including flights and full board.

Community Service Volunteers (0800 374 991, www.csv.org.uk). Year-round placements around the UK; free service.

Coral Cay Conservation Expeditions (0870 750 0668, www.coralcay.org). Reef and rainforest projects from Fiji to the Philippines. Four-week marine trip from pounds 825 full board.

Earthwatch (01865 318838, www.earthwatch.org). Research projects in 50 countries. From pounds 165 to pounds 2,450.

Eco Africa (01483 860 560, www.ecoafrikaexperience.com). Conservation projects in South Africa. From pounds 1,343.

Exodus (0870 240 5550, www.exodus.co.uk). Has 32 years' experience of sending people on 500 tours in 90 countries, with journeys ranging from two weeks to 12 months.

Frontier Conservation (020 7613 2422, www.frontier.ac.uk). Conservation projects, from Madagascar to the Amazon, of up to 10 weeks. From pounds 2,300, all inclusive.

Gap Challenge (020 8728 7200, www.world-challenge.co.uk). From conservation in Belize to care work in India. From pounds 900.

Global Adventures (0800 0854197, www.globaladventures.co.uk) Programmes in 100 countries, from summer camp work and au-pairing in the US to educational programmes.

Global Vision International (0870 608 8898, www.gvi.co.uk). Expeditions include a five-week Amazon wildlife conservation trip to Ecuador. From pounds 1,300.

Greenforce (020 7470 8888, www.greenforce.org). One- to six-month environmental expeditions from Fiji to Nepal. Ten-week expeditions from pounds 2,400, including full board.

Hands Up Holidays (0800 783 3554, www.handsupholidays.com). Combines short community projects with luxury holidays. Nine-day Moroccan trip, from pounds 900 including accommodation, most meals and transfers.

i-to-i (0870 333 2332, www.i-to-i.com). Volunteer, language, teaching and work placements in 19 countries. From pounds 495, including accommodation and insurance.

Inter-Cultural Youth Exchange (020 7681 0983, www.icye.co.uk). Social and environment projects from six to 12 months. From pounds 3,300, inclusive.

Link Overseas Exchange (01382 203192, www.linkoverseas.org.uk) Varied six-month placements abroad. From pounds 2,520 inclusive.

Madventurer (0845 121 1996, www.madventurer.com) Voluntary work and overland expeditions. From two weeks to six months. From pounds 750.

Outreach International (01458 274957, www.outreachinternational.co.uk). Volunteer projects in Mexico, Cambodia and Ecuador of up to six months. From pounds 3,100, including flights, insurance, language training and full board.

Outward Bound (0870 5134227, www.outwardbound.org). Expeditions to South Africa, Malaysia, Slovakia and Romania. From pounds 1,950 inclusive.

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

Project Trust (01879 230444, www.projecttrust.org.uk). Eight- and 12-month placements, from community projects to journalism. From pounds 3,950.

Quest (01444 474744, www.questoverseas.com). Community, conservation and adventure projects from Africa to Chile. From pounds 1,455 for three weeks' full board.

Raleigh International (020 7371 8585, www.raleighinternational.org.uk). Three-month community, environmental and adventure projects from Borneo to Nicaragua. Four-week courses from pounds 1,500, including half board and insurance.

Support and Housing Assistance for People with Disabilities (020 8675 6095, www.shad.org.uk). Volunteering opportunities in the UK with free accommodation and allowance.

The Leap (0870 240 4187, www.theleap.co.uk). Volunteers live alongside indigenous tribes on conservation and community projects. From pounds 1,730, including full board and insurance.

The National Trust (0870 609 5383, www.nationaltrust.org.uk) Conservation projects such as dry-stone walling and reforestation in the UK. From pounds 30.

The Scientific Exploration Society (01747 854898, www.ses-explore.org). Expeditions of two weeks to three months, from Panama to West Africa. Prices on request.

Travellers Worldwide (01903 502595, www.travellersworldwide.com). Work experience in 15 countries. From pounds 1,095 full board.

Trekforce Expeditions (01444 474123, www.trekforce.org.uk). Four-week or two-month jungle expeditions in South-East Asia and Central and South America. From pounds 1,600.

VentureCo Worldwide (01926 411122, www.ventureco-worldwide.com). Four-month programmes combining language learning, voluntary work and expeditions in South and Central America, West Africa and Asia. Three-month expeditions from pounds 3,395, including full board.

Voluntary Service Overseas (020 8780 7200, www.vso.org.uk). Volunteers must raise pounds 700 and work for three months in the UK before spending three months in a developing country. Flights included.

Wind, Sand & Stars (020 7359 7551, www.windsandstars.co.uk). Expeditions and projects with Bedouin tribes in the Sinai peninsula. One-week courses from pounds 860, excluding flights.

World Challenge Expeditions (020 8728 7200, www.world-challenge.co.uk). All-inclusive expeditions of up to nine months. From pounds 1,795.

LEARNING A LANGUAGE

Cactus Language (0845 130 4775, www.cactuslanguage.com) offers courses in various countries. Eight weeks in Guatemala cost pounds 859.

CESA Languages Abroad (01209 211800, www.cesalanguages.com). Two- to 24-week courses in Europe, South America, Japan & Russia. One- week courses start from pounds 133.

Language Courses Abroad (01509 211612, www.languagesabroad.co.uk) arranges courses, such as Spanish in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. A 10-week course in Buenos Aires costs from pounds 1,688, with host accommodation.

OISE Intensive Language Schools (020 7631 3674, www.oise.co.uk). One- to 12-week courses in UK, Europe, USA and Australia.

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

GOING IT ALONE

By rail

Rail Europe (08705 848848, www.raileurope.co.uk) and Railpass Direct (08700 841413, www.railpassdirect.co.uk) provide Inter-Rail passes.

For Canada: Via Rail (0845 6443553, www.viarail.ca). For North America and Australasia: International Rail (08700 841411, www.international-rail.com).

By air

Airline Network (0870 700 0543, www.airnet.co.uk)

Austravel (0870 166 2020, www.austravel.com)

Cheapflights (0870 120 3040, www.cheapflights.co.uk)

Dial-A-Flight (0870 333 4488, www.dialaflight.com)

STA Travel (0870 163 0026, www.statravel.co.uk)

The Flight Centre (0870 499 0040, www.flightcentre.com)

Trailfinders (020 7938 3939, www.trailfinders.com)

Travelbag (0800 082 5000, www.travelbag.co.uk)

Travelsupermarket (0845 345 5708, www.travelsupermarket.com)

Useful websites

www.awardyearout.co.uk Variety of treks worldwide; part of Duke of Edinburgh award.

www.fco.gov.uk Foreign Office advice about countries.

www.findagap.com Placements, jobs and accommodation.

www.gapadvice.com Independent advice on gap years for all ages.

www.gapwork.com Job advice and vacancies for gappers of all ages.

www.gapyear.com 3,000 pages of ideas, contacts, real-life stories and advice.

www.gapyeardirectory.co.uk Everything from UK placements to conservation worldwide.

www.gapyearforgrownups.co.uk Only UK company specifically geared to providing gap breaks for adults aged 30-plus.

www.goldengapyears.com Tailored advice and information for people over 50 taking a gap year or living abroad.

www.intervol.org.uk Search for volunteer jobs based on your skills and interests.

www.ivs.gb.org.uk Extensive database of worldwide voluntary projects.

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

www.lonelyplanet.com News, guides, advice and live chats with experts.

www.masta.org Medical advisory services.

www.natives.co.uk For the ski/snowboard industry.

www.ozuncovered.com Advice from real travellers, message board and advertisements.

www.payaway.co.uk Hundreds of global job vacancies, advice and articles.

www.realgap.co.uk Offers gap year and career breaks in more than 30 countries.

www.realgapexperience.com Comprehensive gap-year provider.

www.statravel.co.uk One-stop site for student flights, advice, insurance and work.

www.seasonworkers.com Hundreds of ads from summer- and ski-resort jobs to instructor courses and gap-year placements.

www.travellersconnected.com Instant travel advice from travellers across the globe.

www.whatsonwhen.com Worldwide events and festivals.

www.www.org.uk Database of more than 350,000 potential volunteering placements in 215 countries.

www.yearoutgroup.org Directory of reputable gap-year organisations and guide to what's on offer.

www.yha.org.uk Lists and rates youth hostels in England and Wales.

www.yini.org.uk 10-month industry placements.

SAFETY COURSES

Objective Gap Year (01788 899029, www.objectivegapyear.com) runs one-day training courses in London each week (and monthly courses at other locations), pounds 150. Private sessions on request.

Planetwise (0870 200 0220, www.planetwise.net) has one- to three-day courses at various locations. Prices from pounds 160 to pounds 445.

Caroline's Rainbow Foundation offers gap-year safety advice. Visit www.carolinesrainbowfoundation.com

GUIDEBOOKS

Before You Go: The Ultimate Guide to Planning Your Gap Year by Tom Griffiths (Bloomsbury, pounds 7.99, www.gapyear.com).

The Virgin Guide to Working Abroad by Rebecca Hardy (Virgin Books, pounds 12.99).

The Rough Guide: First-Time Europe and First-Time Around the World (both pounds 9.99, www.roughguides.com).

The Gap Year Book by Charlotte Hindle and Joe Bindloss (Lonely Planet, pounds 12.99).

Independent Traveller's Europe by Rail 2006(pounds 12.99, www.railpassdirect.co.uk).

Thomas Cook European Timetable (pounds 10.50, www.railpassdirect.co.uk).

pounds 5,000 : a high price to do your bit? With the A-level results out, students are being offered gap-year placements as volunteers - and charged a lot for t....

Load-Date: August 19, 2006

End of Document

Five dead in Sri Lanka rebel attack

Agence France Presse -- English

August 20, 2007 Monday 10:18 AM GMT

Copyright 2007 Agence France Presse All Rights Reserved



Length: 122 words

Dateline: COLOMBO, Aug 20 2007

Body

Tamil Tiger rebels opened fire on a police bunker in northern Sri Lanka on Monday, killing five people including three **female** paratroopers, a military official said.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (**LTTE**) attacked a bunker in the district of Vavuniya, where one soldier was killed on Sunday in a rebel mortar bomb attack, the official said.

"Four guards were killed and three of them were **women**," he said. "A civilian bus driver was also killed in the Tiger firing."

Last month, the Tigers carried out a similar attack in the same area that killed four people.

The rebels are fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sinhalese-majority Sri Lanka. The ethnic conflict has claimed more than 60,000 lives since 1972.

Load-Date: August 21, 2007

15 killed in Sri Lanka by Tamil

IRNA

January 7, 2007 Sunday 12:58 AM EST

Copyright 2007 U.P.I.

All Rights Reserved

ARABIA 2000

Copyright 2007 by Iranian News Agency Distributed by UPI



Length: 141 words

Body

15 killed in Sri Lanka by Tamil Tiger suicide bomber New Delhi, Jan 7, IRNA Sri Lanka-LTTE-Bus Blast Fifteen passengers were killed and 40 injured when a suspected Tamil Tiger women suicide bomber set off a powerful explosion on a moving bus in Southwest Sri Lanka today, Defence officials said.

The explosion occurred when the bus was passing Meetiyagoda near the South Western resort town of Hikkaduwa, about 100 km from capital Colombo.

The bus was plying between the Southern town of Matara and Colombo, a PTI report said here quoting Defence officials.

Police set up road blocks in the area as they began investigating the incident. The injured were rushed to nearby hospital.

Today's attack comes a day after a similar blast ripped through a bus, killing six and injuring at least 50, at Nittambuwa. The bomb was rigged to a seat in the bus.

Load-Date: January 8, 2007

Explosion kills 1, injures 2 in Sri Lankan capital

Xinhua General News Service

November 28, 2007 Wednesday 1:21 AM EST

Copyright 2007 Xinhua News Agency

Section: WORLD NEWS; Political

Length: 145 words

Dateline: COLOMBO

Body

One person was killed and at least two others were injured in a suicide attack carried out by a **female** Tamil Tiger Wednesday morning in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo, said the military.

Officials from the Media Center for National Security said the attack happened around 8:05 a.m. (0235 GMT) at the office of a famous Tamil politician, Douglas Devananda, who is the minister of Social Services and Welfare.

It is not clear whether Devananda was in his office at the time of the attack.

Originally a Tamil militant, Devananda gave up violence and is currently the leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party.

Due to his strong opposition to the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (**LTTE**), the rebel organization has unsuccessfully tried to assassinate him over 10 times and he remains high up on its list of targets for assassination.

Load-Date: November 29, 2007

TSUNAMI DISASTER: THE WAVE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD; A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER CAME FROM NOWHERE, WITHOUT WARNING, AND SWEEP

Independent on Sunday (London)

January 2, 2005, Sunday

Copyright 2005 Independent Print Ltd

Section: First Edition; NEWS; Pg. 11,12,13,14,15

Length: 4148 words

Byline: RAYMOND WHITAKER As the first tsunami approaches Hat Rai Lay beach near Krabi in southern Thailand, a foreign tourist runs towards the wall of water to warn others of the danger AFP/GETTY IMAGES Corpses lie among the debris on the Indonesian coast at Banda Aceh, the town closest to the epicentre of the quake (main picture). Left: scenes before and after successive waves hit a resort in Phuket, Thailand Indian women mourn relatives in Cuddalore, south of Madras (facing page and left); a woman searches for her husband and son in Banda Aceh (above); survivors rush for clothes and food in Cuddalore, and a child drinks fresh water in a relief camp in Madras; a man searches the debris of destroyed buildings in Banda Aceh (far right); and a Swedish child in Phuket waits for news of his parents, who were swept out to sea

Body

It was a cataclysm so great that it caused the Earth to wobble on its axis. Just before 8am Indonesian time last Sunday, hidden forces were released with the strength of thousands of nuclear bombs all exploding at once. A 600-mile section of the Indian Ocean's seabed heaved under the strain of clashing tectonic plates 12 miles below the planet's crust, sending giant shocks across south-east Asia as far as Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, where buildings cracked and tottered.

The earthquake has now been measured at 9.0 on the Richter scale, making it the world's worst in 40 years and the fifth most powerful since 1900. Scientists have calculated that it accelerated the planet's rotation by a fraction of a second and shifted some islands by several metres, both laterally and vertically. But on a quiet Sunday morning, with the world's most powerful nations still sleeping off the effects of Christmas Day, and even non-Christian nations slipping into an end-of-year torpor, there were few who realised the implications of nature's 9/11.

One place which did was the Pacific Tsunami Warning System centre in Hawaii. As the needles of its seismographs scratched frantically across strips of paper, recording the lurch of the Indian tectonic plate beneath the Burma plate, scientists there and at other US institutions realised that giant tidal waves would follow.

In the Pacific, which experiences an average of 10 tsunamis - a Japanese word meaning "harbour wave" - each year, there is a well-developed warning system. Tidal gauges sense the movement of water and allow ocean monitors to determine the size and direction of destructive waves. There was some discussion early in 2004 of developing a similar system in the Indian Ocean, but with tsunamis occurring only once every few centuries, the poor nations around its fringe decided they had other priorities.

Now, with huge pressure waves racing across the Indian Ocean faster than a jumbo jet, American scientists frantically tried to put out a warning. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration fired off emails to

TSUNAMI DISASTER: THE WAVE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD; A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER CAME FROM NOWHERE, WITHOUT WARNING, AND SWEEPED

Indonesian officials, but doesn't know what happened to the information. The Hawaii centre was reduced to phoning US embassies in Asian capitals in an effort to get the word out. "We tried to do what we could," said its director, Charles McCreery. "We don't have contacts in our address book for that part of the world." But it was too late.

A computer simulation of the tsunami shows giant ripples - the first set coloured red, the second blue - rushing away east and west from the convulsion on the ocean floor. Almost immediately they wrap around the province of Aceh at the northern end of Sumatra, the largest island in the Indonesian archipelago.

The first victims of the disaster were probably inshore fishermen operating from Meulaboh, the town closest to the epicentre. Vessels far enough out to sea would have been able to ride out the ocean's turmoil; indeed, the closer they were to being directly above the fissure, the less they would have felt. Swimmers and sailors within sight of land, however, would have found themselves being sucked inescapably towards the horizon, meeting the terrible force speeding towards them.

Tsunamis are formed when the pressure waves from deep-sea earthquakes or landslides reach shallower water, where the friction of the seabed slows them and causes them to build up into the "walls of water" described by every survivor. Meulaboh had already been ruined by 15 minutes of shaking from the earthquake before the sea smashed in. Days later rescuers were still struggling to reach a town which appeared from the air to have simply been scoured from the map.

One of the first accounts came from the nearby town of Surang, where a man called Sukardi later said: "The sea was full of bodies. The waves were throwing me up in the air." Nazarudin, 40, a villager, was outside his house. "People were screaming Big waves, big waves,' then I was carried off. I managed to hold on to a tree, but my wife is gone." Rajali, 55, lost his wife and two children. "I cannot find dry ground to bury them," he would lament.

Banda Aceh, at Sumatra's tip, had little more warning. A local radio station received a phone call saying a tidal wave had killed nine people, and some were reported to have fled to higher ground, but in Aceh's capital the wealthy Hussein family were preparing for a wedding in one of the town's grander buildings. A video taken at the wedding suddenly swings from the women in their finery to the scene outside, where a roaring black torrent hundreds of yards wide and several storeys deep has come from nowhere, drowning neighbouring buildings up to their rooftops and surging almost as high as the balcony on which the cameraman is standing. It is clear that no one in the streets below will stand a chance.

The footage was shot within minutes of the earthquake. India's remote Andaman and Nicobar islands, land masses directly at the epicentre, had suffered almost instant devastation, but their fate was unknown to the outside world. The first news agency reports, which came out around 2am on Boxing Day in Britain, spoke only of a big earthquake in Indonesia's northernmost province, where many buildings had collapsed. At that moment the red and blue ripples on the computer simulation had joined together, and were about to hit Thailand's west coast. The local time was 9am.

Until the hippies of the 1960s discovered them, Thai islands like Phuket and Koh Lanta were home only to fishermen and subsistence farmers. But over four decades a diverse tourist industry has sprung up, servicing everyone from those seeking luxury hotels and yacht marinas to backpackers searching up and down the coast for the next "unspoiled" inlet - a quest explored in *The Beach*, which was filmed on Koh Phi Phi. As airports were built, the package tourists came in and destinations such as Khao Lak and Krabi became known around the world. Certain resorts were favoured by Germans, others by Swedes or Britons. Now the tsunami was going to choose among them for its victims.

The death toll among tourists was disproportionately high because they do what Third World villagers would never dream of, except to earn their living: they go into the sea for sport. "We watched the wave coming. It was horrible," said Jason Richards, a south Londoner on a diving holiday. "The suction of the current drew the water right back. People who were snorkelling in 6ft of water found themselves in the open air or stuck on sharp coral, then they were swept back into the sea by the wave. It was at least 20ft high. I don't think it would have been possible to survive if you had been in the sea. There was just tons and tons of water suddenly appearing out of nowhere.

TSUNAMI DISASTER: THE WAVE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD; A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER CAME FROM NOWHERE, WITHOUT WARNING, AND SWEEPED

"We were swept inland and got to high ground. People were being plucked up like toy soldiers. I saw a woman carrying her child, and the next time I saw her, her hands were empty. She was shouting, but there was no sound coming out. You couldn't hear her."

Dozens of scuba divers went missing, but Amy Harding, 24, an instructor who was giving a lesson off Ko Phi Phi, was swept ashore with her group and landed on a hotel roof. Becky Ralph, a 25-year-old art student, was underwater when the tsunami hit. "There seemed to be a shudder and then a giant whoosh," she said. "I was shot out of the water, back in again and then began to spin. It was like being in a washing machine. I just went round and round in fast spin, gulping water and fighting to stay alive. I was totally helpless, and thought I would drown."

"After a few seconds I stopped spinning and began to try to swim but it was impossible. I was just dragged along. The debris of what I think were two boats washed over me. Two people, a man and a woman, swept past. One was bleeding from his head and his eyes were closed. I tried to reach him, but he disappeared."

"My air tanks were off, and I struggled to reach the surface and to control my breathing. I remember my heart thumping, thumping against my suit. Suddenly, it all seemed to slow down, and I was able to swim to the shore. There was blood coming from one of my ears. I think my diving training and luck were all that saved me."

Lak Pongsanthia, 27, is a hotel worker at Karon Beach resort in Phuket. "Many people thought it was a terrorist attack," he said. "Their instinct was to hide, to get behind walls and into basements. It was the worst place to be - the waves were so strong they broke walls and, of course, they flooded anything below ground level."

"One of my colleagues saw tourists being swept back out to sea. He tried to get them on to his boat. They had broken bones, they were screaming for help."

"One Australian couple were on their honeymoon. I saw them on their balcony at breakfast and, after the waves, the husband was walking around asking if anyone had seen his wife. He didn't know where he was, didn't know his

home address. We found his wife and they were taken to hospital. It was lucky for them, but others will not be so lucky. The bodies won't be delivered back by the sea for days, perhaps never."

In contrast to Sumatra, hit head-on by the tsunami, damage along Thailand's indented coastline was more capricious. Some resorts were demolished, while others a few miles away just experienced an unusually high tide.

But everywhere there was the same absence of a warning: Thailand's meteorological department issued an alert concerning possible dangerous currents at 9am, after the first waves had hit. A tsunami warning was posted on a website three hours later, but by that time at least 700 people had died in Thailand. And nobody thought to tell Thailand's neighbours.

Because tidal waves are so rare in the Indian Ocean, nobody understood the threat implied by the sudden receding of the sea. As the shockwaves ran south from Thailand to Malaysia, the five children of Zulkfli Mohd Noor rushed out to collect the fish left stranded on the seabed, only to be swept away when the water came roaring back. "I did not for one moment think the dead fishes were a sign that a tsunami was going to crash into us just seconds later," said the 42-year-old fisherman.

Directly in the path of the tsunami lay the island of Penang, Malaysia's only Chinese-majority state, which attracts holidaymakers because it is more relaxed and cosmopolitan than the rest of the country. By the time the waves reached the hotels and beaches of Batu Feringhee, Penang's tourist strip, it was nearly two hours after the quake, but still no one knew what was to come.

Mohamad Wan was swimming near his home on Penang. "I could only watch helplessly while I heard my son screaming for help," said his mother, Rosita. "Then he was under water, and I never saw him again."

TSUNAMI DISASTER: THE WAVE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD; A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER CAME FROM NOWHERE, WITHOUT WARNING, AND SWEEPED

By the time the waters receded in Penang, the eastward shockwave from the earthquake had largely spent its force. But on the computer simulation of these events another red line rushes 1,000 miles westwards across the Bay of Bengal, thickening and darkening as it approaches Sri Lanka.

Two hours after the rupture on the seabed, it begins to engulf the teardrop-shaped island, wrapping itself around almost its entire circumference, smashing into India's south-eastern coast and rounding the southern tip of India to swamp the coast of Kerala.

I will never forget the huge wave as tall as a palm tree coming right towards us," said Vindya Gunawardena, a resident of Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital. He and his parents were on their way to Kataragama, a town on the island's south coast.

The family's car was swept up in the torrent. "It went circling through the current and slowly filled with water," said Vindya. "It was hit by a couple of trees that shattered the glass, then it came to a stop, so I got out through the window. Everyone was expressionless as they searched for loved ones who were with them seconds ago."

The Gunawardena family escaped, but thousands of others around the Sri Lankan coast, and in the Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were less fortunate. Some 1,700 people died in one incident alone, when the Queen of the South express train was swept off the track south of Colombo. The tsunami hit Sri Lanka's Sinhalese and Tamil communities alike, but along the isolated eastern and northern coasts where most of the Tamil minority live - and where until recently a savage separatist war was being fought - details of the destruction were hard to obtain, and aid slow to arrive.

Again initial reports of the disaster came quickest from the areas frequented by tourists, mainly the south and east of Sri Lanka. They included the former German chancellor Helmut Kohl, who said the devastation around his hotel reminded him of what he had seen as a boy during the Second World War. India, where there were few foreign witnesses, and where the government said it could cope on its own, received less attention.

Near Pondicherry, a former French enclave in southern India, a construction worker, Satya Kumari, said: "The waves just kept chasing us. It swept away all our huts. What did we do to deserve this?" Sandti, 40, whose fishing village south of Madras was destroyed, said the Indian government had provided nothing. "I don't have a sari to change into," she complained. "I have nothing to eat. We lost everything, our boat, our nets, all our gold."

This weekend there was a growing controversy in India about the failure to pass on warnings of the tsunami. An air force base in the Andaman and Nicobar islands sent an urgent message about what was being experienced there, but it did not reach the interior ministry's disaster management team in time. The unit did not learn about the deadly waves until half an hour after they hit the coast. It emerged that weather officials in the south mistakenly faxed the home of the former science and technology minister, who left office seven months ago.

"A country that hopes to run the call centres of the world could not call its own people," said Barun Mitra of Liberty Institute, a think tank in New Delhi. Since he spoke, Indian officials have accumulated further discredit by issuing false warnings, causing panic.

In the aftermath, there were other lessons to be learned. As last Sunday's tsunami swept on towards the Maldives,

it appeared that the country faced obliteration. Every low island in the chain, strung over more than 1,000 miles from north to south across the Equator, was hit more or less simultaneously by the surge, but there was protection from the extensive coral reefs that surround the archipelago.

So far 75 people are known to have died in the Maldives, including British tourists, but it could have been much worse. Scientists are pointing out that where coral reefs and mangrove swamps were preserved, the loss of life was far smaller. Surin island, near Phuket, suffered less than other resorts because its reef was intact.

TSUNAMI DISASTER: THE WAVE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD; A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER CAME FROM NOWHERE, WITHOUT WARNING, AND SWEEPED

In Tamil Nadu, the Indian state worst affected by the disaster, the areas of Pichavaram and Muthupet, where mangroves remain, were much less badly affected than those of Alappuzha and Kollam, where there has been illegal exploitation of the trees.

There were stories of horror in the Maldives, such as that of Lisa Morgan, a 30-year-old legal secretary from Chatham in Kent. "It was like someone had pulled the plug on the world," she said. "Suddenly this wall of water ripped through the hut."

Ms Morgan and several other people clung to a tree for six hours. "We were trying to spur each other on, but we were all crying for our lives," she said. "There was contaminated water everywhere - dead rats and bodies were floating around me and sewage was mixed in the water, with sanitary products sticking to you. I was sick several times and absolutely terrified."

"I was near the dock," said another holidaymaker, "and we didn't notice the water going down before the wave came. Then we saw all the boats rise up against the dock barrier and the water washed right over it. We were up to our knees. We were very lucky."

It was now more than three hours since the quake, and thousands were already dead. But the waves it had produced retained the power to kill. They continued thousands of miles westwards across the globe until they encountered the barrier of Africa. In Somalia, where civil order has been destroyed by warring militias, there was no warning: hundreds of fishermen are thought to have died, as well as people in coastal towns battered by the tsunami. In neighbouring Kenya, by contrast, only one person is thought to have been lost.

Warned by news broadcasts of what was on the way, a Kenyan bureaucracy not normally known for its efficiency acted with praiseworthy swiftness. Boats offshore were warned to come in, and to spread the news to smaller craft without radio. Police were sent to clear the beaches of tourists, and coastal communities were evacuated. People on the east coast of Madagascar also got out in time, and although the tsunami caused extensive damage there and in Reunion, Mauritius and the Seychelles, where a bridge linking the capital, Mahe, with the main airport was destroyed, the death toll in Africa would have been small had it not been for the anarchy of Somalia.

As Britons woke to the news on Boxing Day, many realised that among the tens of thousands of anonymous victims around the Indian Ocean there could be friends and members of their own family.

The tsunami indiscriminately swept away tourists and local people, the humble and the eminent. Among the dead were Julian Ayer, the adopted son of the philosopher AJ Ayer, and Bhumi Jensen, grandson of King Bhumibol of Thailand. Sir Richard Attenborough's family have announced that his granddaughter Lucy has died, and that his daughter Jane and her mother-in-law, Jane Holland, are missing, presumed dead.

In the aftermath of the catastrophe, the communications technology which might have been used to warn of the approaching danger came into its own. A Swedish couple recognised their orphaned nephew from a photograph posted on the internet and flew to Thailand to claim him. Mobile phone networks allowed free text messages to people in the disaster area. A Rome teenager turned his website, previously dedicated to The Simpsons cartoon series, into a contact point for Italians caught up in the tsunami. It was just one of the weblogs and message boards which sprouted across the internet to put survivors in touch with each other, and to spread the news of who had escaped and who was lost.

Among heartrending postings on BBC message boards is this from Finland: "One-year-old Finnish boy is missing in Khao Lak, his parents Niina Sirparanta and Jari Vesalainen have survived and are desperately seeking any information about their son. Little Paavo has learned to walk and knows his first name. He was lost when the tsunami waves hit the beach."

Another reads: "There is a boy, found in Phuket, right now in Phuket International Hospital. He is white, 3-4 years old. His parents are missing. I have a picture of him. If anyone is looking for a boy of that age, please contact Dr Anuroj Tharasiriroj of Phuket International Hospital."

TSUNAMI DISASTER: THE WAVE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD; A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER CAME FROM NOWHERE, WITHOUT WARNING, AND SWEEP

Jon Moon of Chertsey, Surrey, had earlier sought information on Trevor Syrad from Weybridge, Surrey, who had not been seen "since 26/12 in Phuket ... Family are frantic". A later posting reports: "Trevor Syrad has been found alive but obviously traumatised."

Peter from Newcastle seeks news of Heinz and the Moskito staff. Alison replies from Canada: "I'm sorry to tell you that Heinz and his two daughters did not survive, but Oiy and Dino are alive, as are all the rest of the Moskito staff. I was working there when it happened."

This dialogue, however, was carried on over the heads of most of the inhabitants of the stricken countries. International coverage of the aftermath initially focused on the tourist areas, because they contained Westerners with access to the technology to tell their stories. And while Western nations send chartered aircraft, teams of pathologists and mobile morgues to the disaster zone to recover every last one of their nationals if possible, alive or dead, and the media relays stories of the narrow escapes of footballers and entertainers who had gone to spend the Christmas season in the tropics, thousands of local people are being buried in mass graves. Their families, if any are left alive, may never find out for sure what happened to them.

As even Western relatives may discover, there comes a moment in disasters on this scale when the dignity of the dead has to give way to the needs of the living. Ruins have to be bulldozed without being searched for bodies, and identification of those that are discovered has to be abandoned. The plight of survivors in Indonesia, which suffered worst from the earthquake, is so bad that the authorities in Aceh have had to give up even counting the dead, rather than risk seeing the toll mount out of control as those left alive succumb to injuries, thirst or disease.

From Indonesia to Somalia, the tsunami seemed to pick out zones of conflict with almost perverse precision. Aceh, the focus of a vast international relief effort, is normally closed to foreigners because of a years-long insurgency waged by separatists, who have been ruthlessly suppressed by the Indonesian army. The disaster has brought the conflict to a halt, simply because so many of the participants are dead.

As for Burma, where the waves undoubtedly caused devastation, the military dictatorship has released no details of damage or casualties, and has refused to seek aid. In Sri Lanka a ceasefire in the battle between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers), which demanded independence for the north and east of the island, has held for several months. But the latest disaster has exposed the huge mistrust which remains in the wake of a conflict that lasted two decades, killed 64,000 people and displaced a million more.

Tamils accuse the Sinhalese-dominated government of discrimination in relief efforts, a suspicion reinforced by Colombo's failure to give any figures for the number killed in northern and eastern districts. The large Tamil community in Britain is attempting to send aid supplies directly to their home villages and towns, but the Sri Lankan government is insisting that it cannot be bypassed.

It is naive to assume that politics is suspended when disaster strikes. One devastated village in southern India was visited after dark by a convoy of 20 cars surrounded by policemen, honking their horns, blocking the road and bringing local politicians from the All-India Dravida People's party.

The politicians promised they could influence the Prime Minister into increasing the compensation payments for villagers, already set at 10,000 rupees (pounds 120) for each house destroyed. But they stayed barely a minute, turned their convoy round and left as quickly and noisily as they came. "They just came for the show," said Desingou, 54, one of the villager elders who briefly met the convoy. "Let us see how much they can help us. We can't order them to help. We have nothing."

Nor is such opportunism confined to the world of the poor. Tabloid coverage of the tsunami in Britain has followed a pattern predictable from previous disasters, from the almost immediate complaints about the "slowness" of relief supplies to get through - as though a cash donation on one side of the world instantly materialises as food and water on the other side of the globe, regardless of the mountainous logistical problems in between - to the demands that Tony Blair should cancel his holiday and return to "give a lead" to the aid effort.

TSUNAMI DISASTER: THE WAVE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD; A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER CAME FROM
NOWHERE, WITHOUT WARNING, AND SWEEPED

By Thursday the Daily Mail was sneering "How quickly the sunseekers forget", over a photograph of tourists returning to Patong beach in Thailand; yet the countries hit by the disaster have without exception begged Westerners not to cancel their holidays. The Government, which had earlier urged Britons to stay away, reversed its advice on Friday.

We are back to the divisions between rich and poor. One reason why the economic cost of the disaster seems so small in relation to the scale of the tragedy - \$ 13bn to \$ 15bn (pounds 6.8bn to pounds 7.8 bn), compared to over \$ 20bn for 9/11 and last year's hurricane in the Caribbean - is that so few of the people or businesses in the disaster zone were insured, unlike the tourists or the holiday companies and airlines getting them there.

If there is a fundamental way of seeing the difference between those of us who travel to places like the Maldives or Phuket and the people who live there, it might be this: we are covered for every eventuality, yet disbelieving when the worst happens. They, by contrast, have no way of coping with the worst, yet are completely unsurprised when it happens.

Load-Date: January 2, 2005

End of Document

Letters & emails

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

July 13, 2007 Friday

First Edition

Copyright 2007 The Age Company Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 12

Length: 2106 words

Body

GLOBAL WARMING

Better believe scientists who study climate

PROFESSOR Ian Plimer quite reasonably questions the debate on climate change (Opinion 12/7) and asks for scientific logic, but then follows with an emotionally charged argument presented with little evidence.

His area of expertise is not climatology, although his views on science can still be held in high regard. His knowledge of history is somewhat distorted when he accuses the modern world of "dumbing down the education system" and praises the Renaissance for "a system where criticism, logic, scepticism and an alternative view based on evidence were valued". What would Spinoza, Calvin or Galileo have thought of that?

As an engineer, I believe we are right to be concerned about a distinct possibility of additional climate change due to man-made influences and suspicious of those seeking public popularity by opposing it. For my money I would rather take heed of specialists in climate research and avoid the risk of serious consequences.

Peter Cohen, Ormond

Don't waste a cent on climate rubbish

I DIDN'T bother watching that documentary last night. Along with the address made in May to the US Senate by Vaclav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic, Professor Ian Plimer's brilliant article is going straight to the fridge. I do not understand how anyone, after reading these two articles, could seriously advocate the expenditure of one cent of public money, or the modification of their own lifestyle, on the basis of such a clearly political load of rubbish as global warming. Thank you for publishing it.

Chris Poole, Kingsville South

Swindle was a swindle

READERS who viewed The Great Global Warming Swindle on ABC-TV (Thursday, July 12) should also read the scientific critiques. Bill Butler has written "The Great Global Swindle is itself a fraud and a swindle" and two new articles reject the theory that solar activity is the key reason for global warming.

Letters & emails

In "Cosmic Rays and Global Warming", T. Sloan and A. W. Wolfendale estimate that cosmic rays explain less than 2 per cent of warming over the past 35 years. And in an article to be published soon, Mike Lockwood and Claus Frohlich conclude: "over the past 20 years, all the trends in the sun have been in the opposite direction to that required to explain the observed rise in global mean temperatures".

Brent Howard, Rydalmere, NSW

Explain Greenland not greenhouse

NOW that we have all seen it and tongues of the chattering classes are no doubt clacking like castanets on a chilly morning next to the tea urn, I, for one, will willingly forgo my status as a scornful carbon sceptic if someone, anyone - Flannery, stick your paw in the air - can explain why was it possible for Vikings, for 300 years during the middle ages, to successfully rear cattle in Greenland when today remnants of their barns and homesteads remain frozen in ice.

The question? Simple. What caused the spike in temperature?

John Dorman, Carnegie

Iraq is the new Gallipoli

THE parallels between Iraq and Gallipoli are striking: the bungled invasion of a Middle Eastern country of no perceived threat to anyone, carried out on the orders of a distant imperial power, and then after large numbers of casualties, the ignominious and rapid withdrawal. The suggestion by Graham Price (Letters 10/7) that to withdraw from Iraq now would be "abject cowardice in the face of the enemy" to the soldiers of World War I, seems to overlook the major point that Gallipoli itself ended as a cut-and-run episode.

The only irony being that the long-past pointless deaths are viewed as nationally heroic rather than a great tragedy and monument to aristocratic stupidity.

Maire Mannik, Stirling, SA

Spurring jihad

AT LAST, we have a Western analyst exploding the myth of "they (i.e. Muslim terrorists) hate us for what we are" promoted by Bush, Blair, Howard and their loyalists. Well done, former CIA analyst Michael Scheuer (Age, 11/7) for admitting that "they hate us for what we have done (to them)".

However, he has omitted one other reason for Muslim grievance. In addition to the US military presence in the region, its backing of tyrannical Arab regimes and unqualified support for Israel, the Muslims, especially those living in Western societies, are irked by the cultural arrogance of the West that causes it to hold every other culture in contempt and disdain.

Amirudin Ahamed, Oakleigh South

Cut funds, cut war

SRI LANKAN Secretary of Foreign Affairs Palitha Kohona estimates the Tamil Tigers receive 30 per cent of their overseas funds from Australia. It should be recalled that the violent activities of the IRA were long bolstered by weapons and funds from supporters in the US. Despite president Clinton's attempts to help the peace process, it was not until after 2001 and the "war on terror" that the traffic stopped, making an enduring peace agreement in Northern Ireland possible.

Jack Bradstreet, Hawthorn

Who is next?

Letters & emails

WITH the ongoing detention of Indian doctor Mohammed Haneef, who is yet to be charged with any offence, I was reminded of a variant of the poem by German pastor Martin Niemoller that I saw in The Age in 2005.

"First they came for the asylum seekers, but I did not speak out, because I was not an asylum seeker.

"Then they came for the peace activists, but I did not speak out, because I was not a peace activist.

"Then they came for the Muslims, but I did not speak out, because I was not a Muslim.

"Then they came for the students, but I did not speak out, because I was not a student.

"Then they came for the unionists, but I did not speak out, because I was not a unionist.

"Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me."

The silence about Dr Haneef's detention says a lot about Australia in 2007.

Dallas Fraser, Mudgeeraba, Qld

Power for water

SOME observations about the proposed desalination plant. The plant will need a constant supply of 90 million watts of electricity, with pumping water through pipelines increasing energy requirements by up to half.

Though the Government states that emissions of 22 million tonnes of carbon dioxide for the plant over 25 years will be offset by purchasing renewable energy, the plant's demand will actually be met from existing power generation, 90 per cent of which is coal-fired.

To offset the plant's emissions would require three times the current sales of all renewable electricity for the state, including from existing hydro stations.

The direct energy consumption of the plant requires 4 kilowatt hours for every thousand litres of water produced. Coal-fired power from the Latrobe Valley uses about 3 litres of water to produce a kilowatt hour of electricity, so every thousand litres desalinated will require about 12 litres from the Latrobe Valley's catchments.

Tim Browne, Mirboo North

Dredging the truth

THE State Government is simultaneously spending tens of millions of dollars on infrastructure for channel dredging (Age, 7/7) while pretending the so-called independent panel has power and clout. What an ambiguous confidence trick. We have the environmental ruse, are we waiting for the economical rort too?

The Port of Melbourne Corporation informs us that the \$763 million cost will be mostly paid by the shipping companies, yet by their own admission, the supertankers will only trickle in over a period of years. Are we to assume current tankers are now to be charged almost double to offload? Why would smart shipping companies use Melbourne's port if fees jumped from \$150,000 to almost \$300,000 to unload the same quantity of containers from a ship? In reality, the charges will ultimately be paid by the consumers.

Virginia Beckwith, Mount Martha

Oil shock

A RECENT International Energy Agency report predicts a shortfall in the amount of oil being produced within five years. This should be of great concern to all Australians, even though it didn't create as much of a stir in the Australian media as it should have. When oil starts becoming more and more costly, so does the cost of everything else, including Mr Rudd's groceries. This in turn leads to inflationary pressures, which in turn put more pressure on

Letters & emails

the economy as a whole. Surely this, along with climate change, is the real election issue. Yet, with the exception of the Greens, it seems none of the parties are willing to address it. Understandably no mainstream politician would willingly respond to predictions of economic doom before an election. So it must be the responsibility of the Australian people to force the issue. Let me start: Dear Mr Rudd or Mr Howard, If you win the next election, what would you do to prevent a sudden economic downturn in Australia when oil reaches more than \$100 a barrel?

Charles Cranfield, Cork, Ireland

Better arts

THE University of Melbourne's faculty of arts is indeed reducing the number of first-year subjects from the existing 200 (Age, 11/7). It is not doing this because of financial pressures, but as a result of the most comprehensive two-year review of curriculum ever undertaken. The outcome will be the new BA to be launched next year, in which first-year students will be offered, among an unparalleled array of subjects from across the university, eight new-generation arts subjects that allow students the broadest possible introduction to the disciplinary riches the faculty has to offer.

Nor is it the case that the faculty's operating deficit is caused by the introduction of the Melbourne model. It is caused in large part by the same structural forces that have caused similar difficulties in almost every arts faculty in the country.

Commonwealth funding is now inadequate to sustain the kind of teaching and research that the community expects, and each year it rises by less than the inevitable increase in staffing costs (flowing from enterprise agreements, promotions and natural career development).

Australian universities were extraordinarily successful in plugging this gap with international fee revenue, and Melbourne's faculty of arts particularly so. This revenue has now flattened across the sector, leaving core faculties exposed to the real impact of declining Commonwealth funding.

In this analysis I believe the National Tertiary Education Union and I stand as one.

Professor Belinda Probert, Dean of Arts, University of Melbourne

No male virgins

TO THE one who stays awake wondering about bombers in paradise, Ken Jones (Letters, 11/7), as a Muslim woman I can put your mind to rest about one conundrum regarding paradise. I have it on good authority that **female** bombers are not rewarded with any male virgins. They are rewarded instead with 70 manifestations of Imran Khan (Imran in cricket whites, Imran in a kurta, Imran in blue jeans . . . you get the picture). Hope this clarifies it for you, mate. Oh yeah! And in paradise, Imran always says yes.

Adnas Anim, Malvern

Attack on wedges

A DEBATE over what we love about Melbourne's built environment and the competing demands of aesthetics, local characteristics and development pressures is vital, as expressed in the editorial (Age, 11/7). But I thought the debate about protecting Melbourne's green wedges had already been decided by Melbourne 2030. Yet, two weeks ago, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal handed down a ruling allowing a 250 per cent increase in patronage, to the maximum allowed in the Rural Conservation Zone, for a restaurant-function centre - a use that is now prohibited.

Without the benefit of an Environment Effects Statement, the VCAT member concluded that he could see no reason why extra patrons would cause damage to natural environment values, despite the restaurant-function centre being 30 metres from an important creek and wildlife corridor where a number of critically endangered fauna have been seen.

Letters & emails

What kind of sloppy decision-making is this? It is an open invitation for developers to further push the boundaries and erode the last of Melbourne's natural bushland. An overhaul of VCAT is well overdue.

Karin Geradts, Hurstbridge

Flaying possum

SHARON Gray has got it wrong, "Fur flies in St Kilda's possum war" (Opinion 10/7). The possums in Catani Gardens are not killing the trees. Anyone who visits by day will see this clearly. The magnificent heritage-listed Canary Island Palms are flourishing despite severe extended drought, during which they were neither mulched nor irrigated by Port Phillip Council.

All trees display similar well-formed young green fronds growing from their crowns whether or not they accommodate possums. For about a century, possums have lived in harmony with the trees, but the council bases its extermination program on the fallacy that possums are now damaging them.

Jill Quirk, East Malvern

Graphic

CARTOON BY LEUNIG

Load-Date: July 19, 2007

Against the odds

The Sun Herald (Sydney, Australia)

June 26, 2005 Sunday

Late Edition

Copyright 2005 John Fairfax Publications Pty Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Extra; Pg. 71

Length: 2097 words

Byline: Genevieve Swart

Body

The Boxing Day tsunami tore apart Sri Lanka's coastal communities. Six months later, Genevieve Swart finds a country struggling but determined to heal.

SIX MONTHS ago, Vickum watched helplessly as his mother and two brothers were swept away by the tsunami. When the waves hit Sri Lanka's south coast about 9.30am on December 26, the nine-year-old climbed a coconut tree, clung to the trunk and fought to survive.

Vickum now lives in a temporary housing camp with his grandmother. His father lives in the family's damaged house in the Matara district to protect the remnants.

More than 31,000 people died in this island nation, home to about 19 million people and Vickum is one of hundreds of thousands reeling in the aftermath. His grandmother says the boy is haunted by the tragedy and often wakes up at night and sits silently on his bed.

People in Vickum's camp are waiting for the Government and aid agencies to build permanent houses, but the boy is back at school and spends afternoons in a child-centred space (known among aid workers as CCSs), which aims to help children regain a sense of normality. There, he sings, draws and plays with other boys and girls.

This child-centred space is one of more than 50 established in southern and eastern Sri Lanka by Christian Children's Fund Sri Lanka, part of CCF International. (The organisation will become ChildFund International on Tuesday.)

More than 5000 tsunami-affected children play at the spaces established in schools, private houses and Buddhist temple grounds. Activities include drawing, or "art therapy", an exercise UNICEF social worker Maggy Saldin believes helps children externalise their feelings. "In the beginning, the children were drawing the sea, big waves and destruction," she says. "At a camp recently that had changed. They were drawing pretty flowers and houses. A few were still drawing the waves, but those are the ones who then get referred on for psycho-social help."

CCF's child protection manager in Sri Lanka, Eileen Ihrig, has been there since mid-January. "When I arrived, debris was everywhere, complete destruction no tents, no temporary housing, no nothing," she says. "There's been a lot of change. The tents went up, debris is being cleared, now temporary shelters are up. More and more repair work is being done."

Against the odds

Initial fears of sexual abuse of children have subsided. "There have been a few isolated cases, but I don't think there are as many as we expected," Saldin says.

There were concerns many children would wind up in institutions, but most orphans have been adopted by extended family. Saldin says only 18 orphans in Sri Lanka's south have been placed in children's homes.

Future dangers facing children of poor parents include early marriage for girls aged 14 or 15, and being sent to institutions, Ihrig says. "Decades ago, the West moved away from that model," she says. "The UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child spells out what children have a right to and living with a family is a priority. I would challenge Westerners when, if orphanages aren't good enough for our children, why would we go to developing countries and introduce something we did away with 40 years ago?"

I'm accompanying CCF's regional child protection co-ordinator, Suzanne Pike, on visits

to projects in the south coast cities of Galle and Matara. These two were hit hard after the tsunami crashed into the coast like a wall of concrete, the scene here was compared to a land post-bomb blast, with bodies everywhere, boats swept into trees, wreckage blocking streets and stricken survivors searching piles of rubble for lost family.

Pike says: "Now, we're looking at how we're going to transition to long-term, sustainable programming. Focus will very much be on capacity building."

This means foreign aid workers professionals whose CVs read as a list of catastrophes: Kosovo, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Rwanda are training locals to run regional offices. They will then train others in child protection techniques.

Shashike Gamage, 24, is a CCF training officer. He was on holiday from university at his Matara home, three kilometres from the ocean, when the tsunami struck. "We heard people saying there has been a sea flood," he says. "We rushed to the scene and found hundreds of dead bodies along the coast." Gamage and his friends helped police collect the bodies. A month later, he joined CCF as a Sinhala-English translator.

Gamage organises a visit to the Fort child-centred space in Matara, held on Buddhist temple grounds. More than 100 people from the Fort community died in the tsunami. Women tell of loss: my husband, my son, my sister. Their grief is palpable, which is why gatherings such as this provide comfort and hope. The afternoon is filled with laughter and applause as the children practise for a concert, a rehearsal witnessed by mothers, aid workers and a monk.

After, parents discuss concerns including blocked drains, the cost of school uniforms and the Government's controversial buffer zone, which bans construction 100 metres from the sea. Communities are divided on this. Some rebuild partially damaged houses in the zone, some stake a claim by pitching tents on wrecked foundations, others move to temporary camps inland. All resent the Government for not building promised houses fast enough.

Within the buffer zone is the Fort youth group's meeting place the empty ground floor of youth leader Jageth Kumara's home. Water filled it to the ceiling during the tsunami and the Kumaras now live on the second floor.

THE NEXT day, in the colonial city of Galle, another youth club meeting is held in a hut next to a beachside camp.

Ravindrar Lakmal, 19, lost his father in the disaster and lives with his mother, a factory worker. After the tsunami, his school, more than 500 metres from the sea, was filled with wreckage. He says schooling for older students is not back to normal he often has to babysit younger children. To further his education, Lakmal takes extra classes which can be so large the teacher has to use a loudspeaker and cost about 1500 rupees (\$19) a month. "I do labouring work to pay for classes," he says.

Ajantha Vidanapathirana, 18, wants to be a lawyer, but that dream is on hold. While he didn't lose any family, money is tight.

Against the odds

The young men are two of about 20 teenagers who meet at this camp once a week to uplift children with music and games. "The children are afraid to leave home at night because of the sea. It is embarrassing, but we and many adults are also afraid," Vidanapathirana says.

"A few waves onto the road and everyone shouts 'Tsunami! Tsunami!'," says Susanna Balbo, CCF's child protection adviser for the south. "The monsoon season has just started and it is normal to have high waves in June, but because these people are so traumatised, they are panicking."

Matters were aggravated on March 28, when the Government issued a coastal evacuation warning after an undersea quake off Sumatra which measured 8.7 on the Richter scale. (December 26's measured 9.3.) The warning was withdrawn the next day.

Balbo arranges a visit to Galle's Wallewatta Camp, where 63 families 255 people live in 49 tents. Rows of big, blue tents are beside a road fringed by palms. Across the road is the ocean, where crashing waves provide an uneasy soundtrack to life. The only place children can gather safely is in an open hut with benches, toys and a play area overseen by CCF-trained volunteers. "We build a chain of sustainable trainers and the CCF component will eventually be defunct," Balbo says.

The tent community is led by K.G.N. Dilan, a mechanic who lost his 13-year-old daughter in the tsunami. He has a large framed photograph of a smiling girl with long, dark hair. A ring of plastic flowers hangs over her portrait.

Leading the camp is a big task, but Dilan says: "I do it for the sake of my daughter." Before the tsunami, his family had a good living but "now we are like beggars living in tents".

The International Labour Organisation estimates 276,000 people lost their jobs due to the disaster. In Galle, fishermen suffered most and Dilan says they need to work again. "We have to stand on our own feet, then we can give the support needed to our children," he says. "These people have lost everything 75 per cent were fishermen. If they have boats, they don't have nets; if they have nets, they don't have boats."

Sri Lanka's people are about 70 per cent Sinhalese Buddhist and, until the ceasefire in 2002, the country was riven by a 20-year civil war between the Government and minority separatists, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, aka the **Tamil Tigers**. The peace process is marred by sporadic clashes in the north, but Dilan says his camp is united. "Here there are Muslims, Tamils, Sinhalese and Christians. Before coming here, we had our own lives we did not mix often. Now we share the common problems; we share the common pain."

Signs of harmony were seen at the Sinhala and Tamil new year festival on April 13 and 14, celebrated by all ethnic groups. President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga called unity through disaster "a silver lining among dark clouds" in her new year's message.

NOW SRI Lanka is recovering, aid organisations are switching to long-term plans. CCF and UNICEF have begun a two-year, \$2.5 million child protection program that includes working with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services. "CCF has gone into partnership with UNICEF to train and mentor probation officers," Saldin says. "It's a very ambitious, very insightful program, because it puts the funding where it matters into the care of children."

The problem, the British social worker says, is that before the tsunami probation officers' work was correctional. "They were only dealing with children as offenders or as victims. But the tsunami children were neither."

Officers need training in modern child care. Plus, Saldin says, the department is low on funds.

Orphan adoption by extended family was an ad hoc arrangement. "The probation department processed these guardians through court to regularise those placements," she says. "But the department is so run down . . . probation officers don't have cars, they have to do [assessment visits] on public transport. Not all officers have telephones, they don't have sufficient photocopiers, they don't have fax machines."

Co-ordinator of CCF's child protection operations in Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia, Suzanne Pike believes Sri Lanka is facing many challenges, but that some of the biggest problems lie in Aceh. "There are huge differences

Against the odds

between countries. Not even in the types of need, but more extent of need in some places," she says. "Here some people are beginning to rebuild, but in Aceh there are some areas along the west coast that were decimated, making people's return to their home communities in any foreseeable time frame appear impossible."

UNICEF, 1300 884 233, www.unicef.com.au.

CCF AUSTRALIA, 9264 8333, www.ccfa.org.au.

Tourists needed to help rebuild a nation

SRI Lanka had barely rebranded itself as a tourist's tropical paradise when the tsunami hit.

Since then, islanders have laboured to rebuild facilities for tourism, the country's fourth-largest industry, and a \$5.2 million marketing campaign called Rediscover Sri Lanka was launched in May.

In Unawatuna, a tsunami-stricken beach resort, many hotels have been rebuilt but no tourists fill the sunlounges.

"Our only guests are aid workers," says Federico Prelati, manager of Full Moon Resort. "Tourists think they're going to have to sleep on the floor and do without water and power. They think big waves covered all of Sri Lanka, but inland, it's perfect."

In the mountains, cafes at Nuwara Eliya, a colonial town surrounded by tea plantations, are empty. The Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage is quiet. Even the citadel ruins atop Lion rock at Sigiriya, a World Heritage site, are deserted.

To entice tourists, prices are low. In the capital, Colombo, five-star hotels cost about \$80 a night.

Lalith Induruwage has been a tour guide for 14 years. Business is so slow, he works as a taxi driver for aid workers. "I think things will improve for the Esala Perahera festival in Kandy," he says. Kandy, home to the Temple of the Buddha's Tooth Relic, celebrates with 10 days of colourful street parades, this year from August 11.

The Sri Lanka Tourist Board recently reported that tourist arrivals for the first five months of this year increased by 8.1 per cent over the same time last year. However, the most likely explanation is many aid workers and there's no shortage of those operate on tourist visas.

Graphic

THREE PHOTOS: Picture: WAYNE TAYLOR

Load-Date: June 20, 2007

93 ROD LAVER

The West Australian (Perth)

August 25, 2005 Thursday

METRO

Copyright 2005 West Australian Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 22

Length: 2237 words

Byline: BEVAN EAKINS

MARK NAGLAZAS

DANIEL EMERSON

NORMAN AISBETT

CARMELO AMALFI

LIAM PHILLIPS

SARAH ROBERTS

Body

A sickly kid born in Rockhampton in 1938, Rod Laver became arguably the greatest male tennis player. The left-handed dynamo is the only player to win two grand slams - all four majors in a single calendar year. He did it as an amateur (1962) and a professional (1969). He won 11 grand slam singles titles, including four Wimbledon and three Australian, and was the first player to earn \$1 million in prize money. Only Pete Sampras, with 14 grand slam titles, has surpassed him. (BE)

94 CITIZEN KANE

When British film magazine Sight and Sound released its first all-time top 10 list in 1952, Orson Welles' Citizen Kane was nowhere to be seen.

A decade later it was voted the greatest film made and has never since looked like being toppled.

It took so long for Citizen Kane, which was released in 1941, to receive its due because it is a thinly veiled portrait of the newspaper baron, William Randolph Hearst. So incensed was Hearst by the treatment he and his Hollywood glamour girl lover, Marion Davies, received from Welles that he used all his power and influence to suppress Kane.

93 ROD LAVER

The film is bursting with flashy Welles signature touches that the 25-year-old had used in his theatre and radio work - most notably the famous panic-inducing War of the Worlds broadcast. But critic Pauline Kael believes it should not be seen as a work of individual genius. Instead it was the culmination of the studio system up to that point.

Though many films of the period feel dated, Citizen Kane still has the capacity to astonish because of Welles' use of the full cinematic arsenal, most notably Gregg Toland's evocative deep focus cinematography, to tell the very American story of a great man who flew too close to the sun.

Ironically, Welles' numerous, heartbreaking post-Kane failures have given us pause to think that his masterpiece is not just a biography of Hearst but a portrait of the director himself. (MN)

95 MUNCHAUSEN'S SYNDROME

Sufferers of the psychiatric disorder Munchausen's Syndrome intentionally give themselves physical symptoms of an illness in order to gain hospitalisation or treatment. Closely related is Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy (MSP), where someone causes another person to be hospitalised to gain attention for themselves.

Tragically, MSP victims are usually children, and the perpetrators parent figures, usually the mother, who basks in the sympathy offered by hospital staff and friends. The disorders are named after Karl Friedrich Hieronymus von Munchausen, a German soldier and gentleman whose exaggerated adventure stories were published in 1785 as a widely popular set of "tall tales". (DE)

96 MAASTRICHT TREATY

The Maastricht Treaty was signed in February 1992 in Maastricht, the Netherlands, by the heads of government of the 12 member states of the European Community. Formerly known as the Treaty on European Union, it came into force on November 1, 1993, and established the European Union (EU), which today has 25 members.

It gives union citizenship to everyone holding the nationality of a member state. It also provides for the introduction of a centralised banking system, a common currency (the euro) and common foreign and security policies. Britain has EU membership but is one of 13 countries not yet using the euro. The 12 countries using the euro are part of the so-called eurozone in which the European central bank is responsible for monetary policy.

The future direction of the group is uncertain after the ratification of a proposed EU constitution stalled in several member states this year. In June EU leaders extended next year's deadline for ratification but didn't set a new date. (NA)

97 CASSINI-HUYGENS MISSION

Launched in 1997, the \$5 billion Cassini-Huygens mission, run by the American space agency NASA and the European and Italian space agencies, has returned unprecedented images of the Lord of the Rings - Saturn - as well as tantalising clues that life may exist on its biggest moon. The spacecraft arrived at the ringed planet in July last year after travelling more than 3.5 billion kilometres through space to reach the Saturnian system.

On Christmas Day last year, NASA's Cassini orbiter released the European Space Agency's wok-shaped lander Huygens, which alighted on Saturn's biggest moon, Titan, on January 14. Huygens became the first probe to land on a moon not our own. Titan is the only moon in the solar system with a methane-rich, nitrogen atmosphere resembling what scientists believe was on Earth before plant life began producing oxygen.

For the next three years, Cassini and Huygens' data will provide clues to how life started on Earth, and possibly in other parts of the solar system, such as on Mars and Jupiter. (CA)

98 PEARL HARBOR

93 ROD LAVER

Pearl Harbor, in the Hawaiian island of Oahu, was the scene of a devastating Japanese attack on the US Pacific Fleet that catapulted America into World War II. The surprise attack on December 7, 1941, climaxed a decade of worsening relations between the US and an increasingly expansionist and militaristic Japan.

A 33-ship Japanese naval fleet, including six aircraft carriers, sailed to within about 360km north of Hawaii. From there, it launched about 360 attack planes which sank or severely damaged 18 US ships and destroyed about 200 planes. The estimated 3500 US casualties included more than 2300 killed.

US President Franklin Roosevelt said the date would "live in infamy". The attack ended any support in America for neutrality and Congress declared war on Japan the following day. (NA)

99 KU KLUX KLAN

The Ku Klux Klan, the American militant white supremacist group, was founded in 1866, after the American Civil War, by ex-Confederate soldiers.

The original group was formed to oppose the new rights granted to black former slaves and became characterised by the members' distinctive white hoods.

It was closed down by the government but re-formed after World War I to target Catholics, Jews and foreigners as well as blacks.

It again ended in 1944 but fear of communism saw several groups revive the Klan name in the 1950s. They were further stoked by the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which saw one of the most violent periods of the Klan's history.

The Ku Klux Klan remains active in the US and is considered the extreme symbol of racial hatred. (LP)

100 RORSCHACH TEST

In 1921, Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach introduced 10 inkblots which he used to assess patients' personalities based on what they saw in the images and their reactions to them.

Rorschach died the following year with little recognition of his technique, but the test became a widely used tool in psychology from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Although criticised as unreliable and subjective, the same 10 inkblots are still applied today with analysts using different methods of interpretation. (SR)

ALPHABETICAL EASY-FIND INDEX

Acid Rain (page 11) Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (p8) Al-Qaida (p3) Angkor Wat (p14) Apartheid (p8) Archibald Prize (p14) Armstrong, Louis (p3) Azaria (p10) Bamiyan Buddhas (p21) Banana Republic (p12) Berlin Wall (p5) Bermuda Triangle (p21) Bird Flu (p16) Birth of Rock 'n' Roll (p8) Black Hole of Calcutta (p6) Blue Poles (p3) Boadicea (p10) Bodyline Series (p19) Boston Tea Party (p11) Bottom-of-the-Harbour Scheme (p16) Callas, Maria (p20) Carbon (p14) Cassini-Huygens Mission (p22) Chanel No. 5 (p6) Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (p17) Citizen Kane (p22) Cuban Missile Crisis (p17) Dead Sea Scrolls (p15) Descartes' quote: "I think, therefore I am." (p19) Divine Comedy (p14) Dreamtime (p11) Ebola Virus (p6) **Female** Eunuch, The (p2) Fosbury Flop (p15) Four-Minute Mile (p4) Franklin River Dam (p20) Geneva Conventions (p5) Gettysburg Address (p20) Google (p19) Goons, The (p4) Grand National (p16) Grapes of Wrath, The (p10) Great Barrier Reef (p8) Great Rift Valley (p17) HAL 9000 (p15) Hanson's Maiden Speech (p12) Hindenburg Disaster (p9) Hitchcock, Alfred (p7) Human Genome Project (p7) Iliad and Odyssey (p13) Industrial Revolution (p9) International Court of

Justice (p16) Keyhole Surgery (p18) Khmer Rouge (p18) Koran, The (p5) Krakatoa (p4) Ku Klux Klan (p23) Laver, Rod (p22) Little Tramp (p10) Lucy (p3) Maastricht Treaty (p22) Mein Kampf (p17) Mona Lisa (p14) Munchausen's Syndrome (p22) Nazi Concentration Camps (p11) One-Child Policy (p12) One Hundred Years of Solitude (p17)

OPEC (p18) Orwell, George (p11) Pandora's Box (p19) Partition of India (p12) Pearl Harbor (p22) Pi (p21) Polo, Marco (p18) Reformation, The (p21) Richter Scale (p18) Rorschach Test (p23) Rosetta Stone (p12) Rumble in the Jungle (p6) Running of the Bulls (p7) Sahara Desert (p4) Samurai (p5) Sartre, Jean-Paul (p15) Sims, The (p19) Stonehenge (p2) Studio System (p16) **Tamil Tigers** (p13) Taxi Driver (p20) Terracotta Army (p6) Thinker, The (p10) Third World (p8) Three Tenors, The (p19) Tolstoy, Leo (p20) Universal Declaration of Human Rights quote: "All human beings are born free . . ." (p3) Waiting for Godot (p12) Wars of the Roses (p9) Watergate (p13) World Series Cricket (p9) Wormhole (p15) Wright Brothers' Flights (p4)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research sources used, and gratefully acknowledged, in developing this series include:

A Brief History of Science (Ed. John Gribbon; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998) Boadicea's Chariot (Antonia Fraser; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988) The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia (2nd ed.; Cambridge University Press, 1998) The Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine (Cambridge University Press, 1996) Catastrophe! (Stephen J. Spignesi; Citadel Press, 2002) Concord Desk Encyclopedia (Concord Reference Books, 1982) A Dictionary of World History (Oxford University Press, 2000) Egypt: A Practical Guide (Moustafa Gadalla; Tehuti Research Foundation, 1998) The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia (Ed. David Horton; Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994) Encyclopedia Britannica Great Disasters (Ed. Kaari Ward; Reader's Digest, 1989) The Greek Gods (Evslin, Evslin and Hoopes; Scholastic, 1966) Heroes and Heroines (Ed. Antonia Fraser; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980) The Illustrated History of the World (McRae Books, 2000) The Illustrated Letters: Lewis Carroll Looking-Glass Letters (selected and introduced by Thomas Hinde; Collins & Brown, 1991) "Last rites for magic realism" (Robert McCrum; The Observer, May 12, 2002) The Life Millennium (Ed. Robert Friedman; Life Books Time Inc., 1988) The Macmillan Encyclopedia 2001 (Macmillan, 2000) The Macquarie Dictionary (Revised 3rd Edition, 2001) Mosby's Medical, Nursing and Allied Health Dictionary (5th ed.; Mosby, 1998) Music: An Appreciation (Roger Kamien; McGraw-Hill) National Geographic: Almanac of World History (Patricia S. Daniels and Stephen G. Hyslop; National Geographic Society, 2003) The New York Public Library's Books of the Century (ed. Elizabeth Diefendorf; Oxford University Press, 1996) 100 Great Kings and Queens (Ed. John Canning; Souvenir Press, 1973) 100 Great Lives of Antiquity (Ed. John Canning; Souvenir Press, 1985) Pears Encyclopedia (112th Ed; Penguin Books, 2003) Questions on German History: Paths to Parliamentary Democracy (German Bundestag, 1998) Rainbow Fact Book of British History (Grisewood & Dempsey, 1984) SBS World Guide (10th ed.; Hardy Grant Publishing, 2002) The Times History of the World (Ed. Geoffrey Barraclough and Richard Overy; Times Books, 1999) World Book Encyclopedia

Online Sources:

The Columbia Encyclopedia (6th edition; Columbia University Press; www.bartleby.com/65/)

Encyclopedia Britannica Online (2005; www.britannica.com)

Microsoft Encarta encyclopedia (2005; <http://encarta.msn.com>)

Wikipedia encyclopedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy (3rd Edition; E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Joseph F. Kett, James Trefil; www.bartleby.com/59/)

BBC

(www.bbc.co.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/history

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

www.bbc.co.uk/sn/

ABC

(www.abc.net.au)

Life Magazine: Top 100 People (www.life.com/Life/millennium/people/01.html)

Millennium Milestones (www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781458.html)

Newseum Stories of the Century (www.newseum.org/century)

The Science Channel's 100 Greatest Discoveries (<http://science.discovery.com/convergence/100discoveries/big100/big100.html>)

Timeline of Influential Milestones and Turning Points in Film History (www.filmsite.org/milestones.html)

Time Magazine: Time 100 - People of the Century (www.time.com/time/time100/)

<http://aboriginalart.com.au>

www.answers.com

www.archives.gov

www.artsreformation.com

www.ashermeadow.com

www.bermuda-triangle.org

www.britannia.com

www.callas.it

www.cdc.gov

www.ch2bc.org

www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au

www.dailysoft.com/berlinwall

www.english-heritage.org.uk

www.environment.act.gov.au

www.epa.gov

www.first-to-fly.com

www.gbrmpa.gov.au

www.geocities.com

www.google.com.au

www.greenleft.org.au

<http://history1900s.about.com>

www.historylearningsite.co.uk

www.laparoscopy.com

<http://mathworld.wolfram.com>

www.nationalgeographic.com

www.nationmaster.com

www.newadvent.org

<http://nixon.archives.gov>

<http://nobelprize.org>

www.nyu.edu

www.orientalarchitecture.com

www.pamplona.net

www.paperlessarchives.com

www.pbs.org/wgbh

www.perfumes.com

<http://rmc.library.cornell.edu>

www.rorschach.org

www.sanfermin.com

www.silk-road.com

www.sls.org

www.terrorismfiles.org

www.theatlantic.com

www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

www.threetenors.com

www.unmuseum.org

www.un.org

www.users.bigpond.com/sarcasmo/sexpolitics/germaine.html

www.wall-berlin.org

www.warsoftheroses.com/

www.washingtonpost.com

<http://watergate.info>

<http://whc.unesco.org>

www.who.int

www.wsu.edu

Graphic

Rod Laver at Wimbledon in 1959.; Newly minted 1 German Euro coins produced as a test run in late 1998.; An image of Phoebe, one of Saturn's moons, from the Cassini-Huygens probe.; A 1975 member of the KKK.

Load-Date: August 25, 2005

Tsunami relief draws out the best in Sri Lanka; TRAVEL

Australian Financial Review

August 12, 2005 Friday

First Edition

Copyright 2005 Fairfax Media Publications Pty. Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: LIFE & LEISURE; Pg. 10

Length: 1963 words

Byline: Sue Williams

Body

Australian expatriates staying on after the Boxing Day tsunami in Sri Lanka are fighting to rebuild a dream, Sue Williams writes.

The boutique hotel had been open for just 10 days when there was a deafening crash, shrieks of terror and the sound of water gushing down the streets outside.

Former Australian television director Karl Steinberg leapt out of bed and stared blearily out of the window.

Steinberg and his partner, Chris Ong, had sunk their life savings into restoring a crumbling 18th-century Dutch colonial mansion as a luxury hotel in one of Sri Lanka's top tourist destinations, and had settled into life quickly on the tear-shaped island to India's south.

It had been a big readjustment from Sydney but, with a gruelling six months of work finally finished, they'd had their grand opening and ceremonial blessing by local Buddhist monks, and now, on the cusp of high season, bookings for the next three months were full.

Life was good; they'd found their very own sea-change paradise.

They weren't alone, either. Before the Boxing Day tsunami that devastated large swathes of southern Sri Lanka, the previous wave to hit the country had been nicknamed the Australian Invasion, a flood of entrepreneurs, property dealers, businessmen, retirees, thrill-seekers and fellow sea changers, all looking to make a buck and a difference in a nation that's essentially changed little in the past two decades.

Many of those expatriates were among the hardest hit along the coastline, discovering, too late, that their dreams had a high price. But then a strange thing happened. While most had been expected to depart as quickly as they came in the wake of the deadly deluge that killed about 41,000 people and left 900,000 homeless, most instead opted to stay on and work with the locals to help rebuild the country.

Steinberg, whose upmarket Galle Fort Hotel lies just inside the 17th-century fort walls near the southernmost tip of Sri Lanka, insists he has no regrets in investing so heavily in a country shattered by the disaster. "It was a terrible thing, but no one could have ever foreseen anything like that," he says in his office, crowded with 420 boxes of kids' school shoes ready for distribution that afternoon. "And you have to concentrate on turning the place around, and on the positives.

Tsunami relief draws out the best in Sri Lanka TRAVEL

"On the plus side, now it feels much less a community of us and them the Australians and other expats, and all the locals. Now it feels very much as if we've been accepted as part of the country, and that we're all working together to build a great future."

Steinberg's compatriots are similarly upbeat. "I'm not staying to help out of the goodness of my heart," says Australian entrepreneur Geoffrey Dobbs, who arrived 10 years ago for a holiday, and stayed to restore three mansions into hotels, set up a manufacturing and trading business and open two shops. "I'm doing it because it's just something that has to be done. This is a beautiful country, and I have a great deal of faith in its future."

The tsunami was a tragedy of timing in the tiny nation's trouble-torn history. After a 20-year war with separatist **Tamil Tigers** that left an estimated 60,000 dead and 600,000 in refugee camps, a ceasefire in December 2001, which saw 100 per cent tax breaks for outside investors, suddenly restored faith, and hope.

Foreigners flocked in, and tourism began to take off. Sri Lanka seemed to have everything: cool, green, tea plantations in the north; fabulous temples in the cultural centre; wild animals in vast national parks; golden beaches; and all the colour and verve of India.

Many of the dozens of Australians arriving to call Sri Lanka home concentrated their activity in the south, either on the palm-fringed coast or on Galle Fort, a sleepy, 480-house town inside a 17th-century fort with high stone ramparts ringing 38 hectares of land. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1988, it was built by the Portuguese-ousting Dutch colonisers before they, in turn, were sent packing by British forces led by 35-year-old Lachlan Macquarie, later governor of NSW.

In those days, Galle Fort's wide, dusty streets, fronted by grand ebony doors and tiny merchants' stores, echoed with the sound of cannon and musket fire. Now they reverberate to hammering, sawing and digging as the latest round of outsiders move in, buy up property and continue the restoration.

The fort wasn't badly damaged by the tsunami, but beyond the walls 4000 died and much was crushed beyond recognition.

Steinberg and Ong spent the post-tsunami days cooking packages of curry, dahl and rice for locals, unpacking medical supplies sent by the Muslim community in the capital Colombo, and pitching in to clear debris. Their well is one of the few unspoilt by rising saltwater and they ladle water freely.

Two homes near Galle owned by Sydney therapist Jan Alexander and her husband John were damaged, but she joined guesthouse manager Nicky Harrison, formerly of Perth, to distribute 500 kilograms of medical equipment sent by a friend in London, hand out shots of cholera and typhoid sent by another friend, and prepare food. "We wanted the local people to know we weren't abandoning them," Alexander says. "We employed local people to help rebuild the houses and then, when we came back to Sydney, we set up a bank account for friends to contribute. One donated \$10,000."

Dobbs had a miraculous escape in the tsunami. He was swimming when it hit and was swept eight metres into the air but managed to grab on to a boat wedged between a roof and a tree. His well-known Sun House and Dutch House hotels escaped harm, but other properties he owns were damaged.

He has taken a year off and thrown himself full-time into the relief effort, setting up an organisation, Adopt Sri Lanka, with projects to help fishermen repair their boats, provide machinery for widows to make lace or handicrafts, as well as pumping contaminated wells and re-equipping schools. "We're concentrating on micro-projects, getting people back to work," he says. "These people are proud, and they want to get back to what they were doing before."

Businessman Ray Dingle, whose home at Tangalla was hard hit by the waters, came up with a novel idea to fund his relief projects at neighbouring Marwella village. He returned to Sydney in February to raffle his prized car, a 1947 MG TC. "Most of the houses were demolished or substantially damaged, and the fishing fleet destroyed," he says. "Over 6000 people perished in this area, many of them fishermen, leaving families without a breadwinner."

Tsunami relief draws out the best in Sri Lanka TRAVEL

Dingle, 70, has been doing everything from buying gas cooking units so women can cook the rice provided by relief agencies to replacing fishermen's bikes so they don't have to walk for hours to get to their fishing grounds, and arranging for the repair of outboard motors with the help of the Sri Lankan Navy. In the next phase, he and his partner, Gai Harris, will move into rebuilding houses for the villagers.

After the tsunami, Perth architect Bruce Fell-Smith, who has had a home in Sri Lanka since 1990, designed an extendable, one-bedroom house that could be built for about \$2600, then got together with friends to raise \$200,000 to buy plots of land on which they could be built. Work has started on 50 houses.

"A lot of charities are asking to use our drawings and design, which is great," says Fell-Smith, 61. "Our immediate reaction was: what can we do to help? It's hard, but it's such a beautiful country, it will recover. It also helps that some politicians, who were really anti foreigners coming to live here, seem to be changing."

Sri Lanka offers an easy, cheap lifestyle for most foreigners. The Buddhist majority mixes fairly comfortably with minority Muslims and Hindus and the often English-speaking locals are generally welcoming. The climate is pretty good all year around and even during the monsoon the rains tend to be short and sweet.

Halfway between Europe and Australasia, and with as much potential as Singapore or Hong Kong, some believe, it has plenty to attract tourists. The number of Australian visitors was up by 21.9 per cent last year

The luxury Aman Resorts chain recently expressed its confidence in the country by investing \$US20 million to build two hotels, one in Galle Fort designed by West Australian architect Kerry Hill, which opened last December, and the other in Tangalla.

For simple sea changers, the price of labour and materials is extremely low, while a huge, albeit rundown, rambling mansion with four-metre ceilings in the south of the country, for example, can be bought for about \$100,000.

Interior designer Leslie Walford, the first Australian to buy in Galle Fort, lives in his "small, white garden palace", The Orchard House, for part of every year, then rents it out for the rest. He adores his time there. "It's like discovering St Tropez in 1940," he says. "It's a place that has so much charm and it's going to increase in popularity all the time."

Frequent flyer Andrew Pfeiffer, from rural NSW, who creates gardens around the world and visits Sri Lanka up to six times a year, says it's idyllic. "This is how people imagine India to be," he says, sitting by a friend's pool at Galle Fort with a vodka cocktail. "And it is India, but without the beggars and the lack of hope."

That hope is burning bright as the resident Australians fight hard to save their dreams. Steinberg and Ong are involved with others in buying 20 to 30 of Fell-Smith's houses to lease to locals, as well as sending kids' drawings over to London to be auctioned. When the aid workers, journalists and US Marines move out, they hope their elegant 10-room hotel, framed by grand matching colonnades and stacked with antique furniture and hand-carved reproductions, will return to servicing tourists.

Dobbs is confident his association of leading hotel and travel operators, Sri Lanka InStyle, which organises hot-air balloon rides, helicopter trips to golf courses, cookery classes and an annual elephant polo tournament, will be back in demand.

"This place has everything: sun, sea and sand, and a lot of culture," he says. It's expanding all the time and it'll bounce back quickly. It's not confronting any more for tourists, we're hoping they'll start again soon."

Over at the Galle Fort Hotel, where Steinberg's first \$US200-a-night guests spent their days after the tsunami helping to make curry and clean their own rooms while staff went home, is hoping much the same. The palms have started sprouting on the beaches, and much of the rubble is gone.

The tiny hotel was listed as one of the world's "Hottest new hotels and resorts" in the May edition of US travel magazine Conde Nast Traveler. "Today, all the Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists all say hello to the foreigners and

Tsunami relief draws out the best in Sri Lanka TRAVEL

it's a much more bonded community," Steinberg says. "It's the new Bali. It's an extraordinary place with an amazingly literate people.

"People are so happy to see tourists again. They see it as a sign of faith. They are starting to come back, and are thrilled with what they're finding."

FACTS

Getting there

Most airlines fly to Singapore. Then Singapore Airlines, Emirates and Sri Lankan Air fly on to Colombo.

Stay

The Galle Fort Hotel has 12 air-conditioned rooms of different sizes and configurations with lofty ceilings, mosquito net-canopied four-poster beds and antique furniture. It's at 28 Church Street inside the Galle Fort. Tel (94) (91) 223 2870, fax (94) (91) 223 2939, www.galleforthotel.com

Eat and drink

The restaurant at Galle Fort Hotel serves a modern Asian menu with owner and chef Chris Ong buying daily from the local fish and vegetable markets. The Sun House, just outside the fort, serves a fusion of local and colonial Dutch and Portuguese cuisine at 18 Upper Dickson Road. Tel (94) (91) 438 0275, www.thesunhouse.com

Graphic

THREE PHOTOS: The Galle Fort Hotel lies just inside the 17th-century fort walls near the southernmost tip of Sri Lanka. The Galle Fort Hotel . . . Steinberg's first \$US200-a-night guests spent their days after the tsunami helping to make curry and clean their own rooms while staff went home. Photo, bottom: Sue Williams

Load-Date: April 5, 2012

New directions for female warriors

Canberra Times (Australia)

August 20, 2005 Saturday

Final Edition

Copyright 2005 The Federal Capital Press of Australia Pty Limited

Section: A;

Length: 1971 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

THE THOUGHT of a woman thrusting a bayonet into an enemy soldier's belly would be difficult for many Australians to accept and, as in most countries, the Government is unlikely to countenance this scenario. Women have been soldiers throughout history, from ancient Greece to the American Civil War and modern-day Iran. But more often they serve in irregular armies such as the Tamil Tigers, which has the Women's Military Unit, also called the Birds of Freedom, run by a separate but parallel administrative structure to that of the male fighters.

The women live in their own camps and train to fight alongside men and in all-women units.

The Australian Defence Force employs one of the highest numbers of women of any military, 15.5 per cent including reservists, the United States has about 15 per cent and Britain 8 per cent.

Women are employed by the ADF in roles that require them to kill -from a distance. In the navy, which now has the highest percentage of female personnel, 17.4 per cent, they can serve on all vessels and in the air force, which has 15 per cent, on all aircraft.

As one female navy officer says, "When we talk about women at the front line we are talking about the army. In the navy we are on ships and our front line is a lot further back than the army front line, where it could be 10 feet, or three feet." Women have encroached on traditionally male bastions with great success and nowhere has this been more dramatic than in the military.

What was considered unthinkable just a few decades ago is now the norm.

The Anglican Bishop to the Australian Defence Force, Tom Frame, was the Defence Force's Women's Desk Officer in 1992-93 and says the reasons for women being excluded from some categories were constantly challenged and many objections were removed.

Frame, who was a member of the navy for 15 years, says he has seen extraordinary changes. "It went from being an organisation that had no women at sea to women being very much integrated in seagoing operations, within a decade, and that is extraordinary for an institution as traditionalist as the navy," he says.

"I think women have shown an incredible capacity to do things that men imagined, foolishly, that they couldn't do.

New directions for female warriors

"If people volunteer to put themselves in harm's way and there is no good reason for them to be prevented from doing it, then that seems to me to be acceptable.

"If we are going to discriminate publicly and formally against a group of people, the discrimination needs to be continuously justified -otherwise it is just discrimination.

"Women have been given those opportunities and shown that some of the fears were totally unjustified.

Women have brought to the corporate culture of the ADF positive things that weren't expected." He says the corporate culture of the navy, which he joined 26 years ago, was very different from today's, which he believes is significantly better "because of the civilising effects of women".

"Women will not tolerate forms of behaviour that some men seem willing to justify and the service is all the better for it," he says.

The reasons for men barring women from combat roles have been whittled away as studies show that concerns about cohesion, morale and readiness are less and less justifiable as women become a more integral part of the military.

The most compelling reason that remains is physical strength. As Neil James, executive director of the Australian Defence Association, says, "Defence forces exist solely to deter or win wars by efficiently applied violence. A large part of this role involves a readiness and capacity to engage in actual battle." He says the rationale for limiting some ADF categories to men is based on operational needs for levels of physical strength not met by most women (and many men).

"The situation is strongly analogous to premier-grade sporting teams in physical contact sports.

After all, even the most ardent feminist ideologue does not bat an eyelid in protest that first-grade Australian rules, rugby union and rugby league team have no female players." But if a woman did meet the physical requirements, should she still be barred? Dr Bob Montgomery, director of communications for the Australian Psychological Society, believes there are only "traditional, attitudinal and political reasons, not operational reasons" holding them back. "It's something of a British sexist tradition that we need to protect women, tuck them away from harm." "Our government is a conservative government and would be reluctant to do anything that would offend what it would see as its larger voter bloc." He says that in Israel, the only country with female conscription, the military found having women on the front line counter-productive as some men tried to protect and assist them rather than continue their attack.

"But other than that there is no logical reason why women can't occupy frontline roles just as well as men can," Montgomery says. "The kind of woman who seeks a combat role is already going to be someone who sees herself as capable of doing it and will be screened for fitness." If women were strong enough to meet the physical requirements, would they have the killer instinct? Montgomery says women have often shown themselves just as capable of being aggressive. "It is typically in defence but that's what we all think we are doing when we go off to war -we are defending something we hold valuable.

"A comparative psychologist will tell you the most dangerous animal you will ever face is a female protecting her young. Never get between a mother bear and her cubs; that's a sure invitation to getting your head ripped off." There is no reason why women who choose the role, are appropriately trained and screened for competence, would be less effective than men. "The further you go up the elite scale the more screening goes on. A lot of men who apply to the SAS get rejected," he says.

"Does this person bring the abilities you want, can they be trained up to be competent? If they can, then I'd say it's largely irrelevant whether it's a man or a woman." Montgomery says people don't like to think of women being capable of torture. "The question comes up 'how can women torture?' -these are the people we expect to nurture and care. The answer is, just as easily as men do.

New directions for female warriors

"You can train almost anybody to be a torturer. You don't have to be crazy, you don't have to have peculiar characteristics.

"Women are certainly capable of going through the same kind of training programs to dehumanise your victims, to treat them as an object, not as a person and then do quite nasty things to them." He points out the ruthless behaviour of female guards in concentration camps in World War II. Scores of German women were hanged after the Nuremburg Trials for their treatment of prisoners.

Juana Bormann, of Bergen-Belsen, was known as "the woman with the dogs", who took sadistic pleasure in setting her wolfhounds on prisoners to tear them to pieces.

Maria Mandel, head of the Auschwitz women's camp, reported to be highly intelligent and dedicated to her work, was referred to as "the beast", as she was noted for her brutality and enjoyment in selecting women and children for the gas chambers. Her colleague Margot Drexler was particularly feared by the women inmates, whom she beat and starved to death.

In a more recent, but far milder incident, US soldier Lynndie England faced a general court martial on charges of maltreating prisoners and assault at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

The formal charges avoided the word "torture", though many commentators described her conduct as such.

Montgomery believes acceptance of women just takes time. "Take a parallel look at the growing number of women serving in police forces, where initially women PCs were expected to do the pedestrian crossings outside schools and restricted to what was regarded as typically female roles.

"Increasingly they have demonstrated they can operate in the field just as well as men can, especially now when you are relying more on technology than on simple brute strength." He says gender roles tend to get a big shaking up when there is a major sociological event such as World War II, which opened the doors for women to work in factories. "All of a sudden women, who were expected to be at home being homemakers, were doing the jobs that men traditionally did, because men had gone off to war." He said it is difficult to close those factory doors to women and send them back to the kitchen once they have a taste for it.

Frame says the ADF could now not survive without women: "If you were to suddenly say we're not going to have women, there would be a crisis of national proportions." Much has been said about the bonding of men on the battle field.

Ted Lapkin, a former Israeli army officer, says, "It is esprit de corps, combined with pure testosterone-driven aggression, that motivates men to attack the enemy, when every rational instinct for self-preservation tells them to run away." But Montgomery, who recently held workshops for families in rural areas, where male suicide is 50 per cent higher than in urban areas, says male bravado is sometimes a handicap.

"They are raised in the John Wayne school of stress management which says you are not hurt unless there is a bone showing." The double standards of society have served men just as badly as women, as they teach men "emotional constipation". "Trying to deny your bad feelings usually makes them worse and we pay an immense health price for it." Montgomery says men often self-medicate with alcohol which makes the situation worse. "They manage their bad feelings badly instead of being able to say, 'I really feel depressed,' or, in the military, saying, 'I really feel lousy after seeing my mate get his head shot off.'"

As a navy psychologist, he is working with three sailors who were on HMAS Melbourne when it sliced through HMAS Voyager in 1964, killing 82 men. "They are classic examples of post-traumatic stress disorder. After 40 years they have massive depression, drinking problems, poor work records and a lot of problems with their families. A large chunk of it is that these guys bought into the myth 'I shouldn't be distressed, no-one else feels as bad as I do, I should keep my feelings to myself.' They bottle it up and pay an immense price for it.

"It is less of a problem with women, unless they have decided the answer to femininity is to be masculine, which is like swapping Boggo Road for Pentridge." With regard to discipline, Montgomery believes women may also have

New directions for female warriors

an advantage. "It's an unpleasant process, and there is a large question mark as to whether it really needs to be like that, but it is no more difficult for women than for men.

"Women might have a slight edge because in our culture we raise women to be more submissive than men. They are more accustomed to following instructions and orders than men are." Whether the final bulwark against women in combat will ever be breached remains to be seen and will probably depend on dramatic events, unless there is a major policy shift.

Frame says, "I think we will get to a situation in which women's ambitions are almost completely accommodated within the Defence Force and they'd be free to choose to do whatever they want to do.

If women are able to achieve certain standards of training and proficiency then I think, with time, they'll be allowed to work in those areas.

"Whether or not women would want to do some of those things is another question." US studies have found that half the enlisted men in the US military and more than 80 per cent of all women -but only a third of male officers - favour ending the exclusion of women from ground-combat positions.

But even more telling is that only 12 per cent of enlisted women and 14 per cent of female officers would volunteer for combat roles if given the chance.

Load-Date: August 19, 2005

End of Document

WORLD at 0200 GMT

Associated Press International

January 15, 2005 Saturday

Copyright 2005 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

Section: INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Length: 2132 words

Body

HIGHLIGHTS:

Update: US-IRAQ-PRISONER ABUSE-GRANER - Jury sentences Graner to 10 years in military prison.

New: CROATIA-ELECTION - President Mesic faces Cabinet minister in presidential runoff.

New: INDONESIA-TSUNAMI-FAMILIES GONE - Aceh villagers come to grips with massive loss of lives and devastation.

New: AFGHANISTAN-TALIBAN REFUGEES - AP Interview: U.N. refugee chief says American military could ease operations to help penitent Taliban return to Afghanistan.

New: US-INAUGURAL-BUSH-PROFILE - Bold and determined, Bush seized the moment and hasn't let go.

New: US-INAUGURAL SPEECH-THE SEQUELS. Second inaugural speeches rarely stir the soul.

New: US-INAUGURAL-LAURA BUSH-PROFILE - On issues or travel, new term offers Laura Bush a chance to wander off the beaten path.

ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS: Abbas takes office with full-blown crisis on his hands: Israel cuts ties until he reins in militants

RAMALLAH, West Bank - Mahmoud Abbas is sworn in as the new Palestinian leader facing a series of crises that imperiled fledgling peace moves and raised questions about the elections that brought him to power. Fresh violence kills eight Palestinians in the Gaza Strip a day after Israel cut all ties with Abbas until he reins in militants. The boycott came after six Israelis were killed during an attack at a Gaza cargo crossing this week. BC-ME-GEN--ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS. Moved. By Steven Gutkin. AP Photos JRL104,110; AXLP816..

- BC-ME-GEN--MIDEAST-PALESTINIANS. CAIRO, Egypt - Arabs criticize Israel for severing ties with new Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on the eve of his official swearing-in and claim the Jewish state was giving him little chance to rein in militant groups responsible for anti-Israel violence. Moved. By Salah Nasrawi.

TSUNAMI: Top U.S. defense official tours devastation, says U.S. ready to hand over relief work to Indonesia when it's ready

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia - U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz flies across the devastated wasteland along the Sumatran coast, voices pride in the American aid operation but says Washington wants to hand over relief work to Indonesia and other affected nations as soon as possible. BC-AS-GEN--ASIA-TSUNAMI. Recap expected by 0300 GMT. By Burt Herman. AP Photos XEH101, BM101, XDA102-113, AJE102, 106.

WORLD at 0200 GMT

-BC-AS-REL--TSUNAMI AND FAITH. BANDA ACEH, Indonesia - When the midday call to prayers sounded, the boys entered the mosque and touch their foreheads to the white stone floor, which once was covered with bodies. These were the first corpses the boys had seen. It also was when they started to pray each day. Moved. By Brian Murphy.

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Iraqi officials say they are considering new measures to protect voters in the Jan. 30 national election, including a three-day, nationwide ban on driving to discourage car-bombings. Fresh clashes break out in the troubled northern city of Mosul, where most election officials have fled their jobs in fear. BC-ME-GEN--IRAQ. Moved. By Jason Keyser. AP Photos BAG104, 110,112, 118.

WITH:

- BC-NA-GEN--US-IRAQ-PRISONER ABUSE-GRANER. FORT HOOD, Texas - Army Spc. Charles Graner Jr. is sentenced to 10 years behind bars for physically and sexually mistreating Iraqis in the first court-martial stemming from at Abu Ghraib prison scandal, an embarrassment to the U.S. military fueled by the release of graphic photographs. Moved. By T. A. Badger. AP Photos TXLM106-108.

-BC-EU-GEN--BRITAIN-US-IRAQ-BABYLON. LONDON - The British Museum says U.S.-led coalition forces in Babylon have crushed part of the ancient Iraqi city's 2,600-year-old brick paved streets with their tanks and used soil containing archaeological fragments to fill sand bags. Moved. By Sue Leeman.

CHINA-OUTSTED LEADER: Activist: Deposed Chinese leader has fallen into coma

BEIJING - Zhao Ziyang, the Chinese Communist Party leader deposed after he tearfully sympathized with the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests, has been hospitalized in a deep coma and may be near death, a human rights activist says. BC-AS-GEN--CHINA-OUTSTED LEADER. Recap moved. By Audra Ang. AP Photo NY113.

CHINA-TAIWAN FLIGHTS: Taiwan, China agree to first direct flights in five decades

MACAU - Taiwan and China strike a deal to allow the first direct flights between the rivals in five decades - a major breakthrough that could help reduce tensions in one of Asia's most dangerous potential flash points. BC-AS-GEN--CHINA-TAIWAN-CHARTER FLIGHTS. Recap moved. By Min Lee.

AFGHANISTAN-TALIBAN REFUGEES: AP Interview: U.N. refugee chief says American military could ease operations to help penitent Taliban return to Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan - Improving security in Afghanistan's most troubled region is boosting the outlook for a reconciliation between former Taliban supporters and the U.S.-backed government of President Hamid Karzai, the head of the U.N. refugee agency says. BC-AS-GEN--AFGHAN-TALIBAN REFUGEES. Moved. By Stephen Graham. AP Photos KAB101, 103, 105-106.

INDONESIA-TSUNAMI: Aceh villagers come to grips with massive loss of lives and devastation

ALUE NAGA, Indonesia - After three weeks of scouring the muddy wastelands where his village once stood and peering into scores of body bags, Yusuf Abu has given up hope of finding any of the 67 members of his family who went missing in the tsunami. Despite the tragic loss, he said he was not bitter, even at the sea that claimed everything he cherished. Abu was ready to start a new life - with four relatives he has been able to find. BC-AS-GEN--INDONESIA-TSUNAMI-FAMILIES GONE. Upcoming. By Jim Gomez. AP Photos.

-BC-AS-GEN--THAILAND-TSUNAMI-CORAL CLEANUP. PATONG BEACH, Thailand - Dozens of scuba divers are removing furniture and other debris swept into the ocean by the Dec. 26 tsunami, hoping to rescue fragile coral reefs and marine life that have long made Thailand's southern coast a top tourist destination. Moved. By Daniel Lovering. AP Photos XYY101-105

-BC-AS-GEN--SRI LANKA-TSUNAMI-**TAMIL TIGERS**. KILLINOCHCHI, Sri Lanka - The government lost a chance to revive the peace process despite hopes that the state and guerrillas would unite in efforts to recover from the tsunami, a leader of the Tamil Tiger rebel movement says. Moved. By Christopher Torchia. AP Photos XEK101-103.

WORLD at 0200 GMT

CROATIA-ELECTION: President Mesic challenged by Cabinet minister in presidential runoff

ZAGREB, Croatia - Croatia's President Stipe Mesic is being challenged Sunday by a determined rival, Cabinet minister Jadranka Kosor, in a runoff election to choose the president that could lead this former Yugoslav country to join the European Union. BC-EU-POL--CROATIA-ELECTION. Moved. Polls open at 0600 GMT. First official results expected at 2300 GMT. By Snjezana Vukic. AP Photos XFH101-104.

- BC-EU-POL--CROATIA-ELECTION-THUMBNAILS. A look at the two candidates in Sunday's presidential runoff in Croatia. Moved.

- BC-EU-POL--CROATIA-ELECTION-GLANCE. Moved.

TITAN's MOONSCAPE: Titan probe shows orange surface, beams back sound

DARMSTADT, Germany - Titan's surface appears to be a pale orange place with a thin crust that gives the Saturn moon a consistency like wet sand or clay, scientists say, after refining first images from the Huygens space probe. BC-EU-SCI--EUROPE-SPACE PROBE. Moved. By Melissa Eddy. AP Photos LON813. AP Graphics HUYGENS MISSION, TITAN'S ATMOSPHERE.

RUSSIA-PROTESTS: Massive protests spread; authorities in Moscow region cave in on social laws

MOSCOW - In a major challenge to the Kremlin, massive demonstrations of retirees protesting the elimination of social benefits spreads across Russia, with up to 10,000 people rallying in President Vladimir Putin's home city of St. Petersburg. BC-EU-GEN--RUSSIA-PROTESTS. Moved. By Vladimir Isachenkov. AP Photos MOSB103-106.

UKRAINE-ELECTION: Top opposition figure criticizes Yushchenko call for camp removal

KIEV, Ukraine - In a sign of emerging cracks in the camp of presidential election winner Viktor Yushchenko, a top ally criticizes his call on supporters to raze the downtown tent camp they've occupied for nearly two months, one of the most vivid symbols of Ukraine's "Orange Revolution." BC-EU-POL--UKRAINE-ELECTION. Moved. By Natasha Lisova.

BAHRAIN-CABINET: Bahrain's king swears in new Cabinet, but reformist says changes don't go far enough

MANAMA, Bahrain - Bahrain's king swears in a new Cabinet that keeps many prominent ministers in key positions and adds a second **female** face, but reformists say the changes do not go far enough and leave too much decision-making power in the monarch's hands. BC-ME-GEN--BAHRAIN-CABINET. Moved.

IRAN-EBADI: AP Interview: Iranian Nobel laureate refuses to obey Revolutionary Court summons, vows to resist threats

TEHRAN, Iran - Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi tells Iran's hard-line Revolutionary Court she won't obey a vague summons to appear for questioning, even if it means she will be jailed - an open challenge to a powerful body that has tried and convicted many pro-reform intellectuals. Ebadi, the first Iranian and Muslim woman to win the Nobel peace prize in 2003, vows in a wide-ranging exclusive interview with The Associated Press to resist hard-line threats against her life and will never bow to intimidation. BC-ME-GEN--IRAN-EBADI. Moved. By Ali Akbar Dareini. AP Photos XHS101-103.

US-BUSH INAUGURATION: Bold and determined, Bush seized the moment and hasn't let go

WASHINGTON - Tumultuous times seem to fit George W. Bush. His presidency was off to a lackluster start in its first, quiet months before Sept. 11, 2001. After the terrorists struck, Bush told the nation, "We have found our mission and our moment." His presidency also found its purpose. He seized the moment. He grew in stature and confidence, rising above the gibes about his intellect and a disputed election, and for a while became a living symbol of American resolve. He hasn't looked back. BC-NA-GEN--US-INAUGURAL-BUSH-PROFILE. Moved. By Connie Cass. AP Photos WX107-109.

- BC-NA-GEN--US-INAUGURAL SPEECH-THE SEQUELS. WASHINGTON - Second inaugural speeches rarely stir the soul. Moved. By Calvin Woodward. AP Photos WX110-113.

- BC-NA-GEN--US-INAUGURAL-LAURA BUSH-PROFILE. WASHINGTON - On issues or travel, new term offers Laura Bush a chance to wander off the beaten path. AP Photos WX101-104.

WORLD at 0200 GMT

- BC-NA-GEN--US-INAUGURAL-Q&A. WASHINGTON - Inauguration Day: An old script with modern touches.

- BC-NA-GEN--US-INAUGURAL-BUSH-BY THE NUMBERS. Figures on children, news conferences, war, taxes and Crawford, Texas.

- BC-NA-GEN--US-INAUGURAL-BIO BOX-BUSH. Moved.

US-AVALANCHE: Rescuers find no trace of Utah avalanche victims after day of searching

PARK CITY, Utah - Rescue workers spend all day digging through a massive snow pile but find no traces of five people feared dead in an avalanche that cascaded down a Utah mountainside a day earlier. BC-NA-GEN--US-UTAH AVALANCHE. Moved. By Paul Foy. AP Photos UTDP102, 104, 106. AP Graphic UTAH AVALANCHE.

US-ID CARDS: ID card rules take center stage in privacy vs. security debate

NEW YORK - Privacy advocates warn that the new federal standards for driver's licenses - a common form of photo identification in the United States - will centralize information that can be misused. Government officials say they're just trying to close a security loophole, and that the worries are overblown. BC-NA-GEN--US-NATIONAL ID CARD. Moved. By Robert Tanner. With AP Graphic.

MAPUTO, Mozambique - Britain cancels Mozambique's debt of US\$150 million ([euro]114 million) and says it will pay a percentage of the impoverished country's other foreign debt to aid development and fight poverty. BC-AF-POL--MOZAMBIQUE-BRITAIN. Moved. By Emmanuel Camillo.

SOUTH AFRICA-MANDELA-FUNERAL: Thousands turn out to bury Mandela's son in South Africa

QUNU, South Africa - Nelson Mandela's grandson tells thousands of mourners at his father's funeral that his mother had also died of AIDS a year earlier. BC-AF-GEN--SOUTH AFRICA-MANDELA-FUNERAL. Moved.

ITALY-PARMALAT: Parmalat's founder asks pardon of those who suffered from Parmalat fraud scandal

ROME - The founder and former CEO of Parmalat Finanziaria SpA apologizes to all those who suffered losses in the dairy giant's virtual collapse in a [euro]14 billion (US\$18.3 billion) fraud scandal and pledges to help prosecutors reconstruct the case. BC-EU-FIN--ITALY-PARMALAT. Moved. With AP photos. By Frances D'Emilio. AP Photo PRM103.

LOOKING AHEAD: On Monday, French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie begins a visit to Moscow and European Union finance ministers meet in Brussels, Belgium. On Tuesday, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction begins in Kobe, Japan, and Airbus unveils a new A380 jumbo jet in Toulouse, France.

YOUR QUERIES: The editor in charge is Charles J. Gans at the Americas Desk in New York. Contact your local AP bureau, the Americas Desk at +1-212-621-1650, or the Asia Desk in Bangkok at +66-2-632-6911.

Load-Date: January 16, 2005

End of Document

REP. LEACH COMMENTS ON TSUNAMI TRAGEDY, U.S. ASSISTANCE

US Fed News

January 26, 2005 Wednesday 2:15 AM EST

Copyright 2005 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 2124 words

Byline: US Fed News

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa (2nd CD), issued the following statement:

Statement of Rep. James A. Leach Before the Committee on International Relations - "The Tsunami Tragedy: How the United States is Responding and Providing Relief"

Mr. Chairman, in the wake of what we now understand to be one of the most traumatic natural disasters of the past several centuries, I was asked to lead a Congressional delegation to countries impacted by the tsunami and make recommendations on appropriate Congressional responses. Joining me on the trip were Senators Sam Brownback and Jon Corzine, and a number of House Members, including Mr. Smith, Mr. Faleomavaega, Ms. Watson, Mr. Blumenauer, and Mr. Flake from this Committee.

During our compressed schedule, we met with heads of foreign governments and armed forces, UN and international aid agency officials, NGO representatives, U.S. diplomats and military personnel, and survivors of the tsunami.

Before making more general observations, allow me to describe briefly some of the circumstances we encountered, illustrated by a few photographs that should appear on the video monitors overhead.

Different areas experienced the disaster differently. But in every region we visited, the damage defied comprehension.

Hit hardest by the tsunami was Aceh, Indonesia, on the northern tip of Sumatra. Unlike certain areas in Thailand and Sri Lanka that were mounded with rubble, vast stretches of the Acehnese coast were wiped nearly clean. Entire towns had been seemingly swallowed by the sea, leaving only bare foundations where numerous homes and buildings had once stood. In one area, the local Mosque was the only structure still standing. Engineers suggested the Mosque survived because of its location and construction; residents were convinced that more eschatological factors were in play. In any regard, over 100,000 people died in Indonesia alone on that day. In addition to bearing the greatest loss of life, Aceh also posed the greatest logistical challenge to rescue and relief efforts, as the destruction of its relatively limited transportation infrastructure left large portions completely isolated from the outside world.

Thailand suffered thousands of deaths, including the largest number of foreign casualties. During our visit to the Khao Lak beach area - a destination for vacationers from around the world - we were surrounded by evidence of the deadly force of the waves, believed to have topped out at over 60 feet. At one point, the surge swept a large

REP. LEACH COMMENTS ON TSUNAMI TRAGEDY, U.S. ASSISTANCE

police boat more than a mile inland. The damage was rendered even more poignant by the public bulletin boards filled with photos of still-missing family members and unidentified bodies. We were all impressed by the extent to which the local Thai population, which suffered such heavy losses, had assisted foreign survivors and begun to clear the rubble.

More than 30,000 people were killed in Sri Lanka. The vast majority of that island's coastline was affected by the tsunami, though the extensive damage tended to be highly localized along the shore, limited in most areas to a few hundred yards inland. Thus, unlike in Aceh, most of the affected areas were in relative proximity to intact communities and transportation infrastructure, which helped to facilitate aid and rescue efforts. The juxtaposition of the geographically limited damage with the massive human toll underscored the tragic costs that resulted from the lack of an early warning system. Perhaps the most affecting portion of our trip was our interaction with tsunami survivors at a relocation camp near Galle. There we met the remnants of families who had been left homeless. We spoke with mothers who had lost children and husbands, and met children whose parents had been killed by waves that they described as sounding like the deafening roar of a jet plane.

Although we were unable to view damage sites in India, the briefings we received during our visit indicated that conditions there were of a similar gravity.

There are precedents for natural disasters. There may, however, be no precedent for the size and scale of the international response to this one. In the upward spiral of donor pledges, we have viewed the rise of a kind of competitive compassion that must be considered a welcome development in international relations. It remains to be seen whether the paradigms and the goodwill developed in response to this natural disaster may also have utility in addressing man-made disasters and conflicts that afflict similarly large numbers of people around the world. However, to some degree, the early focus on comparative pledges did not do justice to various national responses, particularly our own.

The American people have reason to be deeply proud of our country's response. The unparalleled airlift and transport capabilities of the U.S. military were the backbone of much of the international humanitarian response throughout the region. To cite one example, the helicopter crews from the USS Abraham Lincoln were the sole lifeline to numerous isolated communities in Aceh, maintaining an exhausting operational tempo ferrying clean water and provisions that saved many lives and helped deter the spread of disease.

I was inspired and gratified by the self-giving response of so many American servicemen and women, our AID workers, our professional diplomatic corps, and the large numbers of Americans working for faith-based and other non-governmental organizations in the region. These private and public servants, who had been working largely without sleep since the disaster, are a credit to our nation.

I would like to cite two discussions involving military personnel. The first was with Vice Admiral Douglas Crowder, aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. Admiral Crowder noted that he had never seen more enthused, committed sailors and Marines, even though they had never been precisely trained for this kind of mission. Knowing that those under his command lacked precise expertise for the task undertaken, he gave them a simple command: "Do good" and then authorized them to develop techniques to fit the circumstance, i.e., to use individual initiative. I believe somewhere on a wall at the Naval Academy ought to be chiseled Admiral Crowder's command: "Do good." Its simplicity implies grandness of mission in the finest tradition of the United States Navy.

The second conversation was with a Brigadier General with the United States Marine Corps. I told him my impression was that the difference the U.S. military made in the wake of the tsunami reminded me of the Confederate cavalry officer, Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, who was known to have argued that the key to all military strategy was getting there "firstest with the mostest." He laughed, but said the more apt analogy might be that of Rommel, who noted that amateurs speak tactics, professionals logistics. We think of our armed forces principally being trained to be put in harm's way in a wartime setting. But one of the lessons of this tsunami is that no institution in the world is better prepared to assist in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster than the military.

REP. LEACH COMMENTS ON TSUNAMI TRAGEDY, U.S. ASSISTANCE

In the long run, civilian institutions must take over, but in the short run the armed services have an important role to play.

Here, a note about faith-based efforts is in order. In Sri Lanka, our Ambassador informed me that he had just received a call from the Los Angeles Jewish Federation, which had raised \$10 million for relief assistance. Two days later, I met with a representative of the Federation in Delhi and she noted that she was prepared to consider giving assistance for the rebuilding of schools, such as the one the Marines had cleared the rubble from in Galle, Sri Lanka. She also said her organization hoped to be able to work with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monastery which was serving as a relief station for refugees, and perhaps even with groups in Aceh, Indonesia, where Muslim political activism is so widespread.

I cite this as one of many examples of American outreach to illustrate that America is more than government. We are a society of individuals who make private as well as public charitable commitments. It is the manner in which the public and private sectors interact that characterizes American governance.

I certainly do not mean to imply that the United States stood alone in these efforts. Numerous countries, including some of those hardest hit by the tsunami, quickly made their own sacrificial commitments. I would particularly like to commend the cooperation and contributions of the Kingdom of Thailand, whose air base at Utaapao has served as an invaluable hub for the transport of essential relief materials throughout the affected area. Our interlocutors in the region also noted with appreciation the prompt dispatch of humanitarian assistance by countries such as Singapore, Australia, Japan, India, Spain, and the Nordic countries, among others. In addition, I would like to commend the work of various UN agencies, particularly in Sri Lanka where they have taken the lead in providing assistance in Tamil-controlled parts of the country.

The short-term response to this disaster has been uniquely global, spontaneous, and successful. The World Health Organization recently reported that although the situation remains precarious, the strength of the international response has so far helped to keep the threat of large-scale disease outbreaks at bay.

As was beginning even during our visit, the focus of the international response will necessarily shift from saving lives to rebuilding livelihoods and the many local economies that were devastated by the tsunami. At present, many thousands of fishermen, subsistence farmers, and shopkeepers are without the modest capital inputs necessary to begin providing for their families once again. Similarly, many women widowed by the waves find themselves unequipped for their sudden, untraditional role as breadwinner. Countless men, women, and children who were traumatized by the terrors of that day will require sustained attention to their mental and emotional well-being.

This process of social and economic reconstruction will be more complex and protracted than the initial rescue and relief efforts, but no less essential. In order to be credible, international assistance must extend into the long term. Furthermore, this massive developmental response must be centrally coordinated and monitored to avoid duplication and corruption, at the same time that it must be locally responsive and open to direction from the communities and individuals most affected. We have an obligation to ensure that resources given from the highest of human motives to meet the most basic of human needs are spent in ways that are efficient, effective, and transparent. Thus, it is obvious that these endeavors will require both funding and careful oversight from the Congress in the months ahead.

On the political front, I am not alone in my hope that these unforeseen tragedies may yet have unforeseeable but positive consequences in catalyzing a peaceful resolution to longstanding separatist conflicts in the region. We have already seen welcome public commitments to renewed dialogue by the Government of Indonesia and the rebels of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Hopefully we can see a de-escalation of violence in the region, and the Indonesian government can demilitarize its approach to Aceh. I also am encouraged by initial reports that the Government of Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers, and humanitarian organizations may be exploring the feasibility of forming a tripartite approach to overseeing and coordinating the humanitarian response within that country. The United States should ensure that any aid provided is distributed on an equalitarian basis and, on the political front, should support these delicate processes of reconciliation in whatever ways are helpful and appropriate.

REP. LEACH COMMENTS ON TSUNAMI TRAGEDY, U.S. ASSISTANCE

On the environmental front, it appears that the January 26 tragedy may have galvanized the political will necessary to implement a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean basin and, more broadly, warning systems for various natural disasters on a worldwide basis. The U.S. should play an active role in such endeavors. I will leave it to my Democratic colleague, Mr. Blumenauer, to expand further on these issues which are of longstanding concern to him.

In conclusion, let me stress that the tsunami of December 26 cannot be viewed through a national tragedy prism; the events represented a human tragedy affecting the world community. We share in the grief and recognize that tragedies of this nature demonstrate our human vulnerability and common fate. Thank you.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: February 3, 2005

End of Document

Headlines in major Indian newspapers

IRNA

February 22, 2007 Thursday 7:51 AM EST

Copyright 2007 U.P.I.

All Rights Reserved

ARABIA 2000

Copyright 2007 by Iranian News Agency Distributed by UPI



Length: 187 words

Body

Headlines in major Indian newspapers New Delhi, Feb 22, IRNA India-Press-Headlines The following headlines appeared in major Indian newspapers.

* The Asian Age:

- India: No joint train blasts probe - Evidence to be shared - Iran plans island only for women
- Action against Nepal King: Deputy PM
- India, Pak sign pact to cut nuclear risk
- Lanka: India must check smuggling

* The Hindu:

- Tamil Nadu and LTTE menace
- Bird flu in Pakistan sparks concern
- On the India-Pakistan frontier, a fragile peace
- Samajwadi Party withdraws support to UPA government

* The Times of India:

- Air India, Indian Airlines will merge to gain muscle
- India rejects Pak call for joint probe
- Pak to top Indo-US talks agenda

Headlines in major Indian newspapers

- Iran to create women-only island

- * The Indian Express:

- No joint probe, will share details: India

- Britain to cut 1,600 Iraq troops

- GoM clear AI-Indian merger

- FM in a fix over Deora's stand on oil customs duty

- * The Statesman:

- Poll in Uttar Pradesh from April 7

- Norway seeks fresh commitment from Lanka govt, rebels

- World's fastest 15-year-old swimmer is an Indian

- India gives POW kin list to Pak

Load-Date: February 23, 2007

Six soldiers killed in north Sri Lanka

Agence France Presse -- English

August 26, 2006 Saturday 6:48 AM GMT

Copyright 2006 Agence France Presse All Rights Reserved



Length: 198 words

Dateline: COLOMBO, Aug 26 2006

Body

A bomb killed six Sri Lankan soldiers and wounded 11 Saturday while they cleared bunkers after fierce fighting with Tamil Tiger rebels in the besieged Jaffna peninsula, a military source said.

The improvised device exploded as soldiers cleared the frontline at Muhamalai on the northern peninsula where 11 days of battles left some 650 rebels and soldiers dead.

"Troops were on an operation clearing bunker lines when an IED (improvised explosive device) went off and six soldiers were killed and 11 injured," said the source from Jaffna.

The peninsula remained relatively calm overnight after the arrival of the first shipment of aid for the tens of thousands of people who have fled fighting in the district.

Jaffna is largely held by the government but is cut off by road from the rest of Sri Lanka by rebel forces.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (***LTTE***) have fought a three-decade battle for a Tamil homeland in the country's northeast and the latest upsurge in fighting has left a February 2002 ceasefire in tatters.

Meanwhile, in the capital Colombo, Sri Lankan police arrested 18 people, including two ***women***, and seized a cache of weapons including grenades and mines at a building.

Load-Date: August 27, 2006

The Bengal Paradox

Hindustan Times

March 17, 2007 Saturday 10:18 AM EST

Copyright 2007 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 1549 words

Byline: Hindustan Times

Dateline: NEW DELHI, India

Body

NEW DELHI, India, March 17 -- It is now over a decade since I moved out of Calcutta. But watching the news last week, I felt I was back. As I saw those terrible shots of policemen beating up women in Nandigram, as I read about the massacre of innocent villagers, and as I noted the cold, commissar-like response of Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee to the killings, I remembered what it was like to live in West Bengal.

The following day, as Mamata Banerjee shouted into the TV cameras, as her spokesman Derek O'Brien referred to Buddhadeb as a 'lunatic' on TV, and as a Bengal bandh ensured that millions of people were inconvenienced (ambulance drivers were prevented from reaching the sick), I realised how little things had changed.

Like the rest of us, the people of West Bengal get the politicians they deserve. They get the thugs and murderers of the CPM and they get the hysterical, self-destructive opposition of Mamata Banerjee. Small wonder then that while Bengalis prosper all over the world (and in the rest of India), Bengal remains a backwater, always at least a decade behind the rest of the country.

When I first moved to Calcutta in 1986, Jyoti Basu was already India's longest-serving chief minister and the subject of universal admiration among the middle class - outside of Calcutta. Within the state capital itself, many educated people took an entirely different view.

It wasn't that they did not admire Basu's stature - it was the rest of him that they disapproved of. The general view then was that while he was a well-educated bhadralok (unlike the north Indian politicians whom Bengalis love to despise), his reputation outside the state was based on hot air. His credentials as a man of the people were dented by his love of the good life, by the annual trip to London in the summer (always on some pretext; it was never described as a holiday), by his son's dodgy reputation and by his complete intolerance of dissent.

A couple of years before I moved to Calcutta, Ananda Bazar Patrika, where I worked, had suffered a violent and disastrous strike. The violence had emanated not so much from disgruntled employees as from professional activists affiliated to the CPM. In those days, the group's Bengali daily was anti-communist and the party had decided that ABP had to be punished. ABP employees were beaten up outside the office and the police determinedly looked the other way - they had orders from the government not to intervene.

But even Jyoti Basu was considered a pro-free speech liberal compared to Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, the classic humour-less, dour communist. When City of Joy was shot in Calcutta during my time there, Jyoti Basu was broadly supportive of the filming. It was Buddhadeb who opposed the decision. His view was not motivated by any sense of literary high-mindedness (I thought, at first, that he might have disapproved of the idiotically sentimental Dominique

The Bengal Paradox

Lapierre book on which the film was based) but out of a conviction that evil Westerners had arrived to denigrate his city.

It is traditional now to regard the CPM as being the most honest party in India and, given the financial integrity of the current leadership, this is probably accurate. But when I lived in Calcutta, we joked that the M in CPI(M) stood for 'Marwari' because so many of the party's leading lights were clearly in the pay of the city's dominant business community.

But the corruption worried us less than the violent streak at the centre of the CPM. Like most successful communist parties, the CPM is cadre-based. And like communists everywhere, its cadres cling to the totalitarian view that individuals are less important than The Cause.

Anybody with some experience of rural West Bengal will tell you that the CPM has done an outstanding job in land reform since it came to power in 1977. But they will also admit that the price Bengal has paid for this is to allow the cadres to take over the villages.

In many rural areas, communist cadres dominate everyday life with the same ruthless efficiency demonstrated by the **LTTE** in northern Sri Lanka. More than the police or the local administration, it is the cadres who wield the real power. They routinely rig elections (though I reckon the CPM would win anyway though perhaps with smaller margins) and impose a reign of terror on the villagers, murdering anyone who dares defy their authority.

In Calcutta we saw the cadres in action when the party required a show of strength. On election day, they would prevent people who were likely to vote for the Opposition from reaching the polling booths. When bandhs were declared, they would ensure that Calcutta shut down.

It was generally accepted that the police would never intervene if CPM cadres were involved. And sometimes the cops would actually lend a hand. It was in the early 1990s (I think) that Mamata Banerjee learnt this the hard way. During a Calcutta bandh, she was publicly assaulted and so comprehensively thrashed by a police party that she had to spend months in hospital recovering. As journalists and editorialists, we were outraged. But the CPM didn't give a damn to what the papers said.

Oddly enough, the rest of India - or, at least, educated urban India - never saw the CPM as a party based on violent, totalitarian cadres with a Stalinist intolerance of dissent and opposition. Nobody commented on the corruption. Or on the intrigues that ensured that control of the party remained in the hands of a small band of apparatchiks.

When these commissars - most of whom rarely stood for election - held forth on democracy and the will of the people, they were listened to with a baffling respect. When they complained about the fascist core at the heart of the Sangh Parivar, nobody pointed out that all totalitarian parties - including their own - had such a core. When they spoke about free speech, few people pointed to the CPM's own mixed record in this regard.

When they treated the machinations and intrigues of Indian politics with lofty disdain, most of us failed to point out that their own party was as full of manipulation and petty feuds. And when they lectured us about the evils of capitalism, we rarely reminded them that Jyoti Basu had repackaged himself as the businessman's best pal while sipping Scotch with the city's richer Marwaris.

I thought back to my years in Calcutta when I saw the TV footage of the Nandigram massacre. Anybody who has lived in Calcutta will understand at once what happened. The CPM had tolerated the defiance of the villagers for long enough. If they were unwilling to give up their land for the greater good then they had to be punished. And so, in the finest traditions of global communism, the cadres were despatched on a mission that would have done Joseph Stalin or Mao Tse-Tung proud. They beat up the villagers, murdered a few people and terrorised the area. The tame police force followed and shot the few innocents who continued to protest.

Was Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee responsible? I doubt it. My guess is that the cadres listen to the apparatchiks and not to the chief minister. It is no secret that large chunks of the Politburo would like to see Bhattacharjee go. And so,

The Bengal Paradox

they don't really care how much the massacre embarrasses him or whether his position has now become untenable. Elected politicians will come and go. But the grim-faced men who run the cadres will go on forever.

What followed was as sadly predictable. Mamata Banerjee represents one of the great wasted opportunities of Indian politics. There was a time, in the early 1990s, when I thought she had it in her to topple Jyoti Basu and to lead a revolt against the stranglehold of the CPM.

Alas, Mamata has proved to be her own worst enemy. When she should have fought Jyoti Basu, she fought Pranab Mukherjee. When she should have rallied her troops, she quarrelled with her closest aides. When she should have led the Congress, she linked up with the BJP. When she should have stuck by the BJP, she deserted the NDA in the aftermath of the Tehelka sting.

You see her now on TV screeching loudly while her spokespeople destroy their own case with childish abuse. You know that beneath the hysteria lurks the truth. But you know also that this outburst too will fade, that Mamata will soon shoot herself in the foot again and that she will slip back into sulky electoral oblivion. The CPM cadres will continue to rule the villages. And the party's leaders will once again deliver self-righteous little speeches about how everybody else is wrong and they are right.

What is it about Bengal, I wonder, that ensures that not only does the CPM get away with murder but that all of the Opposition, from Mamata Banerjee to the pathetically inept Congress, always destroys itself?

Nobody I spoke to in all my years in Calcutta had an answer. Or was able to explain why the state voluntarily opted for a one-party system run by a totalitarian cadre.

I call it the Bengal paradox. And until we learn why Bengalis, who shine wherever they go, are so different when they are at home, we will never understand the hold an obsolete 19th-century totalitarian ideology has on a state full of some of India's most talented and intelligent people.

The Hindustan Times is provided through HT Syndication, New Delhi.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: March 19, 2007

No Headline In Original

Jordanian News Agency

April 9, 2004 Friday 1:02 AM EST

Copyright 2004 U.P.I.

All Rights Reserved

ARABIA 2000

Copyright 2004 by Jordan News Agency. Distributed By UPI.



Length: 413 words

Byline: Jordan News Agency

Dateline: Amman, April 09

Body

Fighting erupts between Tamil Tiger groups in

Fighting erupts between Tamil Tiger groups in eastern Sri Lanka

Text of report by Indian news agency PTI

Colombo, 9 April: In the first factional fighting since the **LTTE** [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] split in March, eight rebels and an ambulance driver were killed as the two sides traded heavy gunfire in Sri Lanka's northeast.

Cadres belonging to the main **LTTE** group were fighting members of the breakaway eastern faction led by renegade commander V.

Muralitharan, better known as Karuna, with mortars and small arms fire at the Verugal river, military officials said.

Commando units of the **LTTE** were advancing on two fronts against positions held by Karuna, who last month broke away from the main group, rebel sources said.

The main Tiger unit launched the offensive under the cover of darkness, crossed the Verugal river that separates the northern district of Trincomalee with the Karuna held Batticaloa region and were on the advance, they said.

There were casualties on both sides.

According to rebel sources, an ambulance driver who tried to retrieve wounded rebel cadres at Kathiraveli was killed in a Claymore mine explosion. Several other civilians too were wounded when they suddenly found themselves in the middle of fighting.

No Headline In Original

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said they were approached by Karuna's faction to retrieve the body of the ambulance driver, but they could not move without security guarantees from both sides.

At least three bus passengers were also injured while three cars were hit by shrapnel.

Eight Tiger rebels wounded in the fighting were brought to the main hospital in Batticaloa and the condition of one of them was said to be critical.

Six Tigers were brought to the nearby Valachchenai hospital where two of them succumbed to their injuries. The two fatalities were women fighters and their bodies were removed by Karuna loyalists.

"More than 300 young fighters of the Karuna group who were defending the southern side of the (Verugal) river and the interior surrendered without fight," pro-rebel TamilNet web site said.

There was no immediate word from Karuna on the fighting or the casualties in the pre-dawn fighting.

However, earlier in the day, Karuna's spokesman who is identified as Varadan said the LTTE's main leadership had initiated the battle and was facing resistance.

Source: PTI news agency, New Delhi, in English 1242 gmt 9 Apr 04

BBC Mon SA1 SAsPol Im

Load-Date: February 11, 2005

End of Document

World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

June 5, 2007 Tuesday

Final Edition

Copyright 2007 Windsor Star, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publication Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. C2

Length: 1537 words

Byline: Star News Services

Body

AFRICA

SIERRA LEONE TO PROBE DEADLY HELICOPTER CRASH

FREETOWN - Sierra Leone has launched an investigation into a helicopter crash that killed 22 people on board, most of them Togolese sporting officials and fans, government officials said on Monday.

A Russian co-pilot was the only survivor of the crash of the Russian-made Mi-8 Paramount Airlines helicopter, which exploded and caught fire while coming in to the country's main Lungi airport late Sunday and crash-landing on the runway.

Denis Ivanov, the privately-owned airline's managing director, said 20 passengers plus two Russian crew -- a pilot and a flight engineer -- were killed in the accident.

The Togolese government dispatched a relief plane to airlift its national football team, who were stranded in Freetown after the crash also claimed the lives of the pilots of a charter flight they used for the trip from Lome, according to a Sierra Leone government director of sports, Saidu Mansaray.

MIDEAST

THREE MISSING U.S. TROOPS ALL KILLED: IRAQ INSURGENTS

DUBAI - An al-Qaida front group said in a video released on Monday that it had killed all three U.S. soldiers whom it captured last month in Iraq triggering a massive search operation by American and Iraqi forces.

"They (the Islamic State of Iraq) ... announced the news of their killing to cause bitter results upon Allah's enemies, with these three soldiers, from being live prisoners to dead bodies," the group said in the 10-minute video.

The video by the al-Qaida-linked group -- obtained by Agence France-Presse from the Washington-based SITE Institute which studies violent extremist groups -- shows the photo identifications of Pte. Byron Fouty and Specialist Alex Jiminez.

The two soldiers were captured along with a third, Pte. First Class Joseph Anzack, in an attack on May 12 south of Baghdad.

World Report

CLASHES SPREAD IN CAMPS AS BOMB HITS CAPITAL

SIDON, Lebanon - Deadly firefights in a Palestinian camp in south Lebanon and a bus bombing in the capital opened new fronts for the army on Monday as it battles to crush an al-Qaida-inspired militia in a 16-day standoff in the north of the country.

Residents were plunged into panic by the gunbattles between the army and Sunni Muslim extremists which first flared late Sunday near Ain al-Helweh, the largest of Lebanon's 12 refugee camps in the southern city of Sidon.

Two soldiers and two militants were killed and 11 wounded, a military spokesman said, and dozens of families fled to safety before calm was restored later Monday.

But in the evening a bomb went off under a public bus parked in Christian east Beirut wounding at least 10 bystanders, a security source said.

SAUDIS SAY NON-MUSLIMS CAN WORSHIP -- IN PRIVATE

RIYADH - Non-Muslims in Saudi Arabia are free to practise their religion in the ultra-conservative Gulf kingdom but must do so in private, the head of a government watchdog said on Monday.

"This matter is well known and doesn't require reasserting -- non-Muslims can conduct their religious ceremonies in secret but not in public," said the head of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, Turki al-Sudairy.

International human rights groups say Saudi Arabia, which applies a strict interpretation of Sunni Islam, does not tolerate religious practices by non-Muslims.

Sudairy stressed that allowing non-Muslims to openly practise their faith would conflict with the "religious politics of the kingdom" and "cause a number of problems, the most serious being preaching... in the cradle of Islam."

EUROPE

MAN'S DEATH IN TRAM GOES UNNOTICED FOR ENTIRE NIGHT

ZAGREB - The body of a man who died in a Zagreb tram rode the service for an entire night apparently unnoticed by fellow passengers, a Croatian daily reported Monday.

The man, 61, died late Thursday after boarding tram number 17, but the driver did not discover that his "sleeping" passenger was in fact dead until Friday morning, the Jutarnji List newspaper reported, identifying the man only as Tomislav K.

"None of the other passengers noticed or reacted since they probably avoided the man believing that he was either drunk or sleeping," Tomislav Juric, the spokesman of the ZET public transportation company, told the paper.

LIBERIA'S TAYLOR BOYCOTTS HIS WAR CRIMES TRIAL

THE HAGUE - The landmark war crimes trial of Charles Taylor got off to a dramatic start Monday when the former Liberian president boycotted the opening session, saying he would never receive a fair hearing and dismissing his lawyer.

Judge Julia Sebutinde, presiding over the trial before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) -- specially moved to The Hague -- ordered the trial to go ahead in his absence.

The first African head of state to stand trial for war crimes before an international tribunal, Taylor is accused of controlling rebels in neighbouring Sierra Leone that went on a blood diamond-financed rampage of rape and mutilation.

World Report

In the opening statement prosecutor Mohamed Bangula said Taylor, 59, waged a "campaign of terror" against the civilian population "fuelled by diamonds."

In a letter read out in the court room by his defence lawyer Karim Khan, Taylor explained why he was boycotting the proceedings.

"I am driven to conclude that I will not receive a fair trial before the Special Court at this time and I must decline to attend hearings," he said, arguing that he had only one counsel compared to nine for the prosecution.

GERMAN TRUCKER GETS LIFE FOR TRIPLE RAPE-MURDER

BERLIN - A German court sentenced a truck driver Monday to life in prison for raping and murdering three women while on the road and attempting to kill a fourth.

A court in the northern town of Limburg found that the 29-year-old defendant killed three women he picked up while driving between 2003 and 2006 and sexually assaulted them before and in some cases after their deaths.

His four victims were between the ages of 18 and 32.

ASIA

OVERWORKED COP STABS HIMSELF TO TAKE DAYS OFF

TOKYO - A Japanese policeman, distressed by long working hours following a major earthquake, stabbed himself and claimed he was attacked by a stranger in an effort to take days off, police said Monday.

The 44-year-old police inspector, whose name was withheld, used a fruit knife to wound his stomach at his apartment on May 23 in the coastal city of Kanazawa, some 300 kilometres northwest of Tokyo, police said.

"He told investigators, 'I was stabbed by an unknown man who came to see me,'" Ishikawa prefectural police said in a statement. "But investigations showed that he stabbed himself."

WAR PLANES BOMB TIGERS AHEAD OF PEACE MOVE

COLOMBO - Sri Lankan war planes bombed suspected Tamil Tiger positions in northern Sri Lanka Monday, the day before an attempt by top donor Japan to revive the tattered peace process.

On the ground, the two sides traded artillery fire after fierce hand-to-hand combat over the weekend that left scores dead along the front lines that separate government areas from the mini-state run by the rebels, officials said.

"The army conceded the territory they had recently captured along the Mannar and Vavuniya defence lines," a top military officer who declined to be named said of Sunday's fighting.

"Security forces were too thinly spread when the Tigers attacked."

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launched the attacks on Saturday night using hundreds of fighters.

The defence ministry said Monday's air attacks targeted Tiger concentrations ahead of military lines.

NORTH AMERICA

ANDERSON TO FULFIL EVERY GIRL'S FANTASY -- MAGIC

LOS ANGELES - Actress Pamela Anderson is to fulfil a dream by becoming a magician's assistant starring in a show at Las Vegas casino, organizers said Monday.

World Report

"I love magic. I love doing things out of the ordinary and of course I'm always up for an adventure, as this will definitely be one," Anderson said in a statement issued by the company Stage Entertainment.

"I knew that one day my dream of being a Vegas showgirl would come true -- even better a magician's assistant. It's every girl's fantasy. I'm thrilled," added the blond, former Baywatch star who turns 40 on July 1.

The three-night a week show will be seen at the hotel-casino complex Planet Hollywood. "Audiences are going to be amazed when they see what she can do in our show," added Dutch magician Hans Klok of Anderson's starring role in his show The beauty of magic.

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSMAN INDICTED IN BRIBERY PROBE

WASHINGTON - U.S. Democratic Rep. William Jefferson, accused of hiding \$90US,000 of intended bribes in his freezer, was charged on Monday with soliciting bribes and paying off a Nigerian official.

The 16-count indictment charges the Louisiana lawmaker with racketeering, soliciting bribes for himself and his family, fraud, money laundering, obstruction of justice, conspiracy and violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Jefferson, 63, a member of Congress since 1991 whose district includes New Orleans, faces a maximum of 235 years in prison if convicted. His lawyer said Jefferson was innocent and would fight the charges.

The investigation has centred on whether Jefferson used his position to promote the sale of telecommunications equipment and services offered by a Louisville-based firm to Nigeria, Ghana, and possibly other African nations in return for stock and cash payments.

Graphic

Photo: Eric Gaillard, Reuters; SMALL STATES' ANSWER TO G8: Dancers perform during the opening ceremony of the 12th Games of the Small States of Europe in Monaco Monday. The athletes of eight countries -- Andorra, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco and San Marino -- will compete through Saturday in the principality. ;

Photo: Karim Khan ;

Photo: Pamela Anderson ;

Load-Date: June 5, 2007

Sri Lankan police identify suicide bomber

Indo-Asian News Service

April 28, 2006 Friday 2:20 PM EST

Copyright 2006 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 197 words

Byline: Indo-Asian News Service

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, April 28 -- The Sri Lankan police have established the identity of the ***female*** suicide bomber who exploded herself and seriously injured the country's Army Commander Sarath Fonseka, the official Daily News said Friday.

According to the newspaper, the police have identified the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (***LTTE***) suicide bomber as Anoja Kuganetti, a 21-year-old resident of Puwarasakulam in Vavuniya district, some 250 km north of Colombo.

The identity of the suicide bomber was established by forensic experts, who pieced together the details from the face of the woman, the paper reported.

According to the government, nine people were killed and 27 injured in Tuesday's attack.

Inspector General of Police Chandra Fernando said police were able to build a profile of the suicide bomber.

"All evidence is being compiled and suspicious characters are being interrogated by the police," said Fernando.

As to the security situation, Fernando said the police have put in place all measures to ensure maximum security levels. He also requested the public to assist the police in their task.

Published by HT Syndication with permission from Indo-Asian News Service.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: April 29, 2006

ROARING BACK - HOT SPOT SRI LANKA - TRAVEL ISSUE '05

Weekend Australian

October 15, 2005 Saturday

Copyright 2005 Nationwide News Pty Limited

Section: MAGAZINE; Pg. 63

Length: 2349 words

Byline: Isobel Wright

Body

After war and tsunami, Sri Lanka is no longer an endangered tourist destination, writes Isobel Wright.

It's half-past cocktail hour in the bar of the Galle Fort Hotel in Sri Lanka's picturesque south. The ceiling fans high above languorously reshuffle the hot air, there's the soft chink of ice being thrown into a dozen glasses, and from outside, through the tall wooden shutters, drift the muffled beeps of a dozen tuk-tuks waiting outside in the hope of a fare.

Sitting in one of the armchairs is a big, blowsy blonde who's holding her audience enthralled with the tale of a fellow expat Brit who recently had an affair with her Sri Lankan driver, 10 years younger. It's all just ended in tears - and allegations of murder - when the driver's new girlfriend's husband was found dead. The blonde knows better than to philander in foreign climes; she's sticking with the fiancé she came over to Sri Lanka with 18 months ago, even though she called off their wedding at the last minute when she discovered he'd been cheating on her.

MATP

Today, she keeps her wedding dress at the front of their wardrobe to remind him daily of his sins; he's doing penance by overseeing the building of her house on a 1.5 hectare block in the hills nearby.

"He won't do it again," she says confidently. "He begs me every day to forgive him and marry him. But I don't think I will. When the house is finished, I might end it, but not before." There's laughter from the group listening, a collection of expat Brits, Australians and Americans who have all left their homelands to build new, vastly more luxurious and often infinitely more exciting lives in one of the hitherto most overlooked of the old British colonies.

And none regrets it, despite the uncertainties of settling in a developing country, particularly an Indian Ocean island that only four years ago ended two decades of ethnic conflict between the majority Sinhalese government and the separatist ***Tamil Tigers***, and which was then devastated by last Christmas's tsunami. "I absolutely adore it here," says Angela Wood, a former fashion designer who's selling her house in England to finance building a villa at Galle so she can live here full-time. "I should have come here years ago. I want to die here, in my maid's arms."

AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORKforce, beautiful surrounds and low-cost living make it, for many of the newest round of migrants, a dreamlike existence of grand houses stocked with maids, cooks, handymen and drivers from a bygone era, which seems, despite all the odds, to endure here. For people such as English opera singer Barbara Segal, the dream is disturbed only by the occasional inconvenience.

ROARING BACK - HOT SPOT SRI LANKA - TRAVEL ISSUE '05

"For some reason, the local supermarket always seems to run out of butter," she complains. "They have everything else, but they never seem to order enough butter." Australian businessman Ray Dingle simply adores the place, particularly after a stint spent in India. "It's a beautiful country, with a big future," he says. "India can be overwhelming; it's too hard. This is a lovely halfway between India and Australia."

Hovering just outside the group, Karl Steinberg and Chris Ong Australians who two years ago bought a derelict old Dutch villa and rebuilt it into a boutique hotel, restaurant and bar which is a favourite watering hole of the in-crowd - smile to hear the conversation. They opened the doors of the Galle Fort Hotel just a few days before the tsunami swept in, killing 39,000 and leaving more than half a million homeless. They spent the first two months of their new business's life supplying free meals to the hungry and hosting journalists and aid workers.

They feared their huge investment was doomed and wondered whether the country would ever recover. But, nearly a year on, with both the hotel and new guestrooms nearby booked solid for Christmas, and a ranking in the 2005 Hottest New Hotels listing of the prestigious United States-based travel magazine Conde Nast Traveler, they're feeling happy and confident.

"Sri Lanka has really come back in force, and most of the facilities for tourists that were damaged have been completely rebuilt," says Steinberg, a former TV director who came here with futures trader Ong after the pair visited on holiday.

"The foreigners who'd come to settle here are all back and building new homes and hotels, many new resorts are opening, and the place is looking really good. People, particularly Australians, are pouring back for holidays, or looking for sea changes."

The figures certainly back him up.

The Sri Lanka Tourist Board has just revealed 362,000 tourists visited the tear-shaped country to India's south from January to August this year, 11.7 per cent up on the figure for the same pre-tsunami period last year, which had already set a record. The board is now targeting one million arrivals by 2010.

It's easy to understand why Sri Lanka has bounced back so quickly.

There is a huge range of attractions, all contained within a fairly small island with good road and bus connections.

There are wonderful wildlife parks with leopards, sloth bears, buffalo, elk and more elephants than you could ever forget. There are more than 400 species of birds, 21 of which are unique to Sri Lanka, lush rice paddies, turtle sanctuaries, rain forest and dry savannah. The historic areas boast breathtaking sights such as temples perched on mountaintops, while the golden beaches are palm-fringed with soft turquoise waters; some are great for swimming, others are being discovered by surfers.

SIPPING A VODKA COCKTAIL BY A friend's pool at Galle Fort, Australian garden designer Andrew Pfeiffer, who visits Sri Lanka up to six times a year, explains the country's appeal: "This is how I imagined India would be, and it is India, but without the lack of hope. It's a beautiful country, with beautiful people and a beautiful atmosphere."

He certainly wasn't the first to spot it. In the mid-1970s the place was buzzing, but 20 years of war left 60,000 Sri Lankans dead, 600,000 more living in refugee camps, foreign investment drying up and tourists viewing the country as far too dangerous to visit.

Life turned around with the ceasefire in December 2001, 100 per cent tax breaks for foreign investors and a government pledging to drive the country into the 21st century and bring tourists back, but the country was to be flooded again when the tsunami hit on Boxing Day 2004.

Sri Lanka's recovery has, however, continued to confound the sceptics.

The rebuilding has led to a 6 per cent expansion of the \$US20 billion (\$A26 billion) economy and, with tourists flocking back, its future as a dream tourist destination looks assured.

ROARING BACK - HOT SPOT SRI LANKA - TRAVEL ISSUE '05

It certainly has lots going for it. The climate is warm and humid all year-round and even during the monsoon season the rains tend to be short. It's situated halfway between Europe and Australia and with as much potential, they would have you believe, as Singapore or Hong Kong. As for the people, the Buddhist majority mix comfortably with the minority Muslims and Hindus and everyone is generally friendly and welcoming to outsiders.

Emerging as something of a centre for the tourist activity is Galle Fort, a sleepy town inside a 17th-century fort on the country's south coast. Surrounded by high stone ramparts, it was built by the Portuguese-ousting Dutch colonisers before they, in turn, were sent packing by British forces. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988, it protected everyone inside from the tsunami that flattened the town of Galle beyond.

Enter through any of its gates today and immediately step back in time:

rickety vegetable carts on wooden wheels are still pushed around the 480 homes of the town; a man crouches near the lighthouse asking if you'd like to see his pet cobra; young boys swathed in vivid saffron robes wander through with their books. At one end of town is the majestic Dutch Reformed Church; at the other, the old Buddhist temple and the mosque with its minaret.

Interior designer Leslie Walford was the first Australian to buy in Galle Fort and he holidays regularly in his garden "palace", the Orchard House, which is rented out for the rest of the year. "It's like discovering St Tropez in 1940," says Walford. "It's a charming place, so restful and lovely, and the people are so beautiful. Sadly, I think more and more people will discover it."

Many of the crumbling old houses in the fort are being renovated back to their former glory and accept visitors.

Galle Fort Hotel, for instance, with its creamy colonnades along each side of a shady courtyard and its swimming pool, has a selection of rooms all with lofty ceilings, doors and window frames made from the local dark jackwood.

Each room is fitted out with original antique or reproduction 17th-century style furniture hand-made by Sri Lankan craftsmen.

Sleep in one of the tall four-poster beds draped in a mosquito net, lounge on the luxurious daybeds or adjourn to the long, cool room converted into a quiet library, and it's easy to imagine the kind of splendour the colonists enjoyed. Eat in the restaurant, take coffee on the verandah or sip cocktails at the bar and you can chat to the modern-day versions, too.

Other hotel operators have been quick to see the potential of the area. In the fort, luxury hotel chain Amanresorts has converted a run-down old hotel into its newest destination; there is also a selection of cheaper guesthouses and homes to rent around town, and luxury hotels beyond the fort's walls.

Geoffrey Dobbs has two boutique villas, the Dutch House and the Sun House, both with period colonial features and furniture. "Sir Lanka has everything the tourist could ever want," Dobbs says. "There are great beaches, wonderful historic sites, wilderness, and culture. It has been difficult for people after the tsunami but it's recovering well. I think this place just has massive potential."

Dobbs, who fell in love with the country on holiday, has formed a group of hotel and travel operators, Sri Lanka In Style, which offers services such as helicopter trips, balloon rides, air taxis and tented safaris.

For independent visitors, a driver can be hired for around \$A40 a day, and hotels, accommodation and food beyond Galle are good and infinitely varied.

In the south, close to the Fort, are some of the country's best beaches.

Unawatuna Bay, where Andrew Pfeiffer has his villa, has several modern resorts and cafes that have been rebuilt further up the sands. It's easy to swim to the reef for some great snorkelling or diving or hire a traditional catamaran. At Thalpe, meanwhile, Australians David and Jan Gerard have completed renovations on their villa, If.

ROARING BACK - HOT SPOT SRI LANKA - TRAVEL ISSUE '05

Twenty kilometres down the road from Unawatuna is Weligama, best known for the fishermen who perch on poles in the deep waters for two to three hours at a time fishing with rods. These days they probably earn more from having small boys ask for a contribution for photos than from their fish. Twenty metres offshore - you can wade at low tide - is the picture-perfect island of Taprobane, now an exclusive resort.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS WILDLIFE parks throughout the country, from Yala and Bundala, with its masses of flamingoes in the south, to Gai Oya and Kaudulla, with its 6500hectare elephant corridor, in the east.

At the Pinnawella Elephant Orphanage, 80km from the capital, Colombo, abandoned and injured elephants are cared for. They look adorable as they play in the water and squirt each other with their trunks as they are rubbed down by their carers. Disney, go weep.

The sightseeing is spectacular, too.

To the northeast of Colombo is the old Sinhalese capital of the hill country, the scruffily charming Kandy, with a picturesque lake at its centre. There the Temple of the Tooth houses what's said to be a sacred tooth of Buddha. In legend, whoever owns the tooth has the right to govern Sri Lanka, and it's been the cause of many battles, raids and deeds of heroism over the years to claim and reclaim it.

Kandy is the ideal entry point for the "cultural triangle", the area where all the ancient cities lie. Not to be missed is the ancient fortress of Sigiriya, perched on lofty rocks that kept the old dynasties safe and used during the 16th and 17th centuries as a monastic refuge.

Also stunning are the cave temples of Dambulla, dating from around 1BC, magnificently carved under the orders of the king in exile.

In the hills to the north, women in gorgeously coloured saris provide bright splashes of colour in the endless green of the tea plantations undulating over mountains. Some of the factories hold tastings of their aromatic teas and packs of exotic blends are an ever popular souvenir.

Dotted along the main routes, roadside cafeterias serve as-much-as-youcaneat feasts of coconut fish, chicken and vegetable curries, daal, rice and the local miniature crunchy coarse pappadums, often for as little as \$A1 per meal.

Any extra body weight should be balanced with extra luggage. With the Sri Lankan rupee relatively weak at the moment, shopping is fabulous for overseas visitors. Best buys are gemstones particularly the country's trademark sapphire - cloth, including the antique, hand-sewn and beaded saris, and handicrafts, especially from the regions around Kandy.

But once back in Colombo, make sure you reserve time for some clothes shopping. With so many overseas brands now being made in Sri Lanka, you can buy top fashions for a fraction of the price.

"There's so much happening here now, it's incredible," says Steinberg. "I think everyone thought it would take years for tourism to recover from the tsunami, but it's happening faster than anyone thought it would. The place just has so much going for it; it's really going to be the place to visit."

There's a murmur of agreement from the crowd at the bar as Steinberg adds, laughing: "And cocktail hour goes on forever."

HOW TO GET THERE

Most airlines fly to Singapore, and then Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Malaysian Air and Sri Lankan Air fly on to the capital Colombo. Go to www.srilankainstyle.com for the best of everything, and www.srilankatourism.org/ for the Sri Lanka Tourist Board.

End of Document

REGULAR PRESS BRIEFING BY INFORMATION SERVICE MAY 15, 2007

States News Service

May 15, 2007 Tuesday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 1849 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

Elena Ponomareva-Piquier, Chief of the Press and External Relations Section of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, chaired the briefing which also heard from Spokespersons for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Telecommunication Union, the Universal Postal Union, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the World Health Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the UN Refugee Agency, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme.

Geneva Meetings

Ms. Ponomareva-Piquier said the Committee against Torture was today holding a public meeting with States parties to discuss its working methods, in particular reporting requirements, with a view to finding synergies and optimizing the work of the Committee to better promote and protect human rights. For most of the rest of the week, the Committee would be meeting behind closed doors until Friday, 18 May when it would release its observations and recommendations on the reports of Denmark, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Japan and Poland which it considered during the session. As usual, a press release would be issued on the morning meeting in English and in French.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was meeting in private all of the week until Friday, 18 May, when it would issue its observations and recommendations on the reports of Nepal, Hungary, the Netherlands (Antilles), Finland and Latvia which it reviewed during the session.

Ms. Ponomareva-Piquier said the Conference on Disarmament was this morning holding the first plenary of the second part of its 2007 session under the presidency of Ambassador Sarala Fernando of Sri Lanka.

Available in the press room was the message of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the ministerial conference of the Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting today in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Human Rights

Yvon Edoumou of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said High Commissioner Louise Arbour was in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of a three-country visit to the Great Lakes region. Yesterday, Ms. Arbour met with President Joseph Kabila, the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations. On Wednesday, the High Commissioner would meet with the

REGULAR PRESS BRIEFING BY INFORMATION SERVICE MAY 15, 2007

Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Justice and other senior Government officials. Questions concerning the fight against impunity, violence against women and child soldiers would be among the main issues discussed between the High Commissioner and the Congolese authorities. On Thursday and Friday, the High Commissioner would be visiting the eastern part of the country including Kisangani, Bunia and Goma. Ms. Arbour would then travel to Burundi (19 to 22 May) and Rwanda (23 to 25 May).

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Martin Scheinin, would be visiting the United States from 16 to 25 May. Mr. Edoumou said the Special Rapporteur would be holding meetings with United States officials to look at the fight against terrorism and its correlation with the promotion and protection of human rights.

Other

Sanjay Acharya of the International Telecommunication Union said World Information Society Day, 17 May, was proposed by the World Summit on the Information Society in 2005 and was then endorsed by the General Assembly. This year, ITU was organizing a global event at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 16 May as the 17 May was a day off in Switzerland. The theme of the commemoration this year was Connecting the Young. The highlight of the global event would be the presentation of the ITU World Information Society Award. During the event, Sheikha Al-Mayassa Bint Hamad Al-Thani, Princess of Qatar and Chair of the reach out to Asia initiative, would launch a campaign along with ITU to secure CHF 2 million to support 250 new scholarships in addition to creating 1,000 new internship opportunities within the next three years, by 2010.

Rheal LeBlanc of the Universal Postal Union said on the occasion of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, a conference on the information society, organized by the UPU International Bureau in conjunction with the International Telecommunication Union, would be taking place at UPU headquarters in Berne on 8 June. UPU wished to highlight the need to prioritise connectivity. Affordable high-speed Internet was a must for developing countries. More reliable telecommunications systems offering reasonably priced services in developing countries was what the UPU needed to step up its efforts to extend its postal financial network throughout the world. Available was a press release with more details.

Veronique Taveau of the United Nations Children's Fund said a UNICEF team currently visiting Zimbabwe would be in Geneva next week and it was agreed that they would brief journalists on Tuesday, 22 May after the briefing.

Ruth Landy of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization said GAVI was honouring Guyana, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia which had begun to help pay the cost of providing new vaccines to their children. They were doing so more than a year before GAVI would have required it as part of a new funding cycle. This would be recognized during a special ceremony in the course of the World Health Assembly, currently meeting at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Available was a press release with more details.

Fadela Chaib of the World Health Organization said the opening speech of Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO, to the World Health Assembly would be available shortly. Available was the statement of the Minister of Health of Indonesia who was talking about the changes in the H5N1 virus. Also a press release on the opening meeting would be available shortly. This morning, the President of the Executive Council would be presenting his report, followed by the statement of the Director-General and statements from countries to the plenary. Starting 11:30, the Prime Minister of Norway and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, the two invited speakers, would be addressing the plenary. At the end of the morning meeting, Committee A would open, but it would start its work at 2:30 p.m. after the lunch break. Committee A would be discussing Avian Influenza and Pandemic Influenza among other issues. There would be a press conference at 5 p.m. in press room 1 on the migration of health workers. Committee B would be discussing tomorrow the health situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, among other issues.

Mark Oliver of the World Meteorological Organization said the election of the President, the Vice-Presidents and members of the Executive Council, and for the appointment of the Secretary-General of WMO would be held tomorrow starting 9:30 a.m. at the Geneva International Conference Centre where the fifteenth congress of WMO was being held. There would be a press briefing by the new Secretary-General around noon tomorrow. The current

REGULAR PRESS BRIEFING BY INFORMATION SERVICE MAY 15, 2007

Secretary-General of WMO, Michel Jarraud, had been nominated and there were no other candidates so there might not even be a vote. Available was a note on the voting procedures.

Jennifer Pagonis of the UN Refugee Agency said UNHCR was highly concerned about living conditions for hundreds of Palestinians stuck at the Al Waleed refugee camp close to Iraq's border with Syria. It was particularly worried about the lack of medical facilities as many of the camp's 942 residents needed urgent medical attention. A UNHCR team visiting Al Waleed camp last weekend verified that the Palestinians were living in precarious conditions. Living conditions were likely to get worse during the summer months. An estimated 1,400 Palestinians were also living in desperate conditions in refugee camps along the Iraq-Syria border. Today, Palestinians fleeing Baghdad for the Syrian order had nowhere to go aside from Al Waleed, which lacked the infrastructure to support them. UNHCR had repeatedly called for international support, but with limited success.

Ms. Pagonis said on Monday, 14 May, the Sri Lankan Government launched the return of tens of thousands of displaced civilians to West Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka, an area that until recently was under rebel LTTE control. UNHCR was fully involved in the return process. UNHCR and its partners were looking at possible reintegration packages and were calling on the international community to help with assistance, as well as asking the Government to expedite its own rehabilitation plan for the return areas.

Elizabeth Byrs of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said on 15 March, OCHA had asked for \$ 9.6 million for Madagascar, which since December had been affected by six tropical storms and cyclones. The food security situation in Madagascar had deteriorated, especially in view of the drought that had preceded the storms. OCHA was doubling its appeal and was now asking for \$ 19.5 million and the money was needed urgently to allow for the situation of agricultural production in the country to be regulated before the next cyclone season. The Government of Madagascar last February requested international aid to help with the damage.

Simon Pluess of the World Food Programme said for well over a year, WFP had been trying to convince the international community of the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic. Finally now, funding for humanitarian operations there were improving. People were living in the bush in northwest of the Central African Republic, fearing for their lives and too scared to return to their homes. Often they were reduced to living off wild roots and berries. WFP had recently scaled up its operations in the country to help some 230,000 people in need. However, because the private sector had been brought almost to a complete halt, the current infrastructure could not cope with the scale of the new operation and WFP needed additional financial support to do the job itself. WFP urgently needed an additional

\$ 3.5 million over the next nine months to upgrade its logistics capacity. WFP's current food assistance operation in the Central African Republic still required a further \$ 25 million in addition to the new funds required to reinforce logistics.

Mr. Pluess said that Food Force, WFP's popular humanitarian video game, was currently sweeping now across Europe. This week, WFP was unloading the German, Finnish and Norwegian versions of the game which has already been downloaded over five million times. These versions came in addition to the Japanese, Chinese French, Italian, Polish, Hungarian and the original English version launched in 2005 as the world's first humanitarian video game.

At the end of the briefing, Ms. Ponomareva-Piquier reminded journalists that Thursday, 17 May is an official holiday at the United Nations at Geneva.

Load-Date: May 16, 2007

**STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM
ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9**

US Fed News

December 9, 2004 Thursday 11:49 PM EST

Copyright 2004 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 3617 words

Byline: US Fed News

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

The U.S. Department of State issued the following remarks by the Deputy Secretary of State:

Richard L. Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State

From the State Alumni Website

Richard L. Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State, answered questions from alumni live online on the State Alumni website on December 9, 2004. Mr. Armitage is closely involved in policymaking for all regions. Thanks to all the alumni who submitted questions.

Name: Zara Sargsyan

Country/Territory: Armenia

What are the things that you have enjoyed and/or found challenging in your job so far as a public servant?

Name: Richard Armitage

The biggest enjoyment is the ability yet again to serve the American public. There is something very energizing about that. The biggest challenge has been to try to translate US hopes and aspirations into something that can be recognized and appreciated around the world.

Name: Paulo Variz

Country/Territory: Portugal

In your Mission Statement, and as far as EU-US relations are concerned, the commitment to co-operate towards advancing global trade while resolving trade disputes on a mutually advantageous basis sticks out. So does your urge (stated in the FY 2004-2009 Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan) for Europe to remove its structural impediments to growth. I would highly appreciate having your appraisal of recent developments in both areas. Thank you.

Name: Richard Armitage

STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON
STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9

Trade disputes are something we deal with in this modern world, particularly as we become evermore interconnected. We're please with the ability to dialogue which we have between US Trade Representative Zoellick and previously Mr. Lamy of France and now Mr. Mandelson who is the new European Union Trade Commissioner. Those dialogues help us work through these disputes. I might note that the WTO - World Trade Organization - is another forum which helps us in this regard.

Name: Elmir Allahverdiyev

Country/Territory: Azerbaijan

Is it possible in the future for Azerbaijan to become a member of NATO and is the U.S. government willing to see Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries in the NATO membership?

Name: Richard Armitage

First of all, the entire current membership of NATO, not just the United States, would have to agree. Having said that, there is nothing which would exclude NATO from reviewing applications for membership from among countries that belong to the OSCE, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council - the EAPC - or the Partnership for Peace. NATO has left the door open for further enlargement.

Name: Valeriya Zasyedatyelyeva

Country/Territory: Ukraine

What is your personal opinion on the Presidential Elections in Ukraine? Do you believe that the second runoff on December 26 will be held in an honest way?

Name: Richard Armitage

First of all, I think the Supreme Court decision and the recent Rada decisions are a great victory for the people of Ukraine. The United States was often accused by some of having a favorite candidate - our favorite candidate was the Ukrainian people. I think given the fact that the entire world, not just Europe, the entire world, will be focused on the election on 26 December in Ukraine that we have a very real possibility of a fair and free election.

Name: Serajul Quadir

Country/Territory: Bangladesh

There is a common belief that after the election victory of Bush the Muslim world will have to face a tough situation with the USA. Do you believe so? Why?

Name: Richard Armitage

No, I don't believe so. There's a great respect and understanding that Islam is one of the great religions of the world. The United States is going to concentrate through our Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative on being more helpful along with our G8 partners to the extent comfortable to our Islamic partners to be more a part of the life of Islam.

Name: Myint Oo

Country/Territory: Burma

I really admire your positions with the US government as Presidential Mediator, Negotiator and in developing politico-military relationships and initiatives throughout the world.

STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON
STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9

If you were the Presidential Mediator for Burma, how would you negotiate and persuade the Burmese military regime to bring democracy faster in Burma? Do you have a more workable plan other than sanctions?

Name: Richard Armitage

Well, sanctions are certainly one tool, but first of all, it's not a matter to be resolved just by the United States, this is something the United Nations has great concerns about. We have been working through the good efforts of UN Special Envoy Razali, whose efforts we have supported. Ultimately, the Burmese people are going to have to show to their government that it is not appropriate that Aung Suu Kyi be kept under house arrest and other representatives of the NLD imprisoned. Ultimately, just like in Ukraine, the will of the people will be shown.

Name: Salome Tsereteli

Country/Territory: Georgia

In President Bush's new term, how will the security cooperation policy in regard to the Caucasus, and Georgia in particular, change or remain the same?

Name: Richard Armitage

Well, I don't expect it to change certainly- if anything we might become more engaged with each other, not just with Georgia, but with Azerbaijan for instance. We've worked with Georgia and Azerbaijan quite well on border issues, border security and I would note that Azerbaijan and Georgia are both very helpful in Iraq and I think you can expect even greater interaction if it's desired by peoples of both those countries.

Name: Antonia Dimou

Country/Territory: Greece

How do you see the European Military Force and the enhancement of the European Defense Agency, and what should be their relation to NATO?

Name: Richard Armitage

I'm very pro the development of a European force. I think there's more than enough work in the world to go around for security forces. And if the development of a European force leads to the nations of Europe putting at least 2% of their gross domestic product into defense I think that would be a good thing. Many of the nations of Europe do not make that investment now.

Name: Uttam Sen

Country/Territory: India

Do you think that economic and other considerations will require greater US reliance on multilateral decision-making on international issues in future?

Name: Richard Armitage

I have always felt that multilateralism was quite important already. I can't quantify whether it will be more or less in the future, but I know most of the great issues of the day on which we're working are ones we approach multilaterally. Whether it's Iran or the North Korean issue, most of these are already multilateral. And certainly in the economic sphere because we're so interconnected and so intertwined that it's almost impossible to believe we can work unilaterally.

Name: Haruhisa Hatori

STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON
STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9

Country/Territory: Japan

According to a draft outline of the Japanese midterm defense buildup plan for fiscal 2005-2009, the Japanese government wants to research long-range precision missile technology. This missile can be used to attack overseas targets and that may increase tension in East Asia. Previously, the government has been reluctant to have such weapons.

What do you think about this switch of Japanese defense policy? Please give your reasons for supporting or not supporting the policy.

Name: Richard Armitage

I have looked very carefully at the five-year defense plan of Japan and am very much supportive of it. Japan is a country that is taking part in all the great issues of the world, it truly has a global outlook. Japan is also an island nation and to have precision missile technology seems to me to be quite defensive in nature and something that is quite appropriate for an island nation.

Name: Nabiha Mahmood

Country/Territory: Pakistan

How do you think America can play an effective role towards discouraging the dangerous trend of an arms and missile race in South Asia, particularly between Pakistan and India?

Name: Richard Armitage

I think we already have had a role to play and have played it quite well - certainly in the summer of 2002 when India and Pakistan were in a precarious state of readiness. In June of this year we've had India and Pakistan having their first ever talks aimed at building mutual trust to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict. So, I think we're in a much better place now regarding India and Pakistan. We'll stay engaged from the outside with both. Ultimately, though, to reduce tensions, India and Pakistan are going to have to resolve the neuralgic issue of Kashmir.

Name: Astrid Leigh

Country/Territory: Peru

I would like to know, in your opinion, if a country like Peru, which has gone through a long terrorism period, previously having lived through a 20 year military dictatorship and recently having faced one of the biggest corruption scandals with our 10 year corrupt government has something to teach other countries?

Name: Richard Armitage

Well, I think that a nation like Peru which defeated Sendero and Minoso and finally listened to the will of the people and found a way to democratically change government is a lesson to most countries that a regular renewal through a democratic process is the best way to assure that government doesn't become sclerotic and not heedful of the wishes of the population.

Name: Maxim Soyref

Country/Territory: Russia

What should be done to establish peace between Israelis and Palestinians?

Name: Richard Armitage

STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON
STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9

Certainly though the United States has long been involved in the search for peace, the situation now is new and does present new opportunities. On January 9, the Palestinian people will elect a new leader, hopefully one who will lead them out of the wilderness of despair in which they've been mired certainly since 1967. A new partner on the Palestinian side who can be a partner searching for peace with the Israelis will be something that will engender quite a bit of international cooperation and I think that combined with the disengagement plan that Prime Minister Sharon has put forward regarding Gaza and for the settlements on the West Bank, we could be in a position where we can get back on the Road Map and see it through to President Bush's vision of two states living side by side in peace and prosperity and security - the state of Israel and the state of Palestine.

Name: Mahamarakkala Patabendige Dias

Country/Territory: Sri Lanka

You are an active participant to the peace process in Sri Lanka. How do you evaluate the present situation in Sri Lankan Peace Process?

Name: Richard Armitage

Twenty years of war is quite enough. Too many people have suffered. But the direct answer to your question is that unfortunately the negotiations are stalled. The US does appreciate the efforts of President Kumaratunga to restart the negotiations. We urge the LTTE to resume negotiations as soon as possible. And we continue to condemn and won't accept the terrorist actions of the LTTE. They've got to abandon terrorism in word and deed and rejoin the negotiating table.

Name: Manuchehr Kholov

Country/Territory: Tajikistan

Could you please comment on the recent shut down of National Democratic Institute (NDI) office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan by the Tajik authorities? Do you think this action is the consequence of NDI's alleged participation in events taking place in Ukraine now?

Name: Richard Armitage

Well, I don't know if that has any relation to Ukraine. But I would note that I visited Tajikistan, I've seen the development of civil society and NGOs and I think they're a very positive thing in the society and I would hope that the government of Tajikistan would soon register the NDI and let international staff function in Tajikistan and in Dushanbe.

Name: Gulbahar Bazarova

Country/Territory: Turkmenistan

I wanted to know your view about dividing the Caspian Sea among 5 countries. Is it possible to share the Sea without any confusion or misunderstanding among those countries?

Name: Richard Armitage

I think from the United States' point of view, if the division of the Caspian were agreed to by all five parties then we would certainly be for it. The problem right now is that two of the parties seem to agree on a very large division of the Caspian and three others do not. So as we say in our slang, we don't have a horse in the race, but if it's agreeable to all five countries who border the Caspian then we would be in favor.

Name: Ershan Wang

Country/Territory: China

STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON
STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9

Chinas power seems likely to continue to rise. What adjustments do you think that US and Europe will have to make?

Name: Richard Armitage

I think clearly a peacefully rising China is in the interest of the whole world, just as a rising tide lifts all boats. China is ready to take her rightful place on the world stage and the US and our European friends will simply have to make the room for that. If China is successful in her rise and continues opening not only her economy but her political society then it will be a very congenial thing to the world.

Name: William Graham

Country/Territory: United Kingdom

The Irish peace process has this week reached a defining moment. US governments have under President Clinton and now President Bush taken a close interest in our situation. There have of course been many difficulties in implementing the Good Friday agreement since it was signed six years ago, but the politicians and British and Irish governments have been trying to find a way forward.

What is your analysis of the outcome and the United States administration continued assistance in cementing the peace in this part of the world?

Do you think, if an accommodation is reached, that it will encourage further investment by US companies in Northern Ireland?

Are there lessons to be taken from the conflict in the north of Ireland which would be worthwhile examining in understanding an approach to conflict situations in other parts of the world ... for example in the Middle East?

Name: Richard Armitage

Unfortunately, we did not reach an agreement, though the United States has commended the efforts of the British Prime Minister and the Irish Prime Minister Mr. Ahern to negotiate a settlement. Had there been a settlement of course there would have been an increase in investment. And certainly the people of Northern Ireland deserve to have that investment just as they deserve to have political leadership and institutions that build an inclusive society respectful of human rights and free from sectarian hatred and committed to the rule of law.

Name: Saiful Mahdi

Country/Territory: Indonesia

As a graduate student and teacher from Aceh at the northern tip of Sumatra, Indonesia, I am especially concerned with the three enemies of humanity: violence (including terrorism), poverty, and environmental degradation.

My question is: what would you do to make sure that US aid, including military aid will be channeled to the right country, right people and armed forces around the world, especially in the case of Indonesia? How do you know that US aid to fight terrorism around the world is not used by undemocratic dictatorships (like those in the Middle East and Latin America) or by unreformed, unprofessional armed forces (like in those of Indonesia) to oppress its own people?

Name: Richard Armitage

Unfortunately, the people of Aceh have good knowledge of the three enemies of humanity which you mentioned: violence, poverty and environmental degradation and my heart bleeds for that. With the United States because of our system where the US government finds it necessary, thankfully, to approach the US Congress and have a debate about the wisdom of providing assistance to various governments, we have a very transparent process. Regarding Indonesia, that process, because of the historical excesses of the TNI, we have not been providing

STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON
STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9

assistance to the military in Indonesia. We'd like to get in a position where we can use certain funds to bring military officers from various countries to the United States to learn about the appropriate role of a military in a modern society and that is: supportive of civilian authority, respectful of the rights of all citizens and professional in the approach to their military duties.

Name: Yasmin Farooqi

Country/Territory: Pakistan

With due respect, I ask why the USA seems to support the Army rulers in developing countries and seriously ignores violations of democracy and basic human rights in war-inflicted countries like Iraq and Afghanistan and supports this never-ending war against terrorism in which we are bombing men, women, children and elderly. Are USA leaders concerned about how they are damaging the wonderful "Great America" image for centuries to come?

Name: Richard Armitage

Well, the United States is of course, leaders of the United States, very concerned with our image in the world and we do realize that sometimes with leadership comes great responsibilities and sometime a lot of troubles. I would note regarding Pakistan that the people of Pakistan under both democratic rule and marshall law have not received the benefits to which they are entitled.

Name: Roman Bryulgart

Country/Territory: Russia

In November we all witnessed how dramatic and tense was the situation in the United States during the presidential electoral campaign. The American society was split into almost even halves. Now Ukraine is facing political crisis after the presidential elections and the society is split in the same way. In fact, the instability is already transferring to Romania, where the opposition tries to follow Ukrainian way. In your opinion, why has United States managed to avoid such tensions and how could its experience be used to solve the political crisis in Eastern Europe?

Name: Richard Armitage

First of all the United States has been experimenting with democracy for almost 230 years, so that helps. Second, you would note that those foreign observers who viewed our election found them to be free and transparent and open, and that I think very much helps the people to accept whatever outcome. And as it turned out our elections weren't as close as people had predicted. Both the electoral college and the popular vote were considered quite large for President Bush. In fact he received the most votes that any democratically elected leader has received anywhere in the world. So I think the one thing that does resolve tensions is if people realize that things were done in an open, democratic, transparent way.

Name: Alexandr Baikalov

Country/Territory: Moldova

Do you think recognition in the Constitution of Moldova of four languages (Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Gaguz) could help in maintaining the country unified?

Name: Richard Armitage

Well, look, tolerance of a multicultural society is a good thing and I think tolerance of a multicultural society can help any country to have unity and we support that.

Name: Anca Padurar

STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON
STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9

Country/Territory: Romania

Does the Department of State have any information regarding Romanian children adopted abroad who were lost into the system, that is no one knows their whereabouts in their adoptive countries and what they became?

I ask this since scary reports surfaced in Romanian media, regarding alleged abuse against these kids - going as far as killing them for body parts - which in their turn fueled the media campaign supporting the Romanian Government position to stop all international adoptions.

Name: Richard Armitage

I have no knowledge of the particular case. I have seen media comments and I think some of those are spurious allegations and we're dismayed by those reports. The United States does support inter-country adoption as an option for children in need of a loving, permanent family placement who cannot find one in their home country. Obviously, if there were these loving, permanent family placements in the home countries, that would be best, but lacking those we're very supportive of inter-country adoptions.

Name: Arminka Helic

Country/Territory: United Kingdom

Is the US policy to stay engaged in the Balkans or hand over the peacekeeping operations there to the EU?

Name: Richard Armitage

We've always said, "in together, out together" in the Balkans and we're moving to an EU force in some areas, which we support. But the United States is going to remain economically and politically even if we're not there militarily.

Name: Lourenildo Leite

Country/Territory: Brazil

I was granted a Fulbright Scholarship (through IIE) to St. Louis University where I did my Masters and Doctorate programs in Geophysics, from July 1969 to December 1976. Today I am a teacher at the Federal University of Par? in Brazil in the Department of Geophysics, and fully involved with the Undergraduate and Graduate Courses, lecturing, research, and orientation of undergraduate and graduate students (for Masters and Doctorate). Considering my accumulated experience and live interest in the USA-Brazil, and USA-International Fulbright Program, I would like to know how to effectively make a return contribution to this Program?

Name: Richard Armitage

Well, I hesitate to try to answer a question for someone who has a doctorate in geophysics. However, I would hope that if you found your time here congenial that you would try to spread the good lessons of the US society to friends in Brazil and let them understand that we are not a closed country, that we are very much internationalist, we might be reluctant internationalists and hesitant sometimes, but we are internationalist and we value the interaction and the relationships with other countries.

Name: Richard Armitage

I've got to run now, but I thank you very much for this opportunity.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

STATE DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM ALUMNI LIVE ONLINE ON
STATE ALUMNI WEBSITE DEC. 9

Load-Date: January 25, 2005

End of Document

The island that heals; Sri Lanka offers sunshine and smiles - and an ancient system of healthcare that has exotic treatments for stress and illness.
Christina Patterson goes on an Ayurvedic adventure

Independent Traveller

January 27, 2007

First Edition

Copyright 2007 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: INDEPENDENT TRAVELLER; Pg. 4

Length: 2634 words

Byline: Christina Patterson

Body

For people who have, in recent years, seen more than their fair share of tragedy, Sri Lankans smile an awful lot. "Our smile can mean anything," says the Sri Lankan poet Sandra Fernando in her poem "Advice", and that may be true, but it's one of the many things that make a trip to this country - described by Marco Polo as "the finest small island in the world" - an unmitigated delight.

The smile is often preceded by the national greeting, ayubowan, delivered with hands joined, as in prayer, which means "may you live a long life". That might sound a bit hollow to the relatives of the 32,000 killed in the tsunami two years ago, or of the many thousands killed in the continuing conflict between the national government and the **Tamil Tigers**. But life expectancy in Sri Lanka remains a healthy 72. The happiness experts who pop up almost daily might argue that this is linked to that ubiquitous smile. But it might also owe something to the benefits of a philosophical and healthcare system that goes back thousands of years.

Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word meaning "the science of life". Based on Hindu philosophy, it was first conceived in India more than 5,000 years ago and arrived in Sri Lanka 2,500 years later, at about the same time as Buddhism. While we were grappling with fire and gazing proudly at our rough flint tools, the Sri Lankan king Buddhassa, himself an eminent physician, was building hospitals.

A friend had raved about the benefits of this gentle healing system whose chief treatments were, she said, soothing massages with aromatic oils. Another had extolled the beauty of the place. Inspired by both, I decided to set out on an Ayurvedic journey through this island shaped like a teardrop, an island that the Portuguese, Dutch and British each decided, in turn, to steal.

My own feeling of wellbeing started on the plane with the pilot's Buddhist greeting, delivered in the melodious Sri Lankan lilt, wishing us the "blessings of the triple gem". It continued on meeting Luxman Perera, my friendly and extremely knowledgeable driver and guide, and it rose to meteoric levels when I hit my first stop, Ayurveda Pavilions. This collection of 12 beautiful villas in Negombo, on the west coast just outside Colombo, has twice been voted the world's best spa, and it's not hard to see why.

The huge villas, inspired by the traditional midah, or ancestral house, have their own verandas and private courtyards. Set around grounds filled with tropical foliage and medicinal plants, they are exquisite. Mine boasted not

The island that heals Sri Lanka offers sunshine and smiles - and an ancient system of healthcare that has exotic treatments for stress and illness. Christina Pa....

just a medley of comforts - giant bed, basket of tropical fruit, gorgeous outside bath - but a little library of improving tomes. Don't Worry, Be Healthy: A Buddhist Guide to Health and Healing and How to Live as a Good Buddhist nestled alongside the New Testament in German, French and English. It was the first of many reminders that this is a country whose religiously diverse population (70 per cent Buddhist, 15 per cent Hindu, 7.5 per cent Christian and 7.5 per cent Muslim) live extremely harmoniously.

As soon as I'd unpacked, Dr Sujeewa was dispatched to my garden to set me on the path to health and healing. Ayurveda was, she said, a system based as much on prevention as cure, one whose main aim was to balance the three central energies, or doshas: vata, pitta and kapha. Vata, apparently, is like air, and imbalances can cause pain, migraine and paralysis. Pitta is like fire, and imbalances can cause digestive, hormonal and skin disorders. Kapha is like water, and imbalances can cause high cholesterol, respiratory problems and colds.

We all have, she said, a basic body constitution, but the balance of the different doshas varies according to weather, state of mind and diet. Then she whipped out her stethoscope, took my pulse and ran through a questionnaire. Did I have a small or large forehead? Thin or thick hair? White or yellow teeth? When she'd finished, she totted up the figures and told me the results. I was predominantly pitta, which made me "very intelligent" but "very vengeful". The treatment, which would involve lots of cooling foods and oil massages, would start immediately.

It started, in fact, on my veranda, with the birds singing overhead. A tiny, pretty woman washed my feet with sandalwood powder and then poured warm oil onto my neck and scalp. With delicate, circular movements, and little flutterings of her fingers, she slowly massaged it in. Once she'd finished, she was joined by another tiny, skinny colleague and together they tackled my body. It's really quite something to have two people massaging you at once: two hands clasping your own while two other hands gently knead your stomach - and, indeed, quite vigorously, your breasts. I was relieved that these superb masseurs, unlike the one who had me slithering, stark naked, in a pool of oil on a floor in Goa, were female.

After a soothing herbal tea ("slim apple" for "pacifying pitta"), a delicious dinner, an excellent night's sleep and a healing breakfast of red rice, curry, rotis and the traditional green rice soup known as "herbal porridge", it was time to get going. Next stop was history and nature, in the area known as the Cultural Triangle, via the elephant orphanage in Pinnawela. I'm not sure that it necessarily had anything to do with Ayurveda, but the 150-odd elephants were, when I arrived, all coated in mud. In an amusing parody of my lovely treatment, they tried to scrape it off themselves, and each other, before lumbering to the river for a proper bath. They certainly looked pretty healthy and, with their little spiky haircuts and wise eyes, very sweet.

There are sometimes wild elephants around our next destination, Vil Uyana, a new eco resort near the extraordinary rock fortress at Sigiriya. There are also wild peacocks, spotted doves, egrets, pond herons, rusty spotted cats and even the odd crocodile. I could see them from the terrace of my palatial villa, complete with private pool, set against the newly forested and flooded fields of this area in Sri Lanka's dry zone. Inspired by local and rural traditions, and the sophisticated fifth-century irrigation system of the palace at Sigiriya, this private nature reserve has been designed to provide a haven for wildlife and humans. Constructed largely from natural materials - wood and straw, combined with the once-again funky concrete - it's the acme of contemporary chic.

Dr Shiromi Wijesinghe, the hotel's Ayurvedic physician, told me more about Ayurveda - excellent for paralysis, fistulae and haemorrhoids, apparently - and liaised with the chef to provide exquisite, healing meals. She also arranged for a suitable treatment to follow the next day's punishing schedule of sightseeing, at Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa. The one I needed, actually, was for awe. It's not hard to see why the breathtaking feat of construction at Sigiriya is often described as the eighth wonder of the world, and you can only gasp at the magnificent - and magnificently preserved - ruins of the 12th-century kingdom of Polonnaruwa. I could only gasp at the "treatment", too: another sublime massage and facial, with aromatic oils and herbal masks, followed by a soak in a candle-lit, flower-filled herbal bath.

The island that heals Sri Lanka offers sunshine and smiles - and an ancient system of healthcare that has exotic treatments for stress and illness. Christina Pa....

The next day, however, my Ayurvedic principles were severely tested. A trip to the still-functioning painted cave temples at Dambulla - astonishing examples of spiritual art, some dating back to the first century BC - should, perhaps, have inspired me to some self-control. But when we stopped off at Luxman's house to pick up a computer part, en route to Colombo, I was confronted by another work of art: a giant chocolate cake. His wife, Leela, had got up at five to bake it, especially for me. It would, I thought, have been rude not to try it. And a second slice.

It wouldn't have been rude not to sip a gin and tonic on the veranda of the Galle Face Hotel, in Colombo, or try the fine wines and non-Ayurvedic cuisine at its ultra-chic new restaurant, 1864, but I'm afraid that didn't stop me. It was raining so hard that I couldn't venture out to see much of Colombo, so I was reduced to sampling the gastronomic delights of this colonial seafront hotel, whose past guests have included Noël Coward, Cole Porter, Gregory Peck and George Bernard Shaw.

En route to Galle next morning, we stopped at Siddhalepa hospital, a private Ayurvedic hospital run by the Hettigoda family, one of the biggest manufacturers of Ayurvedic products worldwide. Mrs Rajapaksa, the president's wife, is, apparently, a regular visitor to its extremely beautiful spa. The hospital, according to one consultant, Dr Tudor Senadheera, treats 25 to 30 outpatients a day, and has room for about 20 patients in private rooms. Does he, I wondered, use astrology in his diagnostic work? "Oh yes," he replied, with a firm nod. "It is essential to see the situation in the stars." In this, he is hardly alone. Most Sri Lankans would-n't dream of taking a major decision without consulting an astrologer - including, unfortunately, its politicians.

My Ayurvedic regime evaporated entirely during my two-day trip to Galle for its fabulous new literary festival [a full account of which will appear in next Friday's books pages]. It was impossible not to sip white wine on the terrace of the Lighthouse, the elegant beachside hotel designed by Asia's leading architect, Geoffrey Bawa, and it was compulsory, as always, to imbibe large quantities of alcohol with the writers. By the time I left the city, and the beautiful old Dutch town at the fort, I could feel the effects. Dark red patches had appeared on my tongue - always a danger sign, according to my (non-Ayurvedic) British acupuncturist - and I could feel that my whole system was inflamed.

At the Barbelyn Beach resort, at Weligama, where I was to spend the next six days, Dr Pushpa took me firmly in hand. My pulse was weak, she told me. My blood was thin. My blood pressure was low. And my tongue indicated an excess of toxins or ama. She would prescribe plenty of herbal medicines, all made on the premises, a strict diet and a daily regime of oils, relaxation and herbal baths.

I thought the beauty of the place alone would heal me. The sister resort of Barbelyn Reef, the first Ayurvedic resort in Sri Lanka, Barbelyn Beach is set on a hillside overlooking a palm-fringed beach. The 15 acres of grounds have been beautifully landscaped, and the views in every direction are stunning. Sitting on the hillside by the pool, you can gaze out at the sea and at the stilt fishermen, perched on their spindly-looking sticks.

From the moment I arrived, I was in heaven.

Built in 2003 and, unlike Barbelyn Reef, which had to be entirely rebuilt, unaffected by the tsunami, Barbelyn Beach is comfortable, plain and unpretentious. The health centre feels like a health centre, not a spa.

The treatments are administered largely by young women in stripy pinafores, like school uniforms, in simple cubicles with functional lighting and plain white tiles. And they are amazing.

First, I was ensconced, wearing only my knickers, in a chair in front of a mirror, and left to contemplate my spare tyres, while a young woman massaged my head and back. Then I was moved to the couch where a second woman joined her in pummelling me all over with pungent oils and patting me with hot herbal "puddings". Feeling, and smelling, like a nice, fatty joint of meat, I was led downstairs to lie in a kind of casket, with my face over a pot of steaming herbs. After 20 minutes of snoring over the scent of sandalwood, it was out to the herbal garden, where I was covered in heated, oil-infused cotton-wool packs and a honey herbal face pack, and left to listen to the birds singing and the monks in the temple chanting. When the packs were removed, I was taken to a shower, where a smiley older woman anointed me with a herbal milk before leaving me to have a shower (on my own!) and then

The island that heals Sri Lanka offers sunshine and smiles - and an ancient system of healthcare that has exotic treatments for stress and illness. Christina Pa....

leading me to my herbal bath. With a metal jug, she splashed hot herbal water on my back, stomach, knees and feet.

This extraordinary ritual took place every day, except one, after a delicious lunch and before an equally delicious four-course dinner. The strict "control diet" that Dr Push-pa had put me on, to lose my Christmas pounds, was, in fact, a delight. You could stuff your face with fruit, vegetables, rice, rotis, curries and soups, and drink unlimited quantities of coconut water and fresh fruit juice. I couldn't imagine how I could lose weight on it - and, indeed, I didn't. When Dr Pushpa next weighed me, I had put on half a kilo.

It was time, she told me, for virechana karma, or "body cleanse", the only part of my Barbelyn trip that I can't say I enjoyed. This involved rising at six for a stomach massage and a disgusting herbal "decoction" and then spending most of the day stuck in my room in order to make frequent, urgent trips to the loo. Still, it could have been worse. Some people are prescribed vamana karma, a vomiting treatment, some raktha mookshana karma, or bloodletting with leeches, and others vasthi karma, enemas with herbal potions, oils or cow's urine.

After a day monitoring the size and shape of my stools, as instructed, and eating only rice gruel, I did lose the half kilo I had gained - but then I bloody should have. Ayurveda is, clearly, not a quick fix. Over a couple of weeks, most people do lose a few kilos. I didn't have a couple of weeks, though I wanted to stay forever. I left, armed with herbal pills, face packs and pastes, stories of dramatic health improvements - including that of a British journalist I met, whose fused discs had kept her in hospital for six months, but which had been cured at Barbelyn in three days - and a fierce determination to come back. En route to the airport, I spent a night at the Siddhalepa health resort in Wadduwa, where I had a lovely herbal facial and did meditation with a Buddhist monk - but it just wasn't the same.

Does Ayurveda work? I don't know. Much of it sounds to me like nonsense, but the results, both anecdotal and in studies, particularly relating to Alzheimer's, paralysis and skin disorders, can be impressive. I do know that the treatments, "body cleansing" aside, are fantastically enjoyable, and so is the food. I also know that this is a country that is truly special. It is a country recovering from a devastating tragedy - the evidence is everywhere - and one that has not been helped by the ineptitude of a corrupt government. It is a country struggling with a serious ethnic and cultural conflict, but one which almost never affects tourists. And it is a country that desperately, desperately needs them. Just go.

TRAVELLER'S GUIDE

GETTING THERE

The writer travelled courtesy of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (0845 880 6333; www.srilanka.tourism.org.uk) and Jetwing Travel (00 94 11 234 5700; www.jetwing.com). Colombo is served by SriLankan Airlines (020-8538 2000; www.srilankan.aero). Flights are also available with Qatar (020-7896 3636; www.qatarairways.com) and Etihad (0870 241 7121; www.etihadairways.com). To reduce the impact on the environment, you can buy an "offset" from Equiclimat (0845 456 0170; www.ebico.co.uk).

STAYING THERE

Ayurveda Pavilions Resort, Negombo (00 94 11 537 3305; www.ayurvedapavilions.com). Vil Uyana, Sigiriya (00 94 11 554 5711; www.viluyana.com). The Lighthouse Hotel, Galle (00 94 91 222 4017; www.lighthousehotelandspa.com). Galle Face Hotel, Colombo (00 94 11 254 1010; www.gallefacehotel.com). Barbelyn Beach Resort, Weligama (00 94 41 225 2994; www.barberynresorts.com). Siddhalepa Ayurveda Health Resort, Wadduwa (00 94 38 229 6967; www.ayurvedaresort.com)

MORE INFORMATION

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (0845 850 2829; www.fco.gov.uk) warns of a high threat of terrorism.

The island that heals Sri Lanka offers sunshine and smiles - and an ancient system of healthcare that has exotic treatments for stress and illness. Christina Pa...

Load-Date: January 27, 2007

End of Document

Letters to the Editor

The Australian (Australia)

May 3, 2007 Thursday

All-round Country Edition

Copyright 2007 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 11

Length: 2510 words

Body

MATP

Labor should not attempt to straddle the fence on IR

MOST TALKED ABOUT

JULIA GILLARD

WHETHER you support her views or not, Julia Gillard is facing unjustified criticism from colleagues for her tough stance on IR policy ("Labor team turns on Gillard", 2/5).

You can't have it both ways -- you either support the capitalist view that workers are a commodity to be bought (and sold) at rates determined by market forces and are an unfortunate drain on profits, or you adopt the more moderate view that workers have basic entitlements, such as minimum working conditions and a right to union-backed, collective bargaining. Collective bargaining has been derided by the Coalition Government and big business yet, in reality, it's just another democratic process.

Labor should not attempt to straddle the fence on this issue in an effort to appease all parties. BHP Billiton and others have, understandably, expressed reservations about Labor's IR policy because it seeks to shift bargaining strength from employer-brokered individual workplace agreements to union-backed collective bargaining and may possibly chip a few dollars off their profit margins. But irrespective of whether Work Choices or Labor's IR policy is in place, the mining giants and the broader resource sector will continue to reap huge profits.

Minor gaffes aside, Ms Gillard has had the guts to take a firm line on IR. She does not deserve derision from within her own ranks.

Lloyd Hammond

Fremantle, WA
JULIA Gillard, who co-authored with Mark Latham the ridiculed Medicare Gold policy and now wants to be deputy prime minister, is already a disaster and she's still in Opposition. She consulted more with her union mates than her own shadow cabinet in relation to creating a workers' Utopia which would be a disincentive to employment. That's the way she would run the country.

Brian Whybrow

Letters to the Editor

Birkdale, Qld

IN proposing to re-regulate the economy in an attempt to restore the fast-fading relevance of union power, Julia Gillard refuses to acknowledge that most people who work long hours do so because they enjoy their work. They don't want their freely arrived at lifestyle re-arranged by union thugs. Office hours are for office boys.

Ian Mackay

Narrabundah, ACT

I CAN'T understand all the bleating. Labor is certainly giving more consideration to the views of business than John Howard gave to the trade union movement before he introduced his bullies' charter, aka Work Choices.

Gerard McEwen

Glandore, SAWHAT is going to happen to the 700,000 workers who are currently on AWAs, particularly those who really wanted to trade off, for higher wages, what would be, under Labor, minimum compulsory conditions? Julia Gillard says it's not a big problem because they only represent 3 per cent of the workforce.

Strange isn't how they are not a problem now because they are such a small percentage of the workforce when, a little while ago, we were told by Labor that AWAs would devastate working men, women and their families.

George Finlay

Balaclava, Vic

IF the ALP were to be elected to government, whenever Kevin Rudd went on leave or overseas Julia Gillard would be acting prime minister. The mere thought of that should be enough to destroy the possibility of Australians voting for Labor.

Rob O'Connor

Perth, WA

NOT content with announcing a wildly optimistic policy on measures to combat climate change, without a clue as to what implementation of that policy would cost or even how it would be achieved, Kevin Rudd now comes up with a lame defence of Julia Gillard's AWAs gaffe by telling us he is determined to get all the details right and will continue to consult with business.

Mr Rudd doesn't appear to understand that the art of politics is about getting all the details right before announcing the policy.

John Dorman

Carnegie, Vic

IN having laid the ground with its new IR policy to lose the next federal election, Kevin Rudd will be able to point a steady finger of blame at the ACTU. This will set the stage for a parting of the ways and the development of a social democrat-style party that is not held back by having to do its paymaster's bidding and Mr Rudd will be seen as the Messiah who led the ALP out of the wilderness.

Bill Cranny

Kalamunda, WA

Letters to the Editor

SENATOR Bill Heffernan's comments about the childless Julia Gillard's inability to understand the issues facing families, and therefore her inability to lead, raises some serious conundrums for this country ("Lib sticks to barren jibe", 2/5).

If the PM's a man, he can't possibly understand the issues facing women. If he/she is older than 50, how can he/she hope to comprehend the difficulties of younger Australians? If the PM is a lawyer from NSW, how can he/she countenance trying to represent those of us not in the legal profession, or who live in the other five states or two territories? Under Senator Heffernan's blinkered logic, no one can lead us.

Robyn Stonell

Scarborough, WA

What's objectionable about that, Mr Keating?

COPERNICUS challenged the belief that the Earth is at the centre of the universe and, implicitly, that humans matter more than anything else. A pre-Copernican, such as Paul Keating accuses John Howard of being, presumably believes human interests outweigh all others and that there's something special about this living planet compared to all the dead planets in the universe. What's objectionable about that?

Chris Oliver

Elizabeth Bay, NSW

IT'S of some comfort that there are people who will still call a spade a spade. Paul Keating was spot on in his remarks that John Howard had taken industrial relations back to pre-Industrial Revolution times when ordinary workers had to gather in the market square to sell themselves to a master at the lowest bidding. It was a system that lasted many hundreds of years until workers fought for the right to form themselves into collective unions to obtain some semblance of equality. Surely workers haven't forgotten the intense struggles of their forebears for a fair go against fragrant and unconscionable injustice.

Len Chiles

Noosaville, Qld

I JUST need to check that I'm hearing Paul Keating correctly. The stunning economic performance of the past decade is entirely due to him, aka Paul the Great? Not even one iota of credit should go to John Howard, Peter Costello and Nick Minchin with their budget surpluses, fiscal restraint and GST reform?

No wonder poor delusional Paul flopped as prime minister.

Ian Morison

Forrest, ACT

I STILL can't think of any outstanding achievements during Paul Keating's prime ministership, so why does he seem to think that Australians hang on every word of vitriol that comes out of his mouth? John Howard is 10 times the PM that Keating ever was, so if he really wanted to help the Labor Party win this election, he would keep his many opinions to himself. Labor's leaders are currently doing enough to snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory without Keating helping them along.

Alistair Dent

South Windsor, NSW

Letters to the Editor

MEMO to Matt Price ("Ex-leader casts a Paul over debate): in quoting Paul Keating's thoughts on John Howard, I think you meant antediluvian, because the PM's recent references to praying for rain demonstrate that he's definitely in the pro-diluvian camp.

Phil Beck

East Victoria Park, WA

It's absolute lunacy

HOPEFULLY, Jamal Rifi's plan to encourage young Muslim women to join the Army Reserve is merely an attempt at high farce ("Young Muslims urged to enlist", 2/5).

Rather than breaking down barriers between Islam and mainstream Australia, the plan would result in exacerbated tensions and divisions. Defence Force recruitment levels are already dangerously low, and hijabs in Holsworthy would undoubtedly mean further deterioration in numbers and morale. It is not a question of discrimination, but one of common sense. Like it or not, we are at war with Islamic extremists and in the event of an escalation of hostilities Reservists could be mobilised. Imagine the uncertainty and doubt that would be felt by young men then facing hijab-clad suicide bombers.

Imagine also the very real danger of "honour killings" of young female reservists following the inevitable cohabitation of the opposite sexes in such circumstances. If Dr Rifi is serious I sincerely hope his plan is stillborn. To say the least it would be somewhat impractical for the military to accomodate the cultural requirement of a male family member accompanying a female recruit at all times.

It's undeniable that the presence of any females in combat situations puts male soldiers in greater danger. It's absolute lunacy to even contemplate making them share a trench with Muslim females in a war against Islamists.

Richard Congram

Carindale, Qld

Evidence points to opposite

DOUG Badow's article ("Invasion has raised ranks of America's foes", Opinion, 1/5) was yet another attempt to apply the Western rationalist mindset to the understanding of Islamist terror. This school of thought believes that the motivation of Islamist terror is identical to that of previous terrorist organisations such as the IRA, ETA and the Tamil Tigers, that is, each has specific grievances that if accommodated would end their terror attacks.

Badow poses the question that if Osama bin Laden and others hate us because we are free and prosperous and that Islamists aspire to an ideology of world domination, then why aren't the jihadis targeting the entire world rather than just America? I would imagine the jihadis in southern Thailand, the Philippines, Chechnya, Kashmir, Somalia, Sudan, Madrid, Moscow and London to name just a few would be rather miffed at Badow's oversight of their terror attacks in those regions, none of which had anything to do with the US. Even France, which was strongly against the invasion of Iraq from the very beginning, has been on the receiving end of numerous (thankfully foiled) terror attacks.

In instances where Islamist grievances have been accommodated, the evidence points to the exact opposite of what Badow supposes. Accommodation of Islamist demands has only resulted in a triumphalist surge in terror attacks such as during the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and Gaza and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

To believe that we could end this war through negotiation and concession is a comforting thought but it is also wrong and wholly misrepresents that nature of the conflict we are in.

Christopher Down

Dulwich Hill, NSW

Retrospective legislation

HOW is it possible for Philip Ruddock ("Move to block Hicks royalties", 1/5) to introduce retrospective legislation to prevent David Hicks profiting from a book about his exploits, when for five years he stated that it wasn't possible to introduce retrospective legislation that would have seen Hicks brought back and charged in Australia?

Alan Stobie

Hester, WA

Awaiting final count

CONCERNING my request for the full two-party preferred vote in the recent NSW election, NSW Electoral Commissioner Colin Barry (Letters, 2/5), has written: "Malcolm Mackerras was not told his request for this work would be abandoned as a cost-saving measure. He was told it was not a priority, as he acknowledged in his letter of request."

In his letter to me dated April 16, Mr Barry wrote: "Consideration is currently being given to whether the Commission will undertake a two-party preferred count for the recent state election. As you would appreciate there is a cost attached to such an exercise."

It would be strange if I did not conclude from those words that this count might be abandoned as a cost-saving measure. So I am glad now to be informed that it was always the commission's intention to do the count when other key post-election tasks have been completed.

Malcolm Mackerras

Campbell, ACT

Illicit drugs still illegal

ONE question that to date hasn't been addressed in the debate over the AFL's three-strike drug policy ("Policy of meek bedevils the code", 2/5): will the AFL provide the names of the players who have tested positive for illicit drug use to the police so that the identity of those selling the drugs to the players can be determined and be pursued accordingly. After all, the sale of illicit drugs is still illegal, isn't it?

Frank Vandermeer

Prahran, Vic

THE AFL needs to take a good hard look at itself about how it reacts to players or clubs that it believes bring the game into disrepute. Being caught on police tapes talking to your drug dealer is not considered serious enough to warrant penalty, misogynist comments attract a censure but no penalty, yet any criticism of umpires or the AFL itself is dealt with in the form of large, after-tax, fines. It seems that anything other than criticism of the AFL itself is, if not tolerated, at least dealt with very softly. Is this a sporting body or a Stalinist regime?

Mike Honeychurch

Flemington, Vic

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

Letters to the Editor

Hey, Hendry Wan (First Byte, 2/5), I'm happy for Sydney to be the capital of Australia for the same reason Canberra holds that status -- I don't have to live there. It makes sense to hold APEC in Sydney -- the traffic system is so bad already nobody will notice the difference.

Andrew Manton

Wembley, WA

Why hold the APEC conference in Sydney, a working city? Why not hold it in Canberra?

J.R. Fredsall

Woollooware, NSW

Reading Simon Barnes's comment on the administrators of the cricket World Cup ("Money knocks out sporting excellence", 1/5) that they "aren't interested in sport. They are interested in power", and reflecting on the recent incidents involving prominent sporting identities, I wondered if "professional sport" is an oxymoron.

Bill Edwards

Cumberland Park, SA

The ICC has done it again, this time by taking no action against several umpires who didn't know the rules, after sacking one who did and applied them.

Ash Forward

Shelley, WA

Bill Heffernan's negative comments about "barren" Julia Gillard make me curious about his thoughts on other childless **female** political leaders past and present, such as Queen Elizabeth I, New Zealand PM Helen Clark and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Neil Jackson

Barden Ridge, NSW

Now we know how Kevin Rudd got the Labor leadership: he went to bed with the Left and woke up between Julia Gillard and Greg Combet.

Nick Coyle

Thornton, NSW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

Email: letters@theaustralian.com.au (no attachments)

Emails and letters should bear a full postal address and day and night telephone numbers.

Letters to the Editor of The Australian are submitted on the condition that Nationwide News Pty Ltd as publisher of The Australian may edit and has the right to, and license third parties to, reproduce in electronic form and communicate these letters.

Letters to the Editor

Letters online

Letters from this page are published on The Australian's website -- and online readers have the opportunity to add their own comments. To join the debate go to:

www.theaustralian.com.au/letters

Prints of Leak cartoons

For information on buying prints of any Bill Leak cartoon go to leakcartoons@theaustralian.com.au

Prints of Nicholson cartoons

To buy a print of a Nicholson cartoon go to <http://www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au/print>

Load-Date: May 2, 2007

***Death Is Celebrated and Life Means Less Than Nothing; Three Authors
Strive To Understand the Violent Evolution of Modern Terrorism***

The Forward

October 3, 2003

Copyright 2003 The Forward Association, Incorporated All Rights Reserved

Section: Arts & Letters; Pg. 15

Length: 2888 words

Byline: Alexander H. Joffe

Alexander H. Joffe is an associate with Global Policy Exchange, Ltd.

Body

No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century

By Walter Laqueur

Continuum, 288 pages, \$24.95.

* * *

Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power In a Violent World

By Jean Bethke Elshtain

Basic Books, 240 pages, \$23.

* * *

Terror and Liberalism

By Paul Berman

W.W. Norton & Company,

214 pages, \$21.

* * *

Recent NBC/Wall Street Journal and Gallup polls indicate that American concern about terrorism has dropped to pre-9/11 levels. What will it take for the American public to again take terrorism seriously? Three books offer dramatically different approaches to the same problem, founded respectively on reason, faith and emotion.

Walter Laqueur is one of the world's most insightful historians and commentators, having written on an astonishing variety of topics, from the history of Zionism and German Jewry, Communism and Fascism, to guerilla warfare and

Death Is Celebrated and Life Means Less Than Nothing Three Authors Strive To Understand the Violent Evolution of Modern Terrorism

terrorism. His latest book is a frightening overview of global terrorism in the 21st century, when science and paranoia have finally given individuals power to destroy the world.

Laqueur charts the history of terrorism and its depressing evolution of violence and justifications. Nineteenth-century terrorism was typically executed by revolutionaries who sought to free the people from oppression but who took great efforts to protect innocents from harm. Highly discriminating attacks on officials rather than society gave 19th- and early-20th-century terrorism the character of "propaganda by deed." Such care and high-mindedness eroded throughout the 20th century, as terrorists from both Left and Right began to attack not simply high but middle officials, and, importantly, to regard society as a whole as their enemy. Fear and panic became goals, and in the 21st century these have yielded to the actual destruction of as much of an enemy society as possible.

Technological ability to actually carry out mass casualty attacks is only part of the reason for the shift toward violence that annihilates all. As all three writers point out, and as 9/11 horrifically demonstrated, the new terrorism is radically different ideologically, if not "spiritually." While a brief summary cannot do justice to Laqueur's argument and wealth of evidence, at least three elements are involved: the means and language of European totalitarianism, Islamic religious fanaticism and abnormal psychology of small, highly paranoid groups. Central to all is suicide. And its enemies are secular, pluralist and diverse societies, quintessentially the United States.

Here all three writers, Laqueur most deftly, show that old categories of Right and Left no longer apply. The Left's rage against "globalization" is precisely the same as the Right's loathing of the "new world order" and the Islamic world's fear of "Westernization." These three camps have actively joined forces against the society that personifies these chimeras. The otherwise absurd spectacle of Trotskyites and Christian Identity morally and practically joining together, and giving support to Islamic Jihad and the IRA, is understandable only by dissolving the categories of the past. The new unifying themes are anti-imperialism, anti-Americanism and antisemitism.

But the most important category that must be dissolved is regard for life itself. Modern terrorism is incomprehensible without taking note of the themes that are at the core of Laqueur's book: Islamic fanaticism, jihad, suicide and anti-Americanism. The rise of bin Laden and Al Qaeda is well understood, but their efforts to conduct jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan and then the world were only given meaning by teachings of Egyptian Islamists. Their emphasis on jihad - in its original and unapologetic sense of total war against infidels - was fused to the notions of heroic self-sacrifice and rationalized slaughter, as understood from, on one hand, early Islam, and on the other hand, Nazism.

The result is an ideology where death is celebrated and life means less than nothing. Finding well-educated individuals with weak senses of self to carry out suicide attacks in pursuit of global religious domination has proven all too easy. But unlike other suicide terrorists, such as *Tamil Tigers*, Islamic groups from Hamas to Al Qaeda have made civilian casualties their goal. This has been supported by edicts from Islamic religious leaders and overwhelming indoctrination of Islamic societies in antisemitism and anti-Americanism. Others ranging from anti-globalization groups to neo-fascists share rage against the West but have not yet declared suicide the answer. But, as Laqueur notes, the smaller the groups, the more paranoid and vicious the ideology. Coupled with new technologies making it possible for mad scientists or merely clever graduate students to unleash plagues of microbes, we truly stand at the threshold of a new era of terror.

Terrorism will not go away, and Laqueur points to Central Asia, Algeria, Kashmir, the Balkans and Nigeria for continuing Islamic terror. Left-Right fusion makes the possibility of anti-Western violence extremely high. And eventual use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists is not a probability but a certainty. But the prerequisite for any resistance to terrorism is the ability to describe things clearly. As Laqueur points out in connection with 9/11, academics and the media share responsibility for creating an environment in which the religious roots of Islamic terrorism have been dismissed, those raising them are accused of racism, and critical semantic and moral distinctions are intentionally blurred. As Laqueur puts it, Jack the Ripper was not an "amateur abdominal surgeon" and terrorists who kill indiscriminately are not "activists," like union organizers.

Death Is Celebrated and Life Means Less Than Nothing Three Authors Strive To Understand the Violent Evolution of Modern Terrorism

Jean Bethke Elshtain shares Laqueur's concern about distinctions. Elshtain teaches ethics at the University of Chicago. She belonged to a small but courageous group of academics who composed and signed the public statement "What We're Fighting For" after 9/11, an assertion of universal human values and the American obligation to defend them. The plain truth of Islamic terrorism for Elshtain, as she describes in her new book, "Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power In a Violent World," is found in the words of bin Laden and other jihadists; they are fighting a global religious war against infidels, not in response to grievances but to establish total Islamic domination. By combining religious and political totalitarianism, the new Islamic terrorism has no "philosophy of limits." To misdescribe this is to engage in denials and lies that facilitate terrorists and their destructiveness.

Elshtain's cataloging of media, religious and academic misrepresentations makes for painful reading. Looking deeply at apologists who seek reasons for "rage" or understand "grievances," she notes an essential racism that asserts that terrorists are less than full moral agents who cannot respond with anything except violence. She goes further and analyzes the rhetoric of apologists, who ignore facts, lie, use old categories in order to prove old categories and question the motives of those who disagree.

These apologists often combine a form of racism with old-fashioned Stalinist thinking. Part of the problem is the culture of academia, where professors clone themselves and their very clever ideas and where new ideas can threaten the entire edifice. Another is the American Left's inability to take religion and religious language seriously, an issue discussed in detail by Paul Berman in "Terror and Liberalism." Critics who conflate the personal and the political are objects of Elshtain's particular disdain. Elshtain quotes the anti-Nazi theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer: We cannot retreat into the "sanctuary of private virtuousness" when confronted with evil and injustice. Even more profoundly, "responsible

action" involves contamination.

But what we must seek is justice, not revenge. On this, Elshtain engages with the "just war" tradition, traced from Saint Augustine through theologians Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr. Christianity was never absolutely pacifist, and Elshtain is upset by 21st-century churches that have adopted this anti-historical and irrational stance. To traditional Christians, evil is real, and sometimes, she writes, God-fearing people must follow earthly authorities and "serve our neighbor and the common good by using force to stop wrongdoing and to punish wrongdoers." Peace is not an absolute good, she argues, and neither is justice. Just-war thinking must be carefully applied to satisfy a number of criteria, not least of which are proper declarations in response to specific unjust aggression, proper intentions and actions with proportionality and discrimination.

These criteria set a high threshold. In Elshtain's view, this has been easily met in the war against terrorism and the defeat of the Taliban. Her book was written before the recent Iraq war, which for Elshtain could be theologically justified by love of our neighbors or "equal regard for others based on human dignity and our common humanity." Have these wars been executed with proportionality and discrimination? Yes, even though civilians have been killed. But to ask whether it was worth it is to explicitly suggest that the alternative was a choice of equal moral weight. Iraq today may be a deeply imperfect place, but people are not being fed feet first into plastic shredders.

Elshtain has insights on every page, but her chapter on the missing legacy of Niebuhr and Tillich is a centerpiece. She cites, for example, Tillich's broadcasts into Nazi Germany decrying the demonic order and its "symbols of death." One of the most horrific features of Nazism for Tillich and Islamism as well for Elshtain is the willingness to sacrifice children. Tillich pointed to the German philosophical legacy of Kant, Fichte and Hegel and their glorification of "internal freedom," which provided a retreat into a dream world from the indecent one that enslaved Germans. Parallels with the 21st-century Islamic world seem inescapable. Similarly, she cites Niebuhr's relentless insistence on moral responsibility and moral discrimination. The hard choices facing us cannot be met with "perfectionist pacifism," nonparticipation in morally ambiguous politics or without the contamination that results from decisive action.

Death Is Celebrated and Life Means Less Than Nothing Three Authors Strive To Understand the Violent Evolution of Modern Terrorism

The stakes are high. Islamic terrorism aims at, among other things, overthrowing the essential bases of American society: the moral equality of individuals, separation of church and state and the political equality of women. The American Left in particular has been silent on the nature of the threat, but there is every reason to take the Pashtun Taliban saying, or threat, seriously: "Women belong in the house or the grave."

Appeasement and dissembling will not work, and abandoning beleaguered peoples, even to respect their cultural "difference," is to disregard their humanity. Elshtain echoes Abraham Lincoln's call for Americans to "disenthrall themselves," to escape dogmatisms that blind us to the realities of terrorism and Islam. Nationalism and religion too must be seen as still powerful, evolving forces. Elshtain's prescription is succinct: "The only defense against terrorism in the short run is interdiction and self-defense. The best defense against terrorism in the long run is building up secure civic infrastructures in many nations." In the 21st century, human dignity needs a guarantor, and the United States is the only possible candidate. Perhaps that assertion is an article of faith, but examining the world as it really is, there is no practical or moral alternative.

Laqueur presents an erudite and dispassionate overview of terrorism's recent past and likely future, and Elshtain a moral understanding of the war against terrorism from the standpoint of Christian theology. Berman's focus is narrower still. His remarkable and impassioned critique is an indictment of liberalism's failure to confront Islamist terrorism, because it seems incapable of taking either the facts or the essential role of faith seriously.

Situated in the American Left-liberal tradition, Berman argues that a deep-seated liberal desire not to think ill of others, motivated in part by an utter faith in human rationality and a healthy dose of post-colonial guilt, has produced a dangerous critical void when it comes to Islam. He usefully pairs two North Africans, the Franco-Algerian philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and the Egyptian Islamist theologian Sayyid Qutb, to explore the nature of Islamism, its embrace of death as a fundamental goal and the liberal response. One cannot easily do justice to Berman's passion or eloquence. His readings of Qutb, the leading theoretician of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and intellectual godfather of Al Qaeda, demonstrate how absolutist readings of the Koran meshed perfectly with the language and doctrines of 20th century totalitarianism, namely fascism and Communism. Islam presumes to be a total system to begin with, and modern totalitarianism provided the scientific methods and mentality of death worship. The irrational element, the mass pathology of suicide culture and the suicide bombers it offers up is a kind of commonplace to Laqueur, who after all, left Germany in 1938. But Berman is positively agonized. And long before Samuel Huntington, Qutb eagerly anticipated the 'clash of civilizations.'

Islamic totalitarianism and its "pathological attachment to murder and suicide" are the 21st century's equivalent to Nazism and Stalinism, Berman argues. And the century's first challenge is getting well-meaning people to believe there is a problem. This is not easy and never has been. Berman's description, for example, of the reactions of pre-World War II French socialists strikes particularly acute nerves. Anti-war socialists, always eager to approach matters rationally, managed to find "truth" in Hitler's "excesses." "The impositions of Versailles, the exploitation of financiers, the pre-war hawks," writes Berman, "[t]heir reasoning was impeccable; 'Weren't some of the hard-liners, the French hawks, who favored war - Jews?'" In the end, the anti-war socialists voted to join Petain's government. Then as now, Left and Right have little meaning and in any case meet happily on the dark side of the moon. The labels are broken; hate is hate.

Unaddressed, however, is whether there is something intrinsic to Islamic theology that makes it uniquely susceptible to the cult of death Berman so ably describes. Other religions embrace martyrdom from time to time, but none displays the theological passion for annihilation as Islam. The question for Berman is not whether this is an authentic Islam or a forgery. It is authentic. The question is, what is moderate Islam doing about it? And the answer, frighteningly, is almost nothing.

Berman's almost belated advocacy of a third way, liberal democratic quasismialism, is deeply unpersuasive. But his criticism of Bush's militant, Wilsonian, muscular liberal internationalism is properly directed at their failure to communicate. He is absolutely correct that the war of ideas is being poorly fought, but he offers no practical suggestions beyond revival of Arthur Schlesinger's 1949 call for "new radicalism." Web sites with Arabic translations of John Locke and John Stuart Mill would do more.

Death Is Celebrated and Life Means Less Than Nothing Three Authors Strive To Understand the Violent Evolution of Modern Terrorism

If our cause is just and our enemies relentless, how are we to proceed? Endless interfaith dialogues are as meaningless as they are comforting. Certainly there can be no discourse with radicals; as Elshtain dryly puts it, sadists are not interlocutors of equal moral weight. And strong arguments can be made for giving death-eaters what they want, only on our terms. But a 21st-century response to terrorism surely must have two aspects, most obviously that the best defense is a strong offense. Intelligence capabilities, discussed only by Laqueur, must be enhanced and monitored for effectiveness and legality. New procedures that infringe on our convenience will become permanent. Metal detectors, bomb-sniffing dogs and background checks will become commonplace, as will profiling, wiretaps and midnight raids.

It is naive to think American or European life will be as blithe and benign as the easy days before 9/11. But vigilance, prudence and self-confidence hardly produce a police state. Assertive action against terrorists, individuals, groups and states necessarily involves violence and, increasingly, pre-emption. To suggest the threats, especially from weapons of mass destruction, do not warrant pre-emption is magical thinking. Again, the question is not whether terrorists will use weapons of mass destruction, only when and where.

But against this backdrop is another less tangible but equally important aspect of defense. The United States is defined by jagged pluralism and obvious diversity, and its messy but effective tolerance and representative institutions. Americans collide with each other and send off sparks, causing some differences to dissolve and others to harden. A walk up Second Avenue shows the process in motion. If we stop believing in this process, whether melting pot or pressure cooker, where Americans combine into new wholes while retaining old strengths, then we are fatally weakened. This is what protects us. This is why we fight.

Graphic

IMAGE

Load-Date: June 14, 2006

THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security

PR Newswire US

January 6, 2005 Thursday

Copyright 2005 PR Newswire Association LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Length: 5821 words

Body

Jan. 6, 2005 _____ ROUND-UPS

Social Security (16 experts) Airport Patdowns (4 experts) Tsunami Aftermath (continued, 21 experts) Homeland Security (continued, 1 expert) _____ LEADS

1. Government: Whistleblowers Have Predictable Fates 2. Immigration: President Signs Renewal to Stem Physician Shortages 3. Immigration: Fighting Foreign Student Visa Laws 4. Law: HealthSouth's Scrushy Trial to Be 'Clash of the Titans' 5. Law: New Mental Health Law Can Help Save Lives 6. Law: Is It Time to Retool Patent Practices? 7. World Affairs: Turkey and the European Union

ROUND-UP: Social Security

Following are experts who can discuss Social Security, in light of President Bush's renewed call for legislation that would let workers create private retirement accounts within the government-run program:

**1. JASON TAYLOR, faculty economist and assistant professor at Central Michigan University: "The current Social Security system is not a good deal for most Americans, since they filter 12.4 percent of their pay into the system to get a 2 percent rate of return on their investment. Those who live shorter life spans, including lower-income Americans (most notably African-Americans), receive negative returns. Americans could do better if they were able to invest 12.4 percent of their paychecks into a diversified portfolio of bonds, real estate, precious metals and mutual funds. This would help end the current bias against socioeconomic groups that live shorter life spans." News Contact: Pat Housley, housl1mp@cmich.edu Phone: +1-989-774-3197 (1/5/05)

**2. SYLVESTER SCHIEBER, director of research and information at Watson Wyatt Worldwide and co-author of "The Real Deal: The History and Future of Social Security," can comment on proposals to revamp the Social Security system: "Now is the time to seriously consider reforming the system. Further delay in taking up this issue puts us at risk of having the sort of experience that Japan and Germany are going through, namely having to cut benefits not only for future retirees, but for current retirees. The system is underfunded. Part of the solution has to be in finding added financing." News Contact: Ed Emerman, eederman@eaglepr.com Phone: +1-609-452-5967 (1/5/05)

**3. DR. TIM BLESSING, director of the Penn State Presidential Performance Survey at Alvernia College in Reading, Pa. (formerly of Penn State): "If you listen very carefully to what President Bush is saying, it appears that he is trying to ease us out of a system that Franklin D. Roosevelt never intended to become the mammoth it has. The story about Republicans always objecting to Social Security is simplistic -- as is the idea that this was a great crusade by the Democrats. The original Social Security plan was not intended to do what we now have it doing. It might be better put that most Republicans never felt comfortable with the whole idea, but only a handful of national

THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security

Republican leaders have ever wanted to sink it." News Contact: Paul Allen Blaum, pab15@psu.edu Phone: +1-814-865-9481 (1/5/05)

**4. MATT MOORE, senior policy analyst for the National Center for Policy Analysis: "Social Security reform is at the top of President Bush's agenda -- and with good reason. In the next decade, two monumental shifts will occur -- 77 million baby boomers will start drawing benefits and stop paying taxes, and Social Security and Medicare will claim an increasing share of federal income tax revenues, reaching almost 30 percent by 2020 and more than 50 percent by 2030. To avoid this unpleasant and unsustainable future, we must move quickly to a funded system, under which each generation pays its own way. The transition to a new system will not be easy, but each year we delay increases the cost of making it." News Contact: Sean Tuffnell, sean.tuffnell@ncpa.org Phone: +1-972-386-6272 (1/5/05)

**5. JOHN C. GOODMAN, president of the National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA): "Social Security reform is stuck in a tug of war between those that want to do nothing and those that believe we can have a free lunch. We have a plan that recognizes Social Security must be reformed and that tough choices will have to be made in order to do it. The NCPA plan, developed in part by Senior Fellow and Social Security Trustee Thomas Saving, is the only reform plan so far that is fully paid for and does not require borrowed money, maintains the progressivity of the current system and replaces today's pay-as-you-go system with a fully funded system after one generation." News Contact: Sean Tuffnell, sean.tuffnell@ncpa.org Phone: +1-972-386-6272 (1/5/05)

**6. RAMON CASTELLBLANCH, Ph.D., assistant professor of health education at San Francisco State University, is an expert in U.S. health and prescription drug policies: "Private accounts would be a disaster for Social Security - they would drain off money from Social Security benefits just when baby boomers need them. Further, they would expose to the uncertainties of the market the retirement security of future generations. The government should be reducing its deficits to cover its Social Security promises. It could best do this by reversing the policies of the past four years that created the deficits -- excessive military spending increases and tax cuts for the rich." News Contact: Denize Springer, denize@sfsu.edu Phone: +1-415-405-3803 (1/5/05)

**7. JAMES HOOPES, Murata Professor of Business Ethics at Babson College: "President Bush wants to fix the Social Security 'crisis' through privatization by having employees invest part of their current payroll taxes in investment accounts to fund their future retirement. Since those current payroll taxes are needed to fund benefits to today's retirees, the Bush administration has now admitted a fact that it glossed over during the campaign. The president's plan will require borrowing trillions now to solve a 'crisis' that will not even begin to occur for another half century. The Social Security Trust Fund is solvent until at least the 2050s. Even then, to remain in the black, Social Security needs a revenue boost equal only to about a fourth of what we're currently spending in Iraq." News Contact: Nancy Sullivan, sullivan@babson.edu Phone: +1-781-239-4548 (1/5/05)

**8. BRAD THOMPSON, vice president of equities and resident macroeconomist at Frost National Bank in San Antonio, is available for comment on Social Security: "I favor private accounts, but with appropriate controls (e.g., which assets are permissible), and I favor mandated savings rather than payroll taxes to fund these accounts. I think a consumption tax should supplement this plan to correct the degree of unfunded liability with respect to Social Security and Medicaid. I dispute that privatization would be a windfall for Wall Street because of low costs versus fees margins, and I wonder if people will use private accounts to postpone funding IRAs." News Contact: Phil West, pwest@dublinandassociates.com Phone: +1-210-227-0221 (1/5/05)

**9. ERIC KINGSON, professor of social work at Syracuse University: "The privatization proposals the president is proposing are neither needed nor desirable. At the end of the day, they would place many Americans -- especially the young, women, African-Americans and Hispanics -- at greater risk in an already risky economy. And they would add greatly to the federal government's projected deficits for many years. In addition, privatizing Social Security does not in any way address the system's financing problem. In fact, it makes the financing problem far more difficult to address. We don't have to destroy Social Security to save it. A combination of reforms -- none of them pain-free -- can address the problems." News Contact: Wendy Loughlin, wsloughl@syr.edu Phone: +1-315-443-2630 (1/5/05)

THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security

****10. RUSS ROBERTS**, professor of economics and J. Fish and Lillian F. Smith Distinguished Scholar at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University: "Social Security can be fixed with some adjustments within the current system, and the fears about privatization are greatly exaggerated. The real reason to favor or oppose privatization is philosophical, not financial. Who should be responsible for my retirement? Should it be me or the government? This is where the real political battle will be waged. There will be lots of sound and fury about rates of return, trust funds, tax rates and savings rates. But, ultimately, the philosophical issue will come into play." News Contact: Amy J. Biderman, abiderma@gmu.edu Phone: +1-703-993-8782 (1/5/05)

****11. PAUL KRUGMAN**, author, Op-Ed columnist for the New York Times and professor at Princeton University: "Privatizing Social Security with personal investment accounts won't do anything to strengthen the system's finances. If anything, it will make things worse. Privatization would begin by diverting payroll taxes, which pay for current Social Security benefits, into personal investment accounts. The government, already deep in deficit, would have to borrow to make up the shortfall. International experience has proven that privatization dissipates a large fraction of worker's contributions on fees to investment companies. It leaves many retirees in poverty." News Contact: Yvette Romero, yvette@monteiroandco.com Phone: +1-212-832-8183 (1/5/05)

****12. ANN OWEN**, associate professor of economics at HAMILTON COLLEGE and former Federal Reserve economist, can comment on President Bush's intention to reform Social Security: "We need to consider that our current system serves two purposes: It is a forced savings plan and a method for redistributing income to reduce poverty among the elderly. Privatizing the system enables us to own money we have paid into the system. Thus, the goal of forced savings is emphasized, and the redistribution aspect is reduced. Reforms of this nature must be made with our eyes open. Among the questions to consider in the reform debate are: What will we do if individuals make bad investment decisions and have insufficient retirement funds? Are we willing to accept increased rates of poverty among the elderly? How might other aspects of the social safety net change in response?" News Contact: Vige Barrie, vbarrie@hamilton.edu Phone: +1-315-859-4623 (1/5/05)

****13. RON O'HANLEY**, vice chairman and head of institutional asset management at Mellon Financial Corp., commented recently on a national radio show that talk of "privatizing" Social Security is a real misnomer: "The phrase confuses the real goals of the Bush administration, those being to offer a measure of stock market-based returns and/or individual choice. But you can achieve the former without ever having to offer the latter. And the latter -- in the form of individual savings accounts -- will carry a hefty burden both in terms of educating taxpayers in 'Investing 101' and the costs to administer millions of these relatively small accounts." News Contact: Joe Ailinger, ailinger.jf@mellon.com Phone: +1-617-722-7571 (1/5/05)

****14. LAURA KATZ OLSON**, professor of political science at Lehigh University and author of five books on aging: "The latest effort to 'reform' Social Security is actually a decades-long effort to undermine and ultimately dismantle it. Some politicians, aided by the mass media, created a crisis mentality over Social Security through statistics and numbers. The underlying message has been: We must solve these problems by privatizing the program. The country needs to view our vulnerable elders as a collective responsibility and make a national commitment to strengthen the safety net, not eliminate it." News Contact: Linda Harbrecht, lmh2@lehigh.edu Phone: +1-610-758-4838 (1/5/05)

****15. DEBRA SPEYER**, managing partner at Speyer Law, is a nationally recognized attorney and expert on investor and elder law and can offer a unique insight on the dangers of Bush's privatization system: "Everyone loses with Bush's Social Security proposal. The new system is meant to prepare workers for retirement, but leaves retirees under our current system to fend for themselves. Workers could ultimately lose lots of money, since the stock market doesn't guarantee success. Although it seems we should praise the no-new-taxes promise, the proposal will only increase the already large debt -- a disaster not only for our current economy, but one even more serious for future generations." News Contact: Petrina Fisher Wells, pwells@wellsmarketinggroup.com Phone: +1-215-665-1213 (1/5/05)

THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security

****16.** ALAN LEVENSON, chief economist at T. Rowe Price, can comment on options for fixing the Social Security problem and also the impact of deficit in the Social Security Trust Fund. News Contact: Rajiv Vyas, rajiv_vyas@troweprice.com Phone: +1-410-345-6559 (1/5/05)

ROUND-UP: Airport Patdowns

Following are experts who can discuss airport patdowns. Many **female** passengers feel the thorough screenings given by airport security go too far -- some have stopped flying altogether. These searches are a result of a new government directive that airport screeners carry out more frequent, and more thorough, searches for explosives:

****1.** STEPHEN J. MCHALE, partner at Patton Boggs LLP and former deputy administrator of the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA), played a key role in the federalization of aviation security after the Sept. 11 attacks and helped merge TSA into the new Department of Homeland Security: "We all want to be safe, so we should all want screeners to be as thorough as they need to be to resolve any suspected threat. If they observe carefully, however, and are allowed to use common sense, sexually intrusive searches should be rare, and new technology coming on line should make them even rarer." News Contact: Brian P. Hale, bhale@pattonboggs.com Phone: +1-202-457- 6186 (1/5/05)

****2.** MARK BUNIM, risk management expert at the law firm Bryan Cave, LLP.: "Government subcontractors are taking huge risks by not properly training their employees when it comes to respecting the privacy and dignity of citizens. Failure by government contractors to administer better training could expose them to civil-rights lawsuits ranging from privacy to sexual harassment." Bunim is available to discuss how airline management should set up programs to avoid possible lawsuits. He can also address what kinds of liability insurance a government contractor should carry to protect them from potential lawsuits. News Contact: Danielle Rhoades, danielle@goodmanmedia.com Phone: +1-212-576-2700 (1/5/05)

****3.** ROBERT L SICILIANO, personal security expert for SafeTravelSecurity.com: "Perception is everything. For example, a man-to-woman handshake, depending on the eye contact associated with it, can be considered flirting. Therefore, considering the whole 'gay vs. straight-is he/she sexually harassing me- sexually uptight society,' as long as screeners conduct physical contact of any nature with travelers, there will always be a percentage of traveler who

will perceive this contact as being sexually intrusive." Siciliano: robert@safetyminute.com Phone: +1-888-742-4542 (1/5/05)

****4.** KENNETH QUINN, co-chair of the aviation and aerospace practice group at Pillsbury Winthrop, LLP., former chief counsel with the Federal Aviation Administration and former counselor to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, is available to comment on a variety of transportation security issues, including new government regulations regarding airport patdowns. Quinn represents aerospace companies, airports and travel agents, and well as a host of airline carriers and even local governments. He recently led a series of high-level professional seminars on transportation security. News Contact: Nathan Burgess, nburg@esq.cc (1/5/05)

ROUND-UP: Tsunami Aftermath (continued)

We've added the following to items posted previously at http://profnet.prnewswire.com/organik/orbital/thewire/lst_leads.jsp?iLRTopicID=7315

****1.** JACK LULE, chair of the department of journalism at Lehigh University, has studied mainstream news coverage and identified enduring archetypes and mythical themes for his book, "Daily News, Eternal Stories": "I see the coverage as yet another example of the power of myth in the news. The myth of the flood that wipes away a people resonates through the coverage, giving the stories much of their power." Lule can also address how technology is changing the coverage to include more graphic images and what's overlooked in the massive mainstream media coverage. News Contact: Linda Harbrecht, lmh2@lehigh.edu Phone: +1-610-758-4838 (1/5/05)

THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security

****2. KEN HACKETT**, president of Catholic Relief Services, focuses on aiding the poor and disenfranchised throughout the world: "This terrible disaster requires an immediate outpouring of help from around the world. We are moving quickly with our partners to ensure we are able to do what we possibly can to assist the survivors recover from the pain, the trauma and the devastation they have suffered." Hackett oversees operations in more than 90 countries and commands a global staff of over 4,000. While in this position, he oversaw the relief operation in Ethiopia -- the largest operation undertaken in the agency's history -- in the early 1980s. News Contact: Erika A. Williams, ewilliams@catholicrelief.org Phone: +1-410-951-7281 (1/5/05)

****3. JAMES C. SIMMONS**, CEO of SUNGARD AVAILABILITY SERVICES (SAS), a provider of disaster recovery and information availability services, can discuss the need for companies to adequately prepare their business critical information to be accessed in the face of any disaster -- from a hurricane to a terrorist attack: "Companies who rely on their information systems for their livelihood must plan for the unexpected -- a brief power outage could devastate a company's computer system as much as major natural disaster could." News Contact: Wayne Pollock, wpollock@stargroup1.com Phone: +1-856-488-5500, ext. 2090 (1/5/05)

****4. ALEX PATTAKOS**, Ph.D., principal of The Innovation Group, based in Santa Fe, N.M., and author of "Prisoners of Our Thoughts": "First, we need to do all that we can to shift our focus of attention to the 'positive' aspects of the situation in order to help out those who have survived. We can't be as helpful as possible if we are 'frozen' in our thoughts, which influence our actions. We have to show compassion, but we also have to offer people hope and inspiration for the future. Also, by extending beyond ourselves -- and our 'needs' -- we'll be in a better position to offer aid and comfort to those in need. This applies to all of us as individuals and as nations." News Contact: Erin Flynn, flynn@plannedtvarts.com Phone: +1-212-593-5853 (1/5/05)

****5. ELAINE HANSON**, associate professor of psychology and academic director for International Center for Disaster Psychology at the University of Denver, is available to speak on both the immediate and long-term mental health needs of the tsunami survivors. She says: "When something like this happens, people are paralyzed to even deal with the day-to-day. Impacted countries are likely to see increased suicide, alcoholism, child abuse and molestation." Hanson is currently working to obtain funding to travel to Jakarta to help with recovery efforts. News Contact: Jennifer Farrell, jfarrel1@du.edu Phone: +1-303-871- 2781 (1/5/05)

****6. ROBERT ROY BRITT**, is the senior science writer for Space.com and Livescience.com, where he has written hundreds of articles regarding science related events and phenomena. He researches and writes daily on various topics on the leading edge of scientific inquiry. Two weeks ago, Britt published a story on tsunamis prior to the one affecting South Asia. His article discussed how they occur, their potential impact, why we should be worrying about them presently and what we should expect to happen in the future. Britt has been a guest expert on "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer" on PBS and "The Flip Side" on CNNfn. His stories also appear regularly on MSNBC.com, CNN.com, USAToday.com and Yahoo! Britt: rbritt@imaginova.com Phone: +1-623-551-6199 Web site: http://www.livescience.com/forcesofnature/041214_tsunami_mega.html (1/5/05)

****7. CHANDREYEE BANERJEE**, South Asia regional representative for Catholic Relief Services, coordinates CRS's response to emergencies in South Asia. Her responsibilities include promoting and protecting the strategic priorities of the region by advocating internally as well as externally for the initiatives taken on by the regional program: "This emergency is unlike anything we have seen before, and the amount of relief that is required is enormous. This will definitely be a long-term effort that Catholic Relief Services is committed to support." News Contact: Erika A. Williams, ewilliams@catholicrelief.org Phone: +1-410-951-7281 (1/5/05)

****8. SEAN CALLAHAN**, vice president of overseas operations at Catholic Relief Services, oversees operations in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. He has experience working in India and has had a wide variety of experiences in South Asia, including representing CRS at the Asian Bishops Synod in 1998; working closely with Mother Teresa of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta; responding to flood, drought, earthquake and man-made emergencies; experiencing a terrorist attack by the **LTTE (Tamil Tigers)** in the Sri Lankan airport; and facilitating programming in Afghanistan during and after the Taliban. News Contact: Erika A. Williams, ewilliams@catholicrelief.org Phone: +1-410-951-7281 (1/5/05)

THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security

****9. DOMINIC MACSORLEY**, operations director of Concern Worldwide, is available to comment on Concern's efforts in providing aid to the tsunami victims, the current state of relief efforts worldwide and the long-term humanitarian crisis that is still unfolding. MacSorley has overseen all aspects of humanitarian and development work in some of the world's toughest places and does frequent media interviews. Concern Worldwide, an international relief and development organization, is responding to the unfolding tsunami disaster in Asia by rapidly increasing its emergency programs in the region. News Contact: Kate Zimmerman, kzimmerman@westhillpartners.com Phone: +1-212- 994-3839 (1/5/05)

****10. STEVEN SCHOENFELD**, chief investment strategist for quantitative management at Northern Trust, is available for commentary on the economic impact of the tsunami disaster, as well as first-person reports from investment professionals in Asia. Schoenfeld's background includes global index strategies and portfolio management. He pioneered development of emerging market index products while at the International Finance Corporation/World Bank and co-authored "The Pacific Rim Futures and Options Markets" as well as his current volume on "Active Index Investing." He is a former Fulbright Scholar in economics and traded Japanese stock index futures as a member of the Singapore Exchange. News Contact: Christine Harmon, cmh4@ntrs.com Phone: +1-312-444-5051 (1/5/05)

****11. BRYON EHRHART** is the president of the division of Aon Re Services that provides actuarial, financial advisory, tax planning, catastrophe modeling and other services to clients of Aon Re, and is the CEO of Aon Capital Markets, a division of Aon Securities Corporation that specializes in risk transfer securitizations and contingent capital products. Ehrhart formerly worked at Coopers & Lybrand, where his audit and consulting client base included some of the more significant property and casualty insurance companies in the United States and several state insurance departments. News Contact: Dana Sohn, dana_sohn@aon.com Phone: +1-312-381-4786 (1/5/05)

****12. ART TAYLOR**, president of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, in Arlington, Va., is an expert in the areas of charity accountability, finances, governance, fundraising and other non-profit sector issues. He can provide tips for donors to evaluate charity relief appeals in the wake of the tsunami disaster, advice on avoiding charity scams and suggestions for contributing to causes that will assist families and victims of the tsunami. Taylor serves on the boards of the Independent Sector and the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. The Alliance produces reports on national charities, specifying if they meet the 20 BBB standards for charity accountability. News Contact: Holly Cherico, hcherico@cbbb.bbb.org Phone: +1-703-247-9311 Web site: <http://www.give.org/> (1/5/05)

****13. BUIE SEAWELL**, clinical professor of business ethics and legal studies at the University of Denver's Daniels College of Business, can speak on the role corporations can, and should, play in recovery efforts. He points to Starbucks as a good example of corporate involvement -- profits from its Sumatran coffee will be used for relief efforts in Sumatra. News Contact: Jennifer Farrell, jfarrel1@du.edu Phone: +1-303-871-2781 (1/5/05)

****14. PETER VAN ARSDALE**, senior lecturer for the University of Denver's Graduate School of International Studies, is a cultural and medical anthropologist who has conducted fieldwork in Indonesia. His areas of expertise include mental health, community development and human rights, as well as problems confronting refugees. News Contact: Jennifer Farrell, jfarrel1@du.edu Phone: +1-303-871-2781 (1/5/05)

****15. HARRY JOL**, associate professor of geography and anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, conducted 15 years of research on earthquakes and tsunamis along the west coast of the United States. He also lived for a year in Indonesia working on international development projects and remains in touch with friends in the region. News Contact: Julie Poquette, poquetjm@uwec.edu Phone: +1-715-836-3985 (1/5/05)

****16. DR. CHARLES MERGUERIAN**, professor of geology at Hofstra University on Long Island, N.Y., can speak at length about this kind of natural disaster. He has lectured on and researched at length the fault lines in New York City and can discuss the possibility of an event of this nature on the East Coast. Merguerian collaborated on the book "Aftershock" with television news broadcaster Chuck Scarborough. News Contact: Ginny Greenberg, prpgse@hofstra.edu Phone: +1-516-463-6819 (1/5/05)

THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security

****17. MIKE WIEST**, COO of Catholic Relief Services, served for 20 years in Africa and Asia as project manager in Senegal; country representative for Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Indonesia and Morocco; and regional director for the East Africa region. News Contact: Erika A. Williams, ewilliams@catholicrelief.org Phone: +1-410-951-7281 (1/5/05)

****18. KENT SYVERSON**, Ph.D., professor of geology at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, teaches oceanography and follows tsunamis closely. He can address geological aspects of the recent earthquake and the generation of the tsunami. News Contact: Julie Poquette, poquetjm@uwec.edu Phone: +1-715- 836-3985 (1/5/05)

****19. DOUGLAS BEREUTER**, president of The Asia Foundation, can comment on the economic impact of the tsunami and recovery and the long-term effects on Asia and U.S.-Asia relations. News Contact: Debbie Felix, dfelix@asiafound.org Phone: +1-415-743-3340 (1/5/05)

****20. ROBERT VALDES**, writer for HowStuffWorks, which provides explanations of how everything around us actually works, can provide a detailed and easily understandable explanation of how tsunamis occur, including the anatomy of a wave, what causes tsunamis, what happens when they hit land, and how they are predicted and monitored. News Contact: Kate Solley, ksolley@convexgroup.com Phone: +1-404-760-4346 (1/5/05)

****21. MARTY COX**, founder and president of IT'S A GRIND COFFEE HOUSE, can discuss how the coffee industry will be affected by the tsunami. Indonesia is the world's third-largest producer of coffee in the \$9 billion coffee industry. News Contact: Julie Meyer, jmeyer@fishmanpr.com Phone: +1-847-945- 1300 (1/5/05)

ROUND-UP: HOMELAND SECURITY (continued)

We've added the following to items posted previously at http://profnet.prnewswire.com/organik/orbital/thewire/lst_leads.jsp?iLRTopicID=7018

****1. RAY OLESON** is the CEO of SI International (NASDAQ:SINT), a provider of information technology and network solutions, primarily to the United States federal government. SI provides information technology and network solutions in eight practice areas to supplement its clients needs in defense transformation, homeland defense, mission critical outsourcing and federal information technology modernization. The company provides its services primarily to the United States Air Force Space Command, United States Army, the Department of State, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services in the Department of Homeland Security), as well as the intelligence community. News Contact: Valerie Bent, valerie.bent@ccgir.com Phone: +1-702-270-9696 (1/5/05)

____ LEADS

****1. GOVERNMENT: WHISTLEBLOWERS HAVE PREDICTABLE FATES.** JOYCE ROTHCHILD, Ph.D., professor of public and international affairs at Virginia Tech, is available to speak with reporters about the characteristics and likely fates of whistleblowers, such as the two who alerted authorities about ethical concerns at Fannie Mae and the FDA: "My research has shown that whistleblowers are people for whom integrity is paramount. Generally, they present their concerns internally to their organization, but if they perceive that the hierarchy is inept or complacent, the whistleblowers will make their case public. The result of whistleblowing is predictable. Usually, the person loses his or her job, typically finding that it is difficult or impossible to locate another. Often, the organization will try to discredit the whistleblower. Whistleblowers experience high levels of stress as families, friends and co- workers wonder if the actions are worthwhile." News Contact: Annette Calhoun, calhoun@vt.edu Phone: +1-540-231-2108 (1/5/05)

****2. IMMIGRATION: PRESIDENT SIGNS RENEWAL TO STEM PHYSICIAN SHORTAGES.** ROBERT S. WHITEHILL, Esq., chair of the immigration group at FOX ROTHCHILD LLP: "President Bush has signed legislation renewing and modifying a program enabling hospitals/medical practices to sponsor foreign-born, U.S.-trained physicians for home-presence waivers. Known as Conrad 30, it allows these physicians to continue practicing in medically underserved regions of the U.S. and gain the right to stay as permanent residents rather

THE PROFNET WIRE: GOVERNMENT & LAW: Social Security

than going home at the conclusion of their training. The president's action stems a concern that the program would not be renewed. Physicians must continue to agree to work for three years in medically underserved areas in H-1B status, but will be exempt from the H-1B cap." News Contact: Karen Di Prima, kdiprima@foxrothschild.com Phone: +1-215-299-2041 (1/5/05)

****3. IMMIGRATION: FIGHTING FOREIGN STUDENT VISA LAWS.** CYRUS REED, assistant provost for international education at Ball State University and chairman of Destination Indiana, is fighting an intelligence-reform bill provision that hinders more foreign students and scholars from obtaining visas: "To require an interview for each visa application is redundant, Given that the interview lasts about 90 seconds. If consular officers were permitted to exempt some individuals from interviews, they could conduct more thorough ones with those who needed to be interviewed. During a recent Congressional hearing, nearly every aspect of international student visas was discussed with members of DI. The group remains positive that the right changes will be made." News Contact: Layne Cameron, lscameron@bsu.edu Phone: +1-765-285-5953 (1/5/05)

****4. LAW: HEALTHSOUTH'S SCRUSHY TRIAL TO BE 'CLASH OF THE TITANS.'** ROSS ALBERT, attorney with Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP and former SEC attorney and assistant federal prosecutor, can discuss HealthSouth's Scrushy trial: "What I find particularly interesting here is the way Scrushy has mounted an extremely aggressive pre-trial public defense that seems to have taken specific pages from the O.J. Simpson and Martha Stewart defense playbooks, among others. Scrushy's trial promises to be very interesting -- a veritable 'Clash of the Titans' so to speak." News Contact: Terri Thornton, terriThornton@mindspring.com Phone: +1-404-932-4347 (1/5/05)

****5. LAW: NEW MENTAL HEALTH LAW CAN HELP SAVE LIVES.** MARY T. ZDANOWICZ, Esq., executive director of the TREATMENT ADVOCACY CENTER: "As 2005 begins, courts in Florida and Michigan now have a powerful new tool to aid in helping people with untreated severe mental illnesses who are too ill to make rational treatment decisions. The passage of these assisted outpatient treatment laws means that 42 states now see the import of intervention to protect people who are in a mental health crisis. The laws are written with strong protections, have survived many court challenges and are proven to save lives. Only eight remaining states do not allow for AOT: Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico and Tennessee." News Contact: Alicia Aebersold, aebersolda@psychlaws.org Phone: +1-703-294-6008 (1/5/05)

****6. LAW: IS IT TIME TO RETOOL PATENT PRACTICES?** Dan Venglarik, attorney of intellectual property at Davis Munck, PC, says the recent hike in the U.S. Patent Office's fee structure should prompt companies to rethink longtime patent-prosecution practices: "Until now, patent attorneys have routinely drafted up to 100 or more excess -- and frequently marginal -- claims as part of a single patent application. The new rates, increasing costs by as much as 260 percent in some cases, make a compelling fiscal argument for streamlining patent applications to sharpen the focus on the core argument for patentability." News Contact: Rhonda Reddick, rhonda@legalpr.com Phone: +1- 800-559-4534 (1/5/05)

****7. WORLD AFFAIRS: TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION.** DENNIS SANDOLE, professor of conflict resolution at George Mason University: "A decision to allow Turkey -- a Muslim, but secular, country and NATO member -- to begin negotiations for inclusion in the European Union will have a significant impact on the growing chasm between the Islamic and Western worlds. Allowing Turkey's membership in the EU will have a far more positive impact on derailing the runaway clash of civilizations and undermining the motivation of Jihads to continue their campaign against the West than the U.S.-led war on global terrorism, which, in many ways, has actually exacerbated the factors making for global terrorism." News Contact: Amy J. Biderman, abiderma@gmu.edu Phone: +1-703-993-8782 (1/5/05)

PROFNET is an exclusive service of PR Newswire. To submit query by e-mail: profnet@profnet.com To consult the ProfNet Database: <http://www.profnet.com/> To submit query by fax: 631-348-7906 To submit query by phone: +1-800-PROFNET To share a thought on the ProfNet Wire: leads@profnet.com

SOURCE ProfNet

<http://www.prnewswire.com>

Notes

NOTE TO EDITORS: The following experts have provided direct contact information: Jason Taylor, Central Michigan University, taylo2je@cmich.edu Phone: +1-989-774-2578; Dr. Tim Blessing, Alvernia College, blessti@msn.com Phone: +1-610-796-8235; John C. Goodman, National Center for Policy Analysis, jcgoodman@ncpa.org Phone: +1-972-386-6272; Ramon Castellblanch, Ph.D., San Francisco State University, ramonc@sfsu.edu Phone: +1-415-405-2151; James Hoopes, Babson College, hoopes@babson.edu Phone: +1-781-239-4345; Russ Roberts, George Mason University, roberts@gmu.edu Phone: +1-703-993-1186; Ann Owen, Hamilton College, aowen@hamilton.edu Phone: +1-315-859-4419; Laura Katz Olson, Lehigh University, lko1@lehigh.edu Phone: +1-610-758-3346; Stephen J. McHale, Patton Boggs, LLP, smchale@pattonboggs.com Phone: +1-202-457-6000; Jack Lule, Lehigh University, jack.lule@lehigh.edu Phone: +1-610-758-4177; Elaine Hanson, University of Denver, elhanson@du.edu Phone: +1-303-871-4684; Dominic MacSorley, Concern Worldwide, +1-212-557-8000; Buie Seawell, University of Denver, bseawell@du.edu Phone: +1-303-871-2698; Peter Van Arsdale, University of Denver, pvanarsd@du.edu Phone: +1-303-871-3281; Harry Jol, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, jolhm@uwec.edu Phone: +1-715-836-3472; Douglas Bereuter, The Asia Foundation, jbetti@asiafound.org Phone: +1-415-743-3367; Joyce Rothschild, Ph.D., Virginia Tech, joycevt@aol.com Phone: +1-540-961-3307; Robert S. Whitehill, Esq., Fox Rothschild, LLP, rwhitehill@foxrothschild.com Phone: +1-412-394-5595; Cyprus Reed, Ball State University, cyrusreed@bsu.edu Phone: +1-765-285-2160; Ross Albert, Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP, ralbert@mmmlaw.com Phone: +1-404-233-7000; Dennis Sandole, George Mason University, dsandole@gmu.edu Phone: +1-703-993-1309

Load-Date: January 7, 2005

End of Document

UN
*Human Rights Committee considers reports from four countries;
Comments made on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political
Rights by Philippines, Russian Federation, Latvia, Sri Lanka*

M2 PRESSWIRE

November 10, 2003

Copyright 2003 M2 Communications Ltd.

Length: 4336 words

Dateline: GENEVA, (UN Information Service)

Body

The Human Rights Committee today concluded a three-week session during which it considered and adopted observations and recommendations on the reports submitted by the Philippines, Russian Federation, Latvia and Sri Lanka on how they implement the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The situation in a fifth country, Equatorial Guinea, was examined in a closed meeting in the absence of a report from that country. The Committee drew up provisional concluding observations and recommendations that will be made public if the State party fails to submit a report before 1 August 2004.

Governments of the Philippines, Russian Federation, Latvia and Sri Lanka sent delegations to answer questions raised by Committee experts, in keeping with their obligations as States parties to the International Covenant. (There are 150 States parties to the Covenant.)

Among its findings on the second periodic report of the Philippines, the Committee appreciated the progress made by the State party to reform its domestic legal order to comply with its commitments under the Covenant.

It noted with satisfaction that the State party had facilitated international assistance in relation to education and training on the protection of human rights. The Committee was concerned about the lack of appropriate measures to investigate crimes allegedly committed by State security forces and agents, in particular those committed against human rights defenders, journalists and leaders of indigenous peoples, and the lack of measures taken to prosecute and punish the perpetrators. The Committee recommended that the State party adopt legislative and other measures to prevent such violations, in keeping with articles 2, 6 and 9 of the Covenant, and to ensure effective enforcement of the legislation.

Concerning the fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation, the Committee noted with appreciation numerous legislative developments and efforts to strengthen the judiciary and welcomed the Federal Constitutional Law of 26 January 1997 which created the institution and set out the functions and responsibilities of the Federal Commissioner for Human Rights. The Committee said it was concerned about the large number of persons in the State party who were being trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation, mainly to destinations outside the borders of the State party. With regard to the situation in Chechnya, the Committee said it remained deeply concerned about continuing substantial reports of human rights violations there. It recommended that the State party ensure that operations in Chechnya were carried out in compliance with its international human rights obligations.

UN Human Rights Committee considers reports from four countries; Comments made on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Philippines , Russ....

With regard to the second periodic report of Latvia, the Committee welcomed the significant progress in legislative and institutional reform since the review of the first periodic report in 1995, including the establishment of a Constitutional Court. The Committee said it was concerned about the large proportion of non-citizens in the country, who by law were treated neither as foreigners nor as Stateless persons but as a distinct category of persons with long-lasting and effective ties to Latvia, in many ways comparable to citizens but in other respects without the rights that come with full citizenship. The Committee expressed its concern over the perpetuation of a situation of exclusion, resulting in lack of effective enjoyment of many Covenant rights by the non-citizen segment of the population. It recommended that the State party prevent the perpetuation of a situation where a considerable part of the population was classified as "non-citizens".

After considering the fourth periodic report of Sri Lanka, the Committee welcomed the conclusion, on 24 February 2002, of a ceasefire agreement between the Government and the Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and expressed the hope that the implementation and monitoring of the agreement would help to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution to a conflict which had given rise to serious violations of human rights on both sides. It was, however, concerned about the large number of enforced or involuntary disappearances of persons during the time of the armed conflict, and particularly about the State party's inability to identify, or inaction in identifying, those responsible and its inability to bring them to justice. It urged the State party to implement fully the right to life and physical integrity of all persons and to give effect to the relevant recommendations made by the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

In the course of the current session, the Committee continued its consideration of a draft General Comment on article 2 of the International Covenant concerning effective remedies for violations of the treaty.

The Committee also considered communications from individuals submitted to it under the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant. The Protocol, for the 104 ratifying States, allows review by the Committee of complaints from persons alleging violations of the terms of the Covenant; such reviews are carried out in private session. The Committee's conclusions on cases considered during the session will be released at a later date.

The next session of the Committee will take place from 15 March to 2 April 2004 in New York. During that session, the Experts are expected to consider reports from Colombia, Suriname, Lithuania, Germany and Uganda.

Country Reports

On the second periodic report of the Philippines, the Committee appreciated the progress made by the State party in reforming its domestic legal order to comply with its commitments under the Covenant.

It welcomed, among other actions, the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant in August 1989. The Committee considered that the process of reform should be accelerated and strengthened. It noted with satisfaction that the State party had facilitated international assistance in relation to education and training on the protection of human rights.

Concerned about the lack of appropriate measures to investigate crimes allegedly committed by State security forces and agents, in particular those committed against human rights defenders, journalists and leaders of indigenous peoples, and the lack of measures taken to prosecute and punish the perpetrators, the Committee said the State party should adopt legislative and other measures to prevent such violations, in keeping with articles 2, 6 and 9 of the Covenant, and ensure effective enforcement of the legislation.

Expressing concern regarding reported cases of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, harassment, intimidation and abuse, including of detainees (many of whom were women and children), that had neither been investigated nor prosecuted, the Committee said the State party should adopt and enforce legislative and other measures to prevent such violations in keeping with articles 6 and 9 of the Covenant and should improve the implementation of relevant laws. The State party should conduct prompt and impartial investigations and prosecute and punish the perpetrators.

UN Human Rights Committee considers reports from four countries; Comments made on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Philippines , Russ....

The Committee was concerned about the reports of persistent and widespread use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of detainees by law enforcement officials and the lack of legislation specifically prohibiting torture in accordance with articles 7 and 10 of the Covenant. It said the State party should institute an effective system of monitoring treatment of all detainees to ensure that their rights were fully protected. The State party should ensure that an independent authority effectively and promptly investigate all allegations of torture, that those found responsible were prosecuted, and that victims were given adequate compensation.

Further, the Committee was concerned that the law allowing for warrantless arrest was open to abuse, in that arrests in practice did not always respect the statutory conditions that the person arrested was actually committing a crime or that the arresting officer had "personal" knowledge of facts indicating that the person arrested committed the crime. It was also concerned that a vaguely worded anti-vagrancy law was used in order to arrest persons without warrant, especially female prostitutes and street children. The State party should ensure that its laws and practices with regard to arrest were brought into full conformity with article 9 of the Covenant.

Concerned at continuing reports of displacement of persons and evacuation of populations, including indigenous population groups, in areas of counter-insurgency operations, the Committee said the State party should take measures to ensure the protection of civilians in areas affected by military operations.

With respect to the fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation, the Committee noted with appreciation numerous legislative developments and efforts to strengthen the judiciary since the submission of the fourth periodic report, which had further improved the protection of Covenant rights. It also noted the information given by the delegation about a decision plenum of the Supreme Court of 10 October 2003 instructing general courts in their obligation to be guided by relevant international treaties, including human rights treaties. The Committee welcomed the Federal Constitutional Law of 26 January 1997, which created the institution and set out the functions and responsibilities of the Federal Commissioner for Human Rights, in line with the Committee's previous recommendations. It also welcomed, among other things, the notable achievements in addressing the problem of overcrowding in prisons, through increasing resort to alternative forms of punishment, amnesties and reduced use of pre-trial detention.

Reiterating its concern regarding persistent inequality in the enjoyment of Covenant rights by women, the Committee said that the State party should ensure that effective measures were taken to improve the situation of women as to their enjoyment of Covenant rights.

The Committee said it was concerned about the large number of persons in the State party who were being trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation, mainly to destinations outside the borders of the State party. It urged the State party to reinforce measures to prevent and combat trafficking in women through, among other things, enacting legislation penalizing such practices and providing protection and support, including rehabilitation programmes, for the victims.

Noting that the death penalty was abolished de facto by the Presidential decree of 16 May 1996, the Committee was concerned that the current moratorium would automatically end once the jury system had been introduced in all constituent entities of the State party, scheduled to be completed in 2007. The State party should abolish the death penalty de jure before the expiration of the moratorium and accede to the Second Optional Protocol.

While the Committee noted that a number of measures had been taken to prevent the use of excessive force and torture by law enforcement personnel during the process of questioning, it remained concerned that suspects and detainees were not sufficiently protected under current legislation. The State party should ensure that law enforcement officials were prosecuted for acts contrary to article 7 of the Covenant, and that the charges corresponded to the seriousness of the acts committed.

The Committee remained deeply concerned about continuing substantial reports of human rights violations in the Chechen Republic, including extrajudicial killings, disappearances and torture, including rape. It was also concerned that investigations into a number of large-scale abuses and killings of civilians in 1999 and 2000 had still not been brought to a conclusion. It was further concerned about the provision in the Federal Law "On Combating

UN Human Rights Committee considers reports from four countries; Comments made on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Philippines , Russ....

Terrorism", which exempted law enforcement and military personnel from liability for harm caused during counter-terrorist operations. The State party should ensure that operations in Chechnya were carried out in compliance with its international human rights obligations. The State party should ensure that abuse and violations were not committed with impunity de jure or de facto.

While the Committee welcomed the introduction of the possibility for conscientious objectors to substitute civilian service for military service, it remained concerned that the Alternative Civilian Service Act, which would take effect on 1 January 2004, appeared to be punitive in nature by prescribing civil service of a length of 1.7 times that of normal military service. The State party should reduce the length of civilian service to that of military service and ensure that its terms were compatible with articles 18 and 26 of the Covenant.

The Committee noted with concern the closure in recent years of a number of independent media companies and an increase in State control of major media outlets, either directly or indirectly through State-owned corporations. The State party was invited to protect media pluralism and avoid State monopolization of mass media, which would undermine the principle of freedom of expression enshrined in article 19 of the Covenant.

The Committee was concerned that journalists, researchers and environmental activists had been tried and convicted on treason charges, essentially for having disseminated information of legitimate public interest, and that in some cases, where the charges were not proven, the courts had referred the matter back to prosecutors instead of dismissing the charges. The State party should ensure that no one was subjected to criminal charges or conviction for carrying out legitimate journalistic or investigative scientific work, within the terms covered by article 19 of the Covenant.

After considering the second periodic report of Latvia, the Committee welcomed the significant progress in legislative and institutional reform since the review of the first periodic report in 1995, in particular the inclusion in the country's Constitution of Chapter III on Fundamental Human Rights, as well as the establishment of a Constitutional Court and the introduction of the right of individuals to launch a constitutional complaint. It noted with great interest the rulings by the Court removing from the national legal system norms conflicting with international human rights standards. Other positive legislative reforms included in particular the adoption and entry into force of a new Asylum Law, dealing with the issue of non-refoulement; amendments to the election law, removing the language requirements to stand for election; and to legislation on trafficking in human beings.

The Committee also welcomed the establishment of the National Human Rights Office and particularly its use of the mandate to submit complaints to the Constitutional Court.

Concerned about allegations of ill-treatment of persons by police officers, as well as the lack of statistical data on the number, details and outcome of cases of ill-treatment, the Committee said the State party should take firm measures to eradicate all forms of police ill-treatment, including prompt investigations, prosecution of perpetrators and the provision of effective remedies to the victims. It was also concerned that no independent oversight mechanism existed for investigating complaints of criminal conduct against members of the police, which could contribute to impunity for police officers involved in human rights violations. The State party should establish an independent body with authority to receive and investigate all complaints of excessive use of force and other abuse of power by the police.

While acknowledging the State party's admission that the average length of pre-trial detention was unsatisfactory, and its attempt to remedy the situation in the proposed code of criminal procedure, the Committee was concerned about the length of pre-trial detention. The State party should take all legislative and administrative measures to ensure compliance with articles 9(3) and 14 of the Covenant as a matter of priority.

The Committee noted the information provided by the delegation as to the improvement of the situation of overcrowding in prisons; however, in view of reports that overcrowding in prisons continued to be a concern, the Committee should be provided with specific information to indicate to what extent overcrowding in prisons was a problem. The State party should continue to take measures to address overcrowding in prisons and to ensure compliance with the requirements of article 10 of the Covenant.

UN Human Rights Committee considers reports from four countries; Comments made on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Philippines , Russ....

Also, the Committee noted the efforts made by the State party to address the situation regarding trafficking in persons, in particular by amending legislation, the adoption of a preventive strategy by providing information to potential victims, and through international cooperation. However, it was concerned about the slow progress made in implementing those policies and noted that it had received only limited statistical information from the State party. Measures should be taken to combat that practice, which constituted a violation of several Covenant rights, including article 3 and the right under article 8 to be free from slavery and servitude.

While noting the efforts made by the State party to combat domestic violence, the Committee was concerned at reports that domestic violence persisted. The State party should adopt the necessary policy and legal framework to combat domestic violence. Further, the Committee noted with satisfaction that in 2002, a new law on alternative service had entered into force, which provided for the right to conscientious objection. However, it remained concerned that, pending a change in the conscription law, the duration of alternative service was up to twice that of military service and appeared to be discriminatory. The State party should ensure that the alternative service was not of a discriminatory duration.

The Committee, while noting the measures taken by the State party to make the naturalization process more accessible and increase the rate of naturalization of non-citizens, was concerned about the limited results of those policies, with many candidates not even initiating the procedure. Furthermore, the Committee was concerned about the possible obstacles posed by the requirements to pass a language examination. The State party should further strengthen its efforts to effectively address the lack of applications for naturalization, as well as possible obstacles posed by the requirements to pass a language examination.

With regard to the status of non-citizens, the Committee noted the policy of the State party to further social integration through naturalization. However, the Committee was concerned about the large proportion of non-citizens in the country, who by law were treated neither as foreigners nor as Stateless persons but as a distinct category of persons with long-lasting and effective ties to Latvia, in many ways comparable to citizens but in other respects without the rights that come with full citizenship. The Committee expressed its concern over the perpetuation of a situation of exclusion, resulting in lack of effective enjoyment of many Covenant rights by the non-citizen segment of the population, including political rights, the possibility to occupy certain State and public positions, the possibility to exercise certain professions in the private sector, restrictions in the area of ownership of agricultural land, as well as social benefits. The State party should prevent the perpetuation of a situation where a considerable part of the population was classified as "non-citizens".

Concerning the fourth periodic report of Sri Lanka, the Committee welcomed the conclusion, on 24 February 2002, of a cease-fire agreement between the Government and the Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam (*LTTE*), and expressed the hope that the implementation and monitoring of the agreement would help to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution to a conflict which had given rise to serious violations of human rights on both sides. It also welcomed the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission in 1997. It noted the measures taken by the State party to improve awareness of human rights standards among public officials and members of the armed forces, and to facilitate the investigation of human right violations.

While taking note of the proposed constitutional reform and the legislative review project currently being undertaken by the National Human Rights Commission, the Committee remained concerned that Sri Lanka's legal system still did not contain provisions which covered all of the substantive rights set forth in the Covenant, or all the necessary safeguards required to prevent the restriction of Covenant rights beyond the limits permissible under the Covenant. The State party should ensure that its legislation would give full effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant and that domestic law was harmonized with the obligations undertaken under the Covenant.

The Committee remained concerned about persistent reports of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of detainees by law enforcement officials and members of the armed forces, and that the restrictive definition of torture in the 1994 Convention against Torture Act continued to raise problems in the light of articles of the Covenant. It regretted that the majority of prosecutions initiated against police officers or members of the armed forces on charges of abduction and unlawful confinement, as well as on charges of torture, had been inconclusive

UN Human Rights Committee considers reports from four countries; Comments made on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Philippines , Russ....

because of a lack of satisfactory evidence and unavailability of witnesses. The Committee also noted with concern reports that victims of human rights violations felt intimidated from bringing complaints. The State party should adopt legislation and other measures to prevent such violations, and the National Police Commission complaints procedure should be implemented as soon as possible.

The Committee was concerned about the large number of enforced or involuntary disappearances of persons during the time of the armed conflict, and particularly about the State party's inability to identify, or inaction in identifying, those responsible and to bring them to justice. The State party was urged to implement fully the right to life and physical integrity of all persons and to give effect to the relevant recommendations made by the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

While noting that corporal punishment had not been imposed as a sanction by the courts for about 20 years, the Committee expressed concern that it was still statutorily permitted, and that it was still used as a prison disciplinary punishment. The State party was urged to abolish all forms of corporal punishment as a matter of law and effectively to enforce those measures in primary and secondary schools, and in prisons.

The Committee was concerned that the Prevention of Terrorism Act remained in force and that several of its provisions were incompatible with the Covenant. It welcomed the decision of the Government not to apply the provisions of the Act and to ensure that normal procedures for arrest, detention and investigation prescribed by the Criminal Procedure Code were followed. The State party was urged to ensure that all legislation and other measures taken to fight terrorism were compatible with the provisions of the Covenant.

Concerned about recurrent allegations of trafficking in the State party, the Committee said the State party should vigorously pursue its public policy to combat trafficking in children for exploitative employment and sexual exploitation.

The Committee noted with concern that overcrowding remained a serious problem in many penitentiary institutions, with the inevitable adverse impact on conditions of detention in those facilities. The State party should pursue appropriate steps to reduce overcrowding in prisons, including resorting to alternative forms of punishment.

While appreciating the repeal of the statutory provisions relating to criminal defamation, the Committee noted with concern that State radio and television programmes still enjoyed broader dissemination than privately owned stations. The State party was urged to protect media pluralism and avoid State monopolization of the media.

Membership of Committee

The Committee's 18 expert members, who serve in their individual capacity, are elected by the State parties to the Covenant for four-year terms. Article 28 of the Covenant requires that "they shall be persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights".

They are: Abdelfattah Amor (Tunisia); Nisuke Ando (Japan); Prafullachandra Natwarlal Bhagwati (India); Alfredo Catillero Hoyos (Panama); Christine Chanet (France); Franco Depasquale (Malta); Maurice Glele Ahanhanzo (Benin); Walter Ka: lin (Switzerland); Ahmed Tawfik Khalil (Egypt); Rajsoomer Lallah (Mauritius); Rafael Rivas Posada (Colombia); Sir Nigel Rodley (United Kingdom); Martin Scheinin (Finland); Ivan Shearer (Australia); Hipolito Solari Yrigoyen (Argentina); Ruth Wedgwood (United States); Roman Wieruszewski (Poland); and Maxwell Yalden (Canada).

Mr. Amor is Chairperson of the Committee. Mr. Rivas Posada, Sir Nigel Rodley and Mr. Wieruszewski are Vice-Chairpersons, and Mr. Shearer is the Rapporteur.

((M2 Communications Ltd disclaims all liability for information provided within M2 PressWIRE. Data supplied by named party/parties. Further information on M2 PressWIRE can be obtained at <http://www.presswire.net> on the world wide web. Inquiries to info@m2.com)).

UN Human Rights Committee considers reports from four countries; Comments made on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Philippines , Russ....

Load-Date: November 10, 2003

End of Document

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

States News Service

March 27, 2007 Tuesday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 9225 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

The Human Rights Council this afternoon adopted a resolution in which it called for the implementation of its resolutions and the dispatch of two urgent fact-finding missions to the occupied Palestinian territory. It also adopted a resolution in which it requested the Coordinating Committee of the Special Procedures to extend until the closure of the fifth session of the Council the deadline for the submission of comments on and inputs to the draft manual of Special Procedures; and requested the Working Group on the Review of Mandates to present to the fifth session the outcome of its deliberations on the code of conduct regulating the work of the Special Procedures.

In the resolution on the follow-up to the Human Rights Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1, adopted without a vote, the Council, noting with regret that Israel, the occupying power, had not implemented to date these two resolutions and hindered the dispatching of the urgent fact-finding missions specified therein, called for the implementation of its resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1, including the dispatching of the urgent fact-finding missions. It also requested the President of the Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the Council at its fifth session on their efforts for the implementation of the resolutions and on the compliance of Israel.

In the resolution on the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Review of Mandates, adopted without a vote, the Council requested the Coordinating Committee of the Special Procedures to extend until the closure of the fifth session of the Human Rights Council, which would be held from 11 to 18 June 2007, the deadline for the submission of comments on and inputs to the draft manual of Special Procedures. It also requested the Working Group to present to the fifth session of the Human Rights Council the outcome of its deliberations on the code of conduct regulating the work of the Special Procedures.

Speaking on the resolutions were Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab Group, Israel, Palestine, Netherlands, Germany on behalf of the European Union, Canada and Algeria.

The Council also took up the reports of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston; the Chairperson/Rapporteur of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, Peter Kasanda; and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diene.

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

Introducing his report, Mr. Alston said the role of the Special Rapporteur was a year-round one and the challenge was to devise ways of ensuring adequate attention was given to countries that did not cooperate or could not be visited due to lack of resources. Communications should not become a paper-chase; reports should not hesitate to address the situation in countries that did not cooperate; missions should not be isolated undertakings and systematic follow-up was essential; assisting development of jurisprudence was a key role of the rapporteur. This analysis had informed his report.

Mr. Kasanda said at its last session, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent had devoted its attention to submitting recommendations on the design, implementation and enforcement of effective measures to eliminate racial profiling that affected people of African descent and Africans in all parts of the world. The existence and prevalence of the problem of racial profiling had been acknowledged worldwide. Numerous studies had been made about the phenomenon. Racial profiling had been recognised as a specific problem as a result of the systematic and historic targeting of certain groups.

Mr. Diene said the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance was facing several challenges like the increase of racist violence against national minorities and ethnic communities, the criminalization of immigration questions and the general rise of the defamation of religions, among others. The Special Rapporteur mentioned three dire developments, legitimising the rise of racism and xenophobia. The first development was about the political and democratic legitimisation of racist and xenophobe parties and movements. The second development concerned the rise of racism of elites, where the most important example could be found in France with declarations and publications that were openly racist and xenophobic. The third alarming development was the rise of revisionism.

Speaking as concerned countries were Guatemala, Philippines, Switzerland and Italy.

The United States, Azerbaijan and Belarus spoke in right of reply.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Council concluded its interactive dialogue on the reports of its Special Procedures on the freedom of religion or belief, the freedom of opinion and expression, and on arbitrary detention.

Asma Jahangir, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief, in concluding remarks, said freedom of conversion was part of the freedom of religion, unless elements of coercion were included. The mandate received a long number of violations, and she emphasised that violent acts, even in the name of religion, could not be grounds for impunity. Governments were encouraged to present opportunities to these groups so that they could disengage themselves from those controlling their lives.

Ambeyi Ligabo, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, responding, said criminalization of the media would not help to promote freedom of expression. The media should be able to self regulate. Regarding state versus non-state actors, there was no distinction in the report. State actors were also required to uphold relevant human rights. On the safety of journalists, he was ready to undertake a study on this and look at root causes of violence against them and protection of them.

Leila Zerrougui, Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on arbitrary detention, concluding, said concerning the protection of people in international transfers and the possibility of transferring people allowing them to be protected against torture, there had been more and more countries ratifying conventions for it. Persons suspected of terrorism must be brought before a judge, but within the framework of national law.

Speaking on the freedom of belief, freedom of expression and on arbitrary detention were the following non-governmental organizations: Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, Fraternalite Notre Dame, Reporters Without Borders International, International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, Defence for Children International, Centrist Democratic International, Federation of Cuban Women, International Buddhist Foundation, Federation of Women and Family Planning, and Interfaith International.

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

When the Council meets at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 28 March, it will continue its consideration of the reports on extrajudicial executions, people of African descent and racial discrimination, before taking up reports on human rights and transnational corporations, the right to health and human rights defenders.

Action on Resolution on Follow-Up to Council's Resolutions Concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory

In a resolution (A/HRC/4/L.2) on the Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: follow-up to the Human Rights Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1, adopted without a vote, the Council, noting with regret that Israel, the occupying power, has not implemented to date these two resolutions and hindered the dispatching of the urgent fact-finding missions specified therein, calls for the implementation of its resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1, including the dispatching of the urgent fact-finding missions; and requests the President of the Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the Council at its fifth session on their efforts for the implementation of Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1 and on the compliance of Israel, the occupying Power, with these two resolutions.

Introduction of Resolution on Missions to Occupied Palestinian Territory

TEHMINA JANJUA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab Group, presenting draft resolution L.2, said resolution S/1 had been adopted by the first special session of the Human Rights Council. In it, the Council had decided to dispatch an urgent fact-finding mission headed by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, to report on the situation of the Palestinian people. The Council had also decided in resolution S-3/1 to dispatch a high-level mission to investigate the situation in Beit Hanoun, and to suggest ways and means of protecting Palestinian civilians from further assault. Last week, Mr. John Dugard, who was to have headed this mission, and Professor Christine Chinkin, who was to have been on the second mission, had told the Council how they had not been able to accomplish their missions. It was the goal of the Council to ensure the implementation in full of all its resolutions. It was hoped the Council would adopt draft resolution L.2 by consensus.

Statements by Concerned Countries

ITZHAK LEVANON (Israel), speaking as a concerned country, said that resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1 were prominent examples of selectivity, politicization and double standards. In conspicuous contrast to the broad, inclusive and intentionally vague language in the operative paragraphs of another resolution, which had been adopted by consensus, the language of those two resolutions was narrow, restrictive and very precisely delineated. Israel was never opposed to engagement with the international community through dialogue and consultation, rather the imposition of inequitable and unbalanced resolutions. Should the sponsors of those resolutions adhere to the Council's stated goals of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, Israel could assure them that there would be a commensurate shift in the Israeli approach to engagement as well. The adoption of the resolution contained in document L.2 was in marked contrast to the wish delegations had expressed to see the Council changing its course for the better. Israel urged delegations to consider that in casting their votes.

MOHAMMED ABU-KOASH (Palestine), speaking as a concerned country, said Palestine renounced its right to speak as a concerned country and that aligned itself with the statement made by Germany on behalf of the European Union.

Other Statements on Missions to Occupied Palestinian Territory

MICHAEL STEINER (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, in a general comment, said the European Union remained concerned at the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and had repeatedly called on both sides to protect civilian life. The European Union had not been able to support Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1, as they had not called for a cessation of the violence from both sides. But the need for full cooperation with the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council was a matter of principle. The European Union asked that the President propose the adoption of draft resolution L.2 without a vote.

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

GWYNETH KUTZ (Canada), in an explanation after adoption of the text, said Canada supported the substantive principle of the Council, and urged all parties to cooperate with the Council and its mechanisms. The Council had the important task of ensuring that when it took on situations, it did so in a fair way, taking into account the actions of all parties involved. The capacity of the Council to influence behaviour was a function of its standing, which was itself based on the standing of its resolutions. When taking decisions, the Council should be mindful of the call in General Assembly resolution 60/251 for universality, equality, and non-selectivity.

Had the previous resolutions been more even-handed and objective, then Canada would have supported them. However, endorsing follow-up compounded the original problem. The Council would have to move beyond scrutiny of one country. Canada disassociated itself from the Council's decision in this regard.

BOUDEWIJN VAN EENENNAAM (Netherlands), in an explanation after adoption of the text, said the outcome of the Council's special sessions did not constitute a balanced approach, but the Netherlands joined in the decision to show support for the need for all States to cooperate with Council decisions.

Action on Resolution on the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Review of Mandates

In a resolution (A/HRC/4/L.6) on Intergovernmental Working Group on the Review of Mandates, adopted without a vote, the Council requests the Coordinating Committee of the Special Procedures to extend until the closure of the fifth session of the Human Rights Council, which will be held from 11 to 18 June 2007, the deadline for the submission of comments on and inputs to the draft manual of special procedures; also requests the Working Group to present to the fifth session of the Human Rights Council the outcome of its deliberations on the code of conduct regulating the work of the special procedures.

Introduction of Resolution

IDRISS JAZAIRY (Algeria), introducing draft resolution L.6, said if a progress report were to be given, then it would have to be said that there had been no progress, and that that was entirely due to the authors' fault, namely the African Group, as it had taken them far longer than planned to draw up a draft code of conduct. As that had only taken place a short while ago, there had then been no time to discuss the issue in the Working Group. The resolution before them now was purely pro forma, indicating that there was a need to postpone the submission of comments until later. The Chair of the Coordinating Committee was agreeable to that result. The work would be submitted to the Working Group during the inter-sessional session, and presented to the Council at a later session.

Statements on Resolution on Review of Mandates

MICHAEL STEINER (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union in a general comment, said that the European Union had not supported the decision taken in the Council's second session. However, the European Union had accepted the decision taken by the Human Rights Council to that effect. The European Union regarded draft resolution L.6 now before the Council as a purely procedural follow-up to that decision. It was under that understanding that the European Union would not break consensus on resolution L.6.

JOANNE LEVASSEUR (Canada), speaking in an explanation, said the work of the intergovernmental Working Group on reviewing mandates had emerged out of consensus on reviewing human rights. Canada considered this an opportunity to review Special Procedures and set up a system that was as comprehensive as possible. The Working Group must conserve and strengthen the independence of Special Procedures, but Canada was concerned about a code of conduct that would hinder the effectiveness of Special Procedures in carrying out their mandates. Special Procedures should be able to hold free discussions on areas within their mandate, including with the media, without restraint.

Reports before the Council

The Council has before it the report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial,

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston (A/HRC/4/20 and Add.1-3), which details the principal activities of the Special Rapporteur in 2006. It also examines four issues of particular importance and sets out the Special Rapporteur's views. On the mandate of the Special Rapporteur in armed conflicts, the Rapporteur rejects the notion that matters arising in the context of armed conflict are beyond the purview of the Special Rapporteur and of the Human Rights Council itself. With respect to "mercy killings" in armed conflict, he emphasizes the prohibition under international humanitarian law of killing those who have laid down their arms or have been placed hors de combat, which must be resolutely upheld. Regarding the requirement of human rights law that the death penalty should be imposed only for the "most serious crimes", the Special Rapporteur affirms that the death penalty can only be imposed in cases where it can be shown that there was an intention to kill which resulted in the loss of life. As to mandatory death sentences, the Rapporteur says that individualized sentencing by the judiciary is required in order to prevent cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and the arbitrary deprivation of life.

A second addendum provides a report of the Rapporteur's visit to Guatemala, which he says is afflicted by social cleansing, the rapidly rising killing of **women**, lynching, the killing of persons for their sexual identity or orientation, the killing of human rights defenders, and prison violence. There is strong evidence that executions of gang members and other "undesirables" are committed by police, and that killings by prison inmates have been facilitated by guards. The report emphasizes the need for the Government and society of Guatemala to take control of its future. A third addendum contains the preliminary note of the Special Rapporteur's visit to the Philippines, prompted by reports of a large number of extrajudicial killings, especially of leftist activists and journalists, over the past six years or so. It notes that the consequences of a failure to end extrajudicial killings in the Philippines will be dire. [A/HRC/4/20/Add.1 not immediately available]

The Council has before it the note verbale dated 19 February 2007 from Australia addressed to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/4/G/1), which contains the Australian Government's response to the request for information from the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mr. Philip Alston, concerning the death in custody of Cameron Doomadgee (Mulrunji), including the results of various investigations under way, detailed information on any penal or disciplinary sanctions that were imposed, and information relating to any compensation provided to the family of Mulrunji.

The Council has before it the report of the Working Group of Experts on People

of African Descent on its sixth session (Geneva, 29 January-2 February 2007) (A/HRC/4/39), by its Chairperson-Rapporteur, Peter Lesa Kasanda. At its sixth session, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent examined the theme of racial profiling. The Working Group acknowledged that racial profiling is a violation of the right to non-discrimination and recalled that international and regional norms make clear that racial discrimination in the administration of justice is unlawful. The Working Group urged States to clearly define and adopt explicit legislative provisions banning racial profiling; to take positive action to secure the real participation of people of African descent and other vulnerable groups at all levels throughout law enforcement agencies; and invited States to establish disaggregated data collection and oversight mechanisms to combat racial profiling. The Working Group also welcomed the General Assembly decision to convene in 2009 a review conference on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

The Council has before it the report submitted by Mr. Doudou Di ne, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/HRC/4/19 and Add.2 and Add.4), which says efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance encounter a number of serious major challenges manifested by worrying trends, including the resurgence of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and their violent manifestations; the growing "democratic legitimization" of racism and xenophobia, demonstrated by the spread of racist and xenophobic political platforms and by their implementation through alliances with Governments; the criminalization of and the exclusively security-based approach to immigration, asylum seekers and the status of foreigners and national minorities; the general increase in the defamation of religions and racial and religious hatred, in particular anti-Semitism and Christianophobia, and more particularly, Islamophobia; and the increase in violent manifestations of racism in sport, in particular, football. To reverse these worrying trends, the Special Rapporteur is continuing to promote the development of a dual strategy political and

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

legal on the one hand, and cultural and ethical on the other in order to identify their root causes. The political strategy aims to arouse and strengthen the political will of States to combat racism; and the legal strategy to enable States to adopt the appropriate mechanisms for that purpose in line with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The cultural and ethical strategy must target root causes of xenophobic attitudes and culture, particular identity constructs, foster acceptance of diversity and meet the central challenge of multiculturalism to promote coexistence in societies.

A second addendum to the report (A/HRC/4/19/Add.2) contains the report of the Rapporteur's visit to Switzerland in January 2006, which concludes that there is a dynamic of racism and xenophobia in Switzerland. There is deep-rooted cultural resistance within Swiss society to the multiculturalization process, especially where persons of south-eastern European and non-European origin are concerned, and a growing prevalence of racist and xenophobic stances in political programmes and discourse. The Special Rapporteur recommends development of a national programme of action against racism and xenophobia comprising national legislation for this purpose and a cultural and ethical strategy for the long-term construction of a multicultural society.

A fourth addendum contains the report of the Special Rapporteur's mission to Italy in October 2006, which concludes that, while Italian society is not marked by a profound phenomenon of racism, it is facing a disturbing trend of xenophobia and the development of manifestations of racism, primarily affecting the Sinti and Roma community, immigrants and asylum-seekers primarily of African origin but also from Eastern Europe, and the Muslim community. In his recommendations, the Rapporteur calls for reform of the so-called Bossi-Fini Law regulating immigration and, partially, asylum, the adoption of a comprehensive asylum law and policy, and the recognition of the Roma and Sinti community as a national minority whose culture and language are to be protected.

Presentation of Reports on Extrajudicial Executions, People of African Descent and Racial Discrimination

PHILIP ALSTON, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution, said country missions were often seen as a *raison d'être* of the rapporteur system. In reality, the role of the Special Rapporteur was a year-round one and the challenge was to devise ways of ensuring adequate attention was given to countries that did not cooperate or could not be visited due to lack of resources.

Communications should not become a paper-chase; reports should not hesitate to address the situation in countries that did not cooperate; missions should not be isolated undertakings and systematic follow-up was essential; assisting development of jurisprudence was a key role of the rapporteur. This analysis had informed his report.

Mr. Alston said his report contained a detailed rebuttal to claims by the United States that targeted killing of individuals on the Afghan-Pakistani border in 2005 as apart of the war on terror did not entail international human rights laws or the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. The interpretation of the United States would overturn the policy established and followed since the beginning of the Commission for Human Rights mandate in 1982. Concerning the death penalty, some Member States of the Council supported it while others had abolished it. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur was neither abolitionist nor retentionist and was rather one that enjoined States to participate in dialogue concerning the application of norms regulating the death penalty where it legally existed. Some norms were quite clear on juveniles for example. Others less so on due process rights preceding execution for instance. There were many reports of procedural violations that made execution unacceptable. Others were more controversial, like the notion of the death penalty being applied only for most serious crimes .

The report addressed a number of related points, such as the assumption that the notion of most serious crimes was to be clarified in the light of jurisprudence by such bodies as the Human Rights Council, and the idea that determination of whether a crime fell under such a category was to be determined by international law, not individual States. On the death penalty more generally, the report concluded, among other things, that mandatory death sentences were inherently over-inclusive, and that in order to prevent cruel and inhuman punishment, judges must be allowed to decide not to impose the death penalty.

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

During country visits, Mr. Alston said he had a standing invitation from Iran but Iran had repeatedly failed to respond to his request for a visiting date to be set. There had been several cases of minors executed in Iran, some for murder or rape, others for acts contrary to chastity. The information on these was credible and constituted clear violations of Iran's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on Civil and Political Rights. The juvenile death penalty had been abolished in almost every other country. The Council should respond to the situation in Iran.

In Guatemala, Mr. Alston concluded that reports that personnel working for a particular division of the national police were involved in social cleansing were credible. The international community needed to act to ensure the situation was addressed, and prosecutions carried out. There was a problem of impunity due to corruption. There was a shocking, deliberate failure to allocate resources to the criminal justice system, for protection of ordinary people from murder, rape and other criminal violations. It appeared that the system was designed to be ineffective, and Congress resisted taxation which could help redress this. There was a lack of political will. Privatised law and order protected the elites while the rest remained insecure. The State had very limited responsibilities towards society. In the Philippines, he remained unconvinced of efforts to respond to the significant number of killings attributed to the military. The Government had shown no commitment to change the situation.

Finally, on Sri Lanka, Mr. Alston said his report argued that some sort of human rights monitoring mission in Sri Lanka was essential to prevent an escalating human rights disaster.

PETER KASANDA, Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, said at its last session, the Working Group devoted its attention to submitting recommendations on the design, implementation and enforcement of effective measures to eliminate racial profiling that affected people of African descent and Africans in all parts of the world. In this sense, the session served as a forum for discussion, analysis, and an exchange of views among experts of the Working Group, panellists, representatives of Member States and civil society organizations. The report aimed at providing suggestions for Governments, international human rights bodies, and civil society in their efforts to contribute to the elimination of the practice of racial profiling, a serious human rights problem affecting millions of people, and affecting even the most routine aspects of their daily lives.

The existence and prevalence of the problem of racial profiling had been acknowledged worldwide. Numerous studies had been made about the phenomenon. Racial profiling had been recognised as a specific problem as a result of the systematic and historic targeting of certain groups. The use of criteria such as race, religion, ethnicity, nationality or skin colour in police procedures aimed at identifying trends in criminal acts or punishing a propensity for legal violations led to the stigmatization of people of African descent and other groups which had historically been discriminated against and assigned inferior status in society. The Working Group expressed its concern about this sort of institutionalised racism, and believed that States should eradicate such practices as a matter of urgency.

The Working Group had found that the unlawful use of racial profiling in police, immigration and airport security procedures had expanded since the terrorist attacks of September 11, and strongly believed that terrorist profiling practices that were based on race violated international human rights standards. It also expressed its concern about manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims that affected not only the daily lives of Muslim communities, but also the societies where they lived. To remedy this negative and disturbing phenomenon, sound strategies and educational campaigns should be developed and vigorously implemented. There should be no excuse to justify racial profiling. When racial profiling had been used as a tool to protect national security, no significant results had been achieved in terms of enhanced security. On the contrary, it institutionalised prejudice and legitimised public prejudice against those being profiled.

DOUDOU DI`NE, Special Rapporteur on the contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and associated intolerance, said that he wanted to draw the Council's attention to the central observations he had developed in his general report showing the increase of phenomena and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia throughout the world. The fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance was facing several challenges like the increase of racist violence against national minorities and ethnic communities, the criminalization of immigration questions and the general rise of the defamation of religions, among

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

others. The Special Rapporteur mentioned three dire developments legitimising the rise of racism and xenophobia. The first development was about the political and democratic legitimisation of racist and xenophobe parties and movements. The second development concerned the rise of racism of elites, where the most important example could be found in France with declarations and publications that were openly racist and xenophobic. The third alarming development was the rise of revisionism. The combat against racism was first of all a combat of memory.

The Special Rapporteur then turned to his visits to Switzerland and Italy. In Switzerland, a reality of a dynamic of racism and xenophobia could be noted. In spite of the existence of competent mechanisms and motivated responsible people, the absence on a national level of this reality and of a political and legal strategy against racism and xenophobia could be noted as well. The Special Rapporteur's recommendations to the Swiss authorities included the acceptance of a dynamic of racism and xenophobia and the expression of a public will to combat it, the set up of means, mechanisms and institutions to translate the political will into facts and the reinforcement of the existing structures to fight racism, among others.

With regard to the visit to Italy, the Special Rapporteur noted the firm commitment of the new Government to fight racism and xenophobia. This political will was illustrated by legislative reforms concerning immigration and citizenship. However, even though the Italian society was not profoundly imprinted by a phenomenon of racism, a worrying dynamic of xenophobia and a rise in manifestations of racism were developing, Mr. Diene said. The tendencies and manifestations were primarily a concern for the Sinti and Roma communities, migrants and people seeking asylum. In recommendations to the Italian Government, the Special Rapporteur pointed out the necessity to attack socio-economic inequalities, which the discriminated communities were facing, and to continue to express at the highest state level a firm willingness to combat racial discrimination. Further recommendations were the adoption of a juridical strategy, the redefinition of the national action plan and the reform of the immigration laws, among others. A particularly positive development could be noted in Japan, where an international non-governmental organization against racism and discrimination had been established.

Statements by Concerned Countries

FRANK LA RUE (Guatemala), speaking as a concerned country, said Guatemala was aware of the need for unrestricted respect for human rights as a fundamental, indispensable state obligation. Factors like a solid justice system, and reliable internal security mechanisms to protect the people and allow them to enjoy their rights to life and health and their economic, cultural and social rights were key contributing issues. While there had been significant progress in human rights in Guatemala, this had not been as speedy as had been hoped, and there had been breaks to take stock of the directions the country should follow. The report of the Special Rapporteur on Guatemala had been listened to carefully, and the country reiterated that it maintained the political will to change the situation. Important moves were under way to achieve a redrawing of national strategy, especially in strengthening justice, civil security and the fight against impunity.

Since the visit of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, there had been numerous actions: a presidential order to selectively screen the national civil police and introduce disciplinary reforms; a presidential commission on national security aimed at restructuring the national police; and a decree on the entry into force of the Convention. Guatemalans were the ones who were facing the realities in their country and they knew how to tackle their problems. The Peace Accords were an important reference for orienting action.

There were huge walls to be demolished in the process, but there was confidence that future actions would be effective, and Guatemala hoped to have the continued support and solidarity of the Special Rapporteur, and of donor countries and international organizations.

ENRIQUE MANALO (Philippines), speaking as a concerned country, said that a number of improvements of a factual nature in the preliminary note could be made in order that a more accurate and clearer picture of the Government's efforts and the prevailing situation was presented. In this regard, the Philippines had submitted factual changes and points of law in connection with the initial draft of the preliminary note. The Philippines hoped that its submissions would be given due consideration and would be fully reflected in Professor Alston's final report.

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

The Philippines wished to make specific observations and comments on the preliminary note. The Philippines condemned extrajudicial killings in the strongest terms and was taking urgent action to stop such killings and to identify and prosecute those who perpetrated them. The Special Rapporteur's observation in paragraph 5 was welcomed about the note that there had been a strong institutional response by the Philippines at the national level.

The Government of the Philippines had also consistently engaged in partnerships with the international and national human rights community and acknowledged the role of civil society in monitoring these cases. In the Philippine's criminal justice system, unlike that of the United States and Australia for example, the independent role of the prosecutor could be perceived as passive. This independence, or which could be misconstrued as passivity, was necessary lest the prosecutor be charged with partiality by either party to a criminal complaint. Nevertheless, the Government was exploring how cases might be evaluated and improved without damaging the prosecutor's credibility. The Philippines noted the interim recommendations of Professor Alston. Regarding the first one, concrete steps had been taken. The Philippines was looking forward to further dialogue with the Special Rapporteur.

BLAISE GODET (Switzerland), speaking as a concerned country, said Switzerland saluted the work of the Special Rapporteur on racism, as racial discrimination was a grave violation of human rights. In this context, the fight against racism could not be limited to the ratification of international conventions, but required a constant effort for their implementation by each State. In that regard, the Special Rapporteur's analysis represented an important source of information on the problems which persisted in the field of integration of foreigners and racial discrimination. On the basis of information received and his observations, the Special Rapporteur had noted the existence of a dynamic of racism and xenophobia in Switzerland.

The report noted a number of points that required improvement. Switzerland did not wish to embellish the situation, nor deny that unacceptable acts were committed. Switzerland had a long experience of migration, and despite a high level of immigration, no ghettoization had taken place, as foreigners were in general well integrated and accepted by the Swiss population. The Government had put into place structures to facilitate the integration of foreigners, and fought against all forms of racial discrimination. Regarding the fight against racism at the international level, Switzerland had implemented its commitments under the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Switzerland was determined to protect and promote human rights, both in all regions of the world, and on its own territory, and looked forward to continuing the fruitful discussion with the Special Rapporteur.

PASQUALE D'AVINO (Italy), speaking as a concerned country, said the Italian Government had been and remained determined to effectively protect and promote human rights and more specifically, to combat racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. Because of the complexity of certain issues, they had not been exhaustively and properly considered in Mr. Diene's report. The Citizenship Bill was currently under consideration, and foreigners were entitled to citizenship after five years' legal residence, or after three years for asylum seekers with refugee status. The Government was also working on a legal agreement between the State and Italian Muslim communities. There were technical problems with that agreement, caused by endorsement of the authority of the Muslim representatives within their communities, but a consultative council had been established to sort out the problem. On migrant workers, the Government was about to present to Parliament a comprehensive reform of the current immigration law, which would provide better protection for the human rights of migrant workers and their families, including health care rights, flexible modalities on entry rights, and others. There were new measures also to protect foreign temporary workers in the agriculture sector against exploitation, to protect the rights of Roma people, and to harmonize the asylum system.

Right of Reply

VELIA DE PIRRO (United States), speaking in a right of reply, wished to address the issue of the five men who had been convicted in federal court for their long-term involvement in a network in the service of the Cuban Directorate of Intelligence. Following a jury trial in Miami, during which the accused had received the full protection of the United States legal system, including counsellors and lawyers, they had been condemned. After a trial lasting seven months, they had been convicted and given prison sentences. On August 2006, the United States Appeals Court

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

upheld that decision. In its final decision, the appellate court had unanimously confirmed the Miami Court's handling of the trial. During their trial the five defendants had never denied their covert activities, nor their services to the Government of Cuba, and the United States Government believed that those five individuals had been given the full service of democracy.

AZAD CAFAROV (Azerbaijan), speaking in a right of reply, wished to respond to the remarks of Armenia. Because of the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan no single Azerbaijani historic or cultural monument had been left undamaged, and practically no holy places had escaped desecration with the economic infrastructure of Azerbaijan having been purposefully damaged and dismantled. In that connection, Azerbaijan would soon submit the list of all cultural objects representing the cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people that had been subjected to vandalism by the Armenian side in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan as well as in Armenia proper. Azerbaijan had appealed to the Council of Europe and to UNESCO to dispatch a monitoring group to investigate the state of cultural and historical monuments in the Nagorno Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and in Armenia proper.

ANDREY TARANDA (Belarus), speaking in a right of reply, said that the demonstration referred to by the German Representative on behalf of the European Union had been authorized to take place in a given place. The demonstration had then been held in a different place and the law enforcement officers had asked the participants to move and had provided buses for the purpose. The participants had ignored those suggestions, yet the law enforcement officers had not used force or detained demonstrators. By contrast, there had been repeated recent suppression of demonstrations inside the European Union, events that had been widely covered in the media. Belarus invoked once again the principle of non-selectivity in the work of the Council.

Continuation of Interactive Dialogue on Freedom of Religion, Freedom of Expression, and on Arbitrary Detention

ANGELA WU, of Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, said religious freedom was best preserved through the protection of the religious exercise of people of all faiths, not through restricting the speech of people of some faiths. Defamation of religion laws claimed to protect vulnerable religious communities. However, there were already laws against assault, false imprisonment, fraud and even defamation of persons. Defamation of religion laws was mere though control and in practice worked solely to the advantage of religious majorities. If the Council adopted measures encouraging defamation of religion laws, it should make clear what these resolutions really were thought control so that people were aware that their rights as they knew them were being stripped by the Council.

MARIE-SABINE LEGRAND, of Fraternite Notre Dame, said the organization's aim was to teach respect for all human beings, and it worked voluntarily around the world. It had endured discrimination for many years, and had fled to the United States from France due to persecution. France was conducting an anti-religious campaign and this was characteristic of totalitarianism. France operated on a sectarian model. France should reverse its institutional discriminatory approach.

GEORGE GORDON LENNOX, of Reporters Without Borders International, said the Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression once again had placed emphasis on the freedom of journalists. Many journalists had been killed, injured or taken hostage in various parts of the world. In 2006, the Security Council had adopted a resolution on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, with particular regard for journalists, and this was a great step forward. The highest political organ of the United Nations recognised the importance of the issue, and condemned such attacks. Would the Special Rapporteur or the Council make available all the information they had to the United Nations Secretary-General for inclusion in his report to the Security Council, and would the Special Rapporteur insist that the resolution be complied with, the speaker asked?

TAHIRA JALEEN KHAN, of International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, said issues addressed by Ms. Zerrougui's report were important. In Indian held Kashmir, security forces routinely abused the rights of innocent Kashmiris including jail without trial and illegal and arbitrary detentions. The absence of internal checks and the silence of the international conscience had only served to worsen the agony of the Kashmiris. The curse

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

had reached to the levels where even the Indian national media had to report on the severity of the situation. The Association called on the Council to allow a Special Rapporteur visit to India to examine the situation.

REBECCA MORTON, of Defence for Children International, in a joint statement with World Organization against Torture, said the report of the Working Group on arbitrary detention was welcomed, in particular the attention given to the large number of people in pre-trial detention, many of whom had not been arrested for a valid crime. The Group's failure to acknowledge that over 1 million of the world's detainees were children was regretted, as many of these suffered human rights abuses, lacking access to basic needs such as health, education and security. It was child detainees who were most affected by this phenomenon, suffering physical and sexual abuses.

LAKHRIF AHMED, of Centrist Democratic International, said that as a non-governmental organization concerned by human rights throughout the world, the organization remained concerned about the drama ongoing for decades in Tinduf in southern Algeria. The organization wanted once again to make a call against one of the most anachronistic situations of our time. Bloody repression was taking place and aggressions and imprisonment without trial as well. Given this situation it was necessary to show solidarity with those who suffered in the Tinduf camps. The necessary provisions needed to be taken to protect those people from retaliation. The international community was asked to act and to intervene so that human rights were respected.

ADRIANA PEREZ, of Federation of Cuban Women, said five anti-terrorist Cubans had been imprisoned in the United States since 1998, even two years after the Working Group on arbitrary detention issued an opinion saying that this was arbitrary, and in contravention of article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Group then requested the United States Government to adopt the necessary steps to remedy the situation. The deprivation of liberty of these people for the past nine years violated their human rights, the international conventions and treaties currently in force, as well as the United States Constitution. These violations extended the legal process against them indefinitely, and they should therefore be released immediately.

DOUGLAS WICKSAMRATNO, of International Buddhist Foundation, welcomed the report on freedom of religion. Sri Lanka was threatened by the Tamil Tigers. The kidnapping of children and their use as child soldiers continued. In Sri Lanka there was freedom of religion, guaranteeing to every faith the celebration of their festivities. Tamil Tigers attempted to destroy temples representing important cultural heritages. The international community should not stand silent when the Tamil Tigers were violating human rights and the freedom of religion. Young girls were taken away as sex slaves. Parents who campaigned against the abduction of their children were tortured and imprisoned in torture chambers.

WANDA NOWINCKA, of Federation for Women and Family Planning, in a joint statement with Action Canada for Population and Development, said the Special Rapporteur was commended on her excellent report, particularly her consideration of discrimination and practices harmful to the health of women and girls that were applied within communities for reasons of religious belief. The recommendations made to address cultural practices based on religion that were harmful, which clearly included those that sought to control their sexuality, were also welcomed. What steps would the Special Rapporteur recommend that Governments take to eliminate the conscientious objection barrier to women's access to reproductive health services, and what should Governments do to ensure that doctors who objected to providing reproductive health services on religious grounds actually fulfilled their obligations to refer patients to those who did provide these services, the Federation asked?

KELTOUM IRBAH, of Interfaith International, said that in recent years, the repression in the Western Sahara had intensified. Human rights defenders had been targeted by the Moroccan regime. It was thus important that the international community redoubled its efforts by setting up mechanisms of concrete action so that the fundamental rights of freedom and security could also be respected in the Western Sahara.

Concluding Remarks

ASMA JAHANGIR, Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion and belief, said freedom of conversion was part of the freedom of religion, unless elements of coercion were included. The mandate received a long list of violations, and she had emphasised that violent acts, even in the name of religion, could not be grounds for

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

impunity. Governments were encouraged to present opportunities to these groups so that they could disengage themselves from those controlling their lives. On the defamation of religion, the Special Rapporteur had presented a report last year, and believed that derogation from freedom of expression and of religion could only be made in extremely rare cases. Repressed religious sentiments should not be criminalized. Neutrality of Governments in matters of religion was crucial, and religious rights should be decriminalised. Religion should not be used or misused for political motives.

On the law of blasphemy, per se it did not restrict freedom of religion, but incidents and practice showed a pattern of concern. Most religious minorities were accused of blasphemy, often in perpetuation of an agenda of religious intolerance and religious violence. The application of these laws was disproportionate and selective, and they discriminated for these reasons. Justice was not fairly dispensed in these circumstances. Generally, States did not interfere with the attire or dress of women. When the issue was raised, they should deal with the issue in a balanced and non-alarmist manner, conforming to international standards on freedom of religion and belief. In a few countries, laws required women to abide by a dress code, and there had been positive trends in this regard.

There had been outstanding cooperation between the Special Rapporteur and the Governments of Azerbaijan and the Maldives, and this was excellent, as it gave an encouraging opportunity to publicise the mandate. The Special Rapporteur hoped that she would receive increasing positive responses to her requests to visit from various countries. With regards to defamation of religions, this could be a counter-productive issue, and should be broached carefully. There had been good practices regarding the rights of women, which interfaced with freedom of religion and belief. Women had gained freedom in terms of challenging religious intolerance, and this was to be commended.

AMBEYI LIGABO, Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, responding, said, regarding disinformation, that independent mechanisms should be established regarding the media. Criminalization of the media would not help to promote freedom of expression. The media should be able to self regulate. Regarding state versus non-state actors, there was no distinction in the report. State actors were also required to uphold relevant human rights. On the safety of journalists, he was ready to undertake a study on this and look at root causes of violence against them and protection of them. He had proposed a voluntary fund for journalists killed in the line of duty.

There were various limitations brought up by some governments on freedom of expression. One was close monitoring of websites to monitor opposition. This had led to citizens being arrested for expressing opinions on the Internet. Powerful media groups were business and profit oriented and this went some way to endangering rather than protecting freedom of individuals. Media guidelines or legislation was not a good idea, however, and self-regulation was preferred.

On Zimbabwe, Mr. Ligabo said he had no plan to visit in the near future, and had not had a response to a request to visit in 2003. He was ready and available to the Security Council to offer his proposals. On the empowerment of women, he had covered this amply in his reports. On Internet governance, a working group was working on this issue.

LEILA ZERROUGUI, Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on arbitrary detention, said that she wanted to thank all of those who supported her work and expressed her special appreciation to the Governments of the countries which had been visited. Concerning the questions asked, the Special Rapporteur started with the question from Germany on behalf of the European Union. There had been an increase in cases the Working Group received. Contributions to the right of free trial could be made. There was the risk of arbitrary detention. Looking at the causes for the increase, there were security concerns because there was less interest in the protection of the people. People who were considered as security threats preferred to leave the country.

Concerning the protection of those people in international transfers and the possibility of transferring people allowing them to be protected against torture, there had been more and more countries ratifying conventions for it, Ms. Zerrougui said. Persons suspected of terrorism must be brought before a judge, but within the framework of

COUNCIL ADOPTS TEXTS ON FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ON MISSIONS TO OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; REVIEW OF MANDATES

national law. Concerning the second session questions about concerns with regard to the increase of the prison population and the violations of detainees rights, the Special Rapporteur stressed that the resources were not enough and were not allocated to the prisons. The resources were rather used to reinforce security measures.

Countries could do better and allocate more resources to rehabilitation and reintegration, also with international cooperation, she said. Regarding the example of Nicaragua, the situation could be improved. Concerning the best practices, there had been some measures, which allowed the reduction of the number of prisoners. One could learn from what was being done in other countries. Concerning the question on the problem of judicial appeals, there were weaknesses in Special Procedures. The follow up should be ensured. There was still a concern about the visit of children that were detained to ensure that detention for minors was the last resort.

Load-Date: April 17, 2007

End of Document

No Headline In Original

The Bismarck Tribune

November 29, 2007 Thursday

Copyright 2007 The Bismarck Tribune, a division of Lee Enterprises All Rights Reserved

Section: WIRE; Pg. 2A

Length: 354 words

Byline: ERANGA JAYAWARDENA Associated Press Writer

Body

NUGEGODA, Sri Lanka - A bomb exploded Wednesday evening near the entrance to a popular department store in a busy Colombo suburb, killing 16 people and wounding 37 in a rare attack on civilians that the military blamed on Tamil Tiger rebels.

The blast occurred just outside the four-story No Limits store in Nugegoda as commuters crowded a nearby bus stop during the evening rush hour, officials said.

"We know that the attack bears all the hallmarks of the LTTE," military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara said, referring to the rebel group by its formal name, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. "It is nobody else but the LTTE."

If confirmed, it would be a rare attack by the separatist group on a purely civilian area in recent years, although civilians have been killed in previous attacks on government and military targets.

Rebel spokesman Rasiah Ilanthirayan did not answer repeated calls from the Associated Press seeking comment.

Earlier in the day, a female suicide bomber sent by the Tamil rebels killed one person and wounded two others in an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate a government minister in his office in Colombo.

The rebels' top leader blamed the government for a recent escalation of fighting in the more than two-decade-old civil war that has killed an estimated 70,000 in the Indian Ocean island nation.

The powerful blast at the department store shattered windows and left piles of crumbled concrete on the bloodstained sidewalk, according to an AP photographer at the scene.

Crumpled and charred pieces of motorcycles and three-wheeled taxis were scattered nearby.

Police and firefighters searched the debris for victims.

The military said at least 16 people were killed and 37 injured. At a nearby hospital, residents came in search of missing relatives.

The bomb may have exploded when a security guard at the mall became suspicious about a package and tried to open it, a defense official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

No Headline In Original

However, police at the scene said the explosives may have been in one of the three-wheeled taxis that were destroyed.

Load-Date: December 3, 2007

End of Document

ASIAN TSUNAMI DISASTER: FIRST A RUMBLE, THEN A WALL OF WATER TRAILING DEATH IN ITS WAKE

The Independent (London)

December 27, 2004, Monday

Copyright 2004 Independent Print Ltd

Section: First Edition; NEWS; Pg. 2,3,4,5

Length: 2865 words

Byline: JONATHAN BROWN A Sri Lankan woman cries after a tsunami washed away her home in Colombo yesterday. More than 4,500 people were killed on the island Eranga Jayawardena/AP

Body

THERE WAS no warning. As the sun began to climb into a cloudless sky, the people of Banda Aceh were going about their lives in this city on the north-western tip of Sumatra, Indonesia. It was early morning when the first gigantic wall of water hit.

Those that heard the rumble of water rang the radio stations in panic. They had lived all their lives in the area, but they knew this earthquake was a bad one. "The ground was shaking for a long time," said Yayan Zamzani. "It must be the strongest earthquake in the past 15 years," he said. But it was worse. Much worse.

The people of Banda Aceh found themselves directly in the path of a massive tsunami, a vast sea wave caused by an earthquake underneath the ocean. Within moments they were fighting for their lives as the vast torrent of water surged through their homes. Many died instantly, others were swept out to sea. The quake, six miles beneath the seabed, was one of the worst in memory. It measured 8.9 on the Richter scale and was the fourth most powerful since 1900, with its epicentre under the seabed off Sumatra.

Within minutes hundreds of buildings had collapsed, shops and homes were swept away by a 30ft surge. Electricity supplies failed and the area's telephone network crashed. Thousands of people emerged from their homes and places of work in a state of panic. The word went out that they should get to higher ground. But still the sea rose.

A little way down the coast in Sigli the wave arrived moments later. The beach town has remained popular with foreign surfers despite the persistent Islamic insurgence which has rendered the region largely off-limits to tourists and threatened the Indonesian government's lucrative oil and gas fields there.

Witnesses reported the sea level was rising at a worryingly fast rate. Local officials feared that fresh water dams could burst as inland rivers began to surge.

Communications across the whole of the north-west of the largest of Indonesia's 17,000 islands began to fold. The airport was closed and towns and cities began to empty.

The Meteorological and Geophysics Agency in Jakarta downplayed the scale of the quake. Officials insisted it had reached a magnitude of only 6.4 on the Richter scale and located it 160 km (100 miles) below ground. By this time large waves were being reported along the entire northern coast.

ASIAN TSUNAMI DISASTER: FIRST A RUMBLE, THEN A WALL OF WATER TRAILING DEATH IN ITS WAKE

In northern Sumatra's capital, Medan, there was panic as strong tremors were felt. People ran out of their houses in terror. At Lhokseumawe, the main street was deluged with 3ft of water. A similar pattern emerged as buildings were destroyed and people abandoned their belongings and properties to begin the trek to higher ground. Military trucks, more used to dealing with hidden insurgents, now began leading the local population to safety.

Within 30 minutes of the first wave, hospitals began to treat the injured. Seventeen casualties arrived at one hospital, among them a man whose leg had been severed by falling debris from a house.

The first deaths followed as it was reported that 21 children, all below the age of ten, were swept from their parents' arms as they waded to safety. In Banda Aceh, nine bodies were recovered, five of them children. They were just the first of many thousands to lose their lives.

In Papua province Indonesia's president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, was visiting victims affected by an earthquake there only last month. He expressed his "deep concern" at the disaster. There was no let-up, however, and ten powerful aftershocks rocked the province.

Thailand was the second country to report any effects. Its south-eastern resorts were

crammed with Western holidaymakers enjoying Christmas breaks. In Phuket, the tourist playground of five-star resorts, waves 15ft high crashed into the lobbies of the seafront hotels. Trucks and cars were washed into the hotel lobbies, smashing through windows and walls.

In the bustling Thai capital of Bangkok, some 1,240 miles from the epicentre of the quake, buildings swayed. The 24-storey Charoenkrung Pracharat hospital was evacuated. Some patients were moved in to the streets still in their hospital beds, some hooked up to oxygen tanks. Terrified residents in apartment buildings reported hearing loud cracking noises and rumblings. They streamed out into the city's thundering traffic. Aftershocks were felt as far north as Chaing Mai, the trekking capital of northern Thailand.

The flooding in Phuket was mirrored in Phang-Nga province. First casualty reports suggested 100 injured. They were woefully optimistic. The first confirmed deaths came here - four people drowned. Many more were feared swept out to sea. Survivors took refuge on rooftops while in neighbouring Krabi where two local Thais, one a child, and a foreigner were confirmed killed when a wave struck their house.

In Phuket, Boree Carlsson, a 45-year-old Swedish hotel worker, eluded death by grabbing hold of a pillar in a hotel lobby as the furniture was sucked out by the water around him. "As I was standing there, a car actually floated into the hotel lobby and overturned because the current was so strong," he said. Rumours proliferated that the island was going to be hit by another wave causing panic among those that had survived. Electricity and water supplies were severed. The Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra announced that the southern provinces of Krabi and Pang-nga had also been hit, but not as badly as Phuket. He ordered the evacuation of areas hit by the tsunami.

Casualties in Phuket had already mounted fast and officials were battling to comprehend the scale of the disaster that had befallen them. The Watcharat hospital was filled to capacity within two hours, mainly with injured foreigners brought from hotels on the popular Kamala and Patong beaches. Police reported that 30 boats filled with tourists have been lost at sea. There was little hope that the flimsy converted fishing vessels - each one thought to be carrying several dozen backpackers - could have survived the mountainous seas. Flights to and from the island were immediately suspended leaving hundreds of tourists stranded on Phi Phi island, made famous as the location for the filming of *The Beach* starring Leonardo DiCaprio. It was feared many tourists and local workers had been killed as 200 bungalows at two resorts were swept out to sea.

Eyewitness accounts from holidaymakers began to emerge. "Suddenly this huge wave came, rushing down the beach, destroying everything in its wake," said Simon Clark, a 29-year-old photographer from London who was vacationing on Koh Ngai island near Krabi with his girlfriend, Caroline Barton, 25, also of London. "People that were snorkeling were dragged along the coral and washed up on the beach, and people that were sunbathing got washed into the sea," he said.

ASIAN TSUNAMI DISASTER: FIRST A RUMBLE, THEN A WALL OF WATER TRAILING DEATH IN ITS WAKE

Thai officials confirmed that several foreign divers were killed while exploring the Emerald Cave off the country's southern coast. They were among 70 visiting the beauty spot - a cave where the water is turned emerald by sunshine shining through a hole in the top of the rock. Several dozen more foreign divers were reported missing in the area.

The third country to report the affects of the tsunami was Malaysia. Situated just across the narrow strait of Malacca from Sumatra, the high-rise condominiums of the northern tourist island of Penang were badly shaken. Building owners checked their properties for damage as police in Penang reported tourists missing after being swept away by huge waves while swimming or riding on jet skis off Penang Island. More deaths were reported in the mainland state of Kedah. Malaysia's deputy prime minister Najib Razak addressed the nation. An emergency plan was activated to move people from vulnerable and affected areas. In Singapore, light tremors were reported across the country. There was mass panic as high-rise buildings swayed as the quake hit.

Three hours after Indonesia was hit, the Chittagong geophysical observatory in Bangladesh reported an earthquake measuring 7.36 on the Richter Scale. The quake, thought to be a powerful aftershock, was centred on the Andaman Islands at a depth of six miles below the surface. Local seismologists said they lacked the equipment to locate the centre of the quake. But its effects were being felt throughout the region. Elsewhere in the delta nation of 140 million people further rumbles were reported in southern and western regions as well as in the capital, Dhaka, which has a population of 11 million. Crops were flattened while two children were drowned as a boat with 15 tourists on board capsized in high waves off Kuakata, a sea resort south of Dhaka.

In Sri Lanka, 1,000 miles west of the epicentre, the southern beach resorts were enjoying their busiest time of the year. But as the first waves came ashore it was clear there was going to be major destruction and loss of life. The chairman of the luxury John Keells hotel group reported five of his resorts seriously damaged. Initial estimates suggested 3,000 people have been displaced from their homes. The figure soon rose to 100,000 but tripled again within hours. Six villages were immediately confirmed as flattened.

As the toll continued to grow, army and navy rescue teams were deployed. Half the navy's eastern fleet was mobilised to look for survivors. In Colombo flash floods shut the busy port, its main building submerged as thousands of workers are forced to flee, many of them in lorries, while huge waves pounded the sea walls.

Sri Lanka's president Chandrika Kumaratunga, who was on holiday in Britain, appealed for international assistance, declaring a national emergency. Witnesses reported seeing the bodies of children entangled in wire mesh used to barricade seaside homes south of Colombo. Victims were sucked into the sea as they dashed to retrieve beached fish bought ashore by the first waves, the survivors said. Gemunu Amarasinghe described the scene. "There were rows and rows of women and men standing on the road and asking if anyone has seen their family members. I also saw people bringing in bodies from the sea beaches and placing them on roads and covering with them sarongs. The first waves brought in fish and when the waves went down some of the fish remained. Some residents went to get them when the second waves hit," he said.

A BBC reporter, Roland Buerk, was near the southern town of Galle: "We were swept along for a few hundred metres, trying to dodge the motorcycles and the refrigerators and the cars that were coming with us.

"Most people have gone up onto higher ground, fearful of another tidal wave. Rumours are that another one might be coming and people are trying to get up onto the hills."

Doctors evacuated pregnant women from maternity wards near Galle, as others fled houses submerged under several feet of muddy water. Witnesses saw corpses floating in floodwaters, while thousands fled their homes in the hard-hit eastern port of Trincomalee. Cars floated out to sea.

In Colombo, slum areas close to rivers and waterways were flooded though the rest of the capital remained largely unscathed. The Tamil Tigers' website TamilNet reported many parts of the guerrillas' territory badly affected. Two hundred inmates escaped from the southern Matara prison.

ASIAN TSUNAMI DISASTER: FIRST A RUMBLE, THEN A WALL OF WATER TRAILING DEATH IN ITS WAKE

The sun loungers on the Maldives, the winter resort of choice for some of the world's wealthiest tourists, were also doing brisk trade when the tsunami struck there.

The nation's 1,192 atolls, already under threat from rising sea levels, were packed with tourists. It was here that the first British victim was confirmed - a man who suffered a heart attack as he saw a huge wave come towards him at the White Sand Beach resort in South Ari. He was among 285 tourists on the beach at the time the wave came ashore. Jetties were swept away and boathouses destroyed. As in all the other affected countries, warnings proliferated that there could be another wave within 12 hours.

For several hours the Maldives was cut off from the rest of the world. One journalist reached a hotel worker by telephone but he was too frightened to talk. The islands - just 3ft above sea level - had been hit by a 4ft wave. President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who has spent most of his 26 years in power warning of impending disaster caused by climate change, appealed for international assistance and declared a national emergency. The international airport was by now unusable.

Two-thirds of the capital Male, whose cramped white-washed houses were home to 75,000 people, was immediately sunk. Contact with the outlying atolls and their 225,000 inhabitants was also lost. Boats sent to help find survivors and bring the injured to medical help put the country's already stretched resources under yet more pressure.

It was only 30 minutes after the first tremors were felt in Indonesia that mild tremors were reported in southern India. The tremors lasted more than a minute. All along the coast, beach houses were washed away as waves sent them crashing on to roads. Boats were smashed as sea conditions worsened and water levels continued to rise. Police cordoned off the beach area but sea water began to seep into the coastal towns of Nellore and Vishakhapatnam in southern Andhra Pradesh.

Hospitals again began to fill and vast areas of land was submerged. Residents in multi-story buildings, rushed out of their homes after being jolted awake in the eastern states of Orissa and West Bengal and the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

But it emerged that Tamil Nadu had been worst hit, the state's northern city of Madras, and its fisherman, had borne the brunt of the devastation.

More than 2,500 fishermen had made their homes in the low lying areas of the city, they were right in the path of the wave, which hit a 620-mile stretch of India's eastern seaboard.

Bodies began to wash ashore at Marina beach in Madras. "I felt like I was on a train. I turned around and I saw that a small glass table with a flower vase was shaking," said resident Rajani Unni. "We saw people rushing away from fishermen colonies lining the beach. Women were wailing and crying."

Elliot's Beach was evacuated of 2,000 fisherman causing serious traffic jams. But it was too late for hundreds more now reported missing as the Indian Navy trawled the waters between Vishakhapatnam and Nellore.

Almost 500 tourists were stranded on a rock in the sea off the country's southernmost tip, Kanyakumari. Holidaymakers had taken the ferry to the Vivekananda Rock memorial to see the sun rise. Services were halted soon after the tourists landed because of choppy seas.

In Andhra Pradesh, 32 people including 15 children were immediately swept away as they took part in a Hindu bathing ritual to mark the full moon.

All along the coast, the sound of wailing filled the air and the beaches grew to resemble open air mortuaries. Locals removed the bodies in hessian sacks. The children's cries were the most pitiful. "Where are my mummy and daddy?" cried nine-year-old Bhuvaneshwari, whose parents were swallowed by the sea at Manginapudi beach near Machilipatnam, about 200 miles from the state capital, Hyderabad.

ASIAN TSUNAMI DISASTER: FIRST A RUMBLE, THEN A WALL OF WATER TRAILING DEATH IN ITS WAKE

Meanwhile the islands of the Indian Ocean took massive hits. The number of dead and missing on India's Andaman and Nicobar islands began to soar. Estimates suggested up to 1,000 were dead or missing, the number climbing all the time. Many more were reported dead in Kerala state, another popular tourist destination.

Throughout the day, further countries felt the force of the quake. The Cocos Islands, a remote outpost of Australian territory, was hit by a small wave. The Australian government set up a hot line for worried relatives while emergency services were put on standby in the sparsely populated north-west territory.

In Burma, 10 people were killed when a bridge collapsed in the coastal town of Kawthaung, close to the Thai border. State television confirmed the quake had hit, but did not give details of the extent of the damage. Thai scientists said they have detected an earthquake measuring 6.4 there. The effects spread to Africa's Indian Ocean coast. Countries stretching from the horn of Africa down as far south as Tanzania are were also hit. In the Seychelles, low lying coastal roads were flooded. Kenya's tourist beaches were closed at Mombasa and Malindi.

As the day closed, world leaders paid their respects to their dead. President George Bush sent his condolences on the "terrible loss of life". He promised to work with the United Nations to help those affected.

In Sri Lanka it was confirmed that 100,000 had been affected. Ten Britons were being treated in hospital in Phuket and there where nearly 300 dead. In Tamil Nadu 3,000 were killed, a similar number in Sri Lanka.

In Indonesia, more than 4,000 had lost their lives. Many many more were left homeless. At one hospital in Lhokseumawe, the corpses of at least six children were laid on stretchers in morgues. The local television showed a screaming mother hugging and kissing her dead child.

A health ministry official was shown reading the latest update on the death toll. "We are still waiting for more numbers," he said. "It will surely rise."

Load-Date: December 27, 2004

End of Document

THE WEEK

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

March 13, 2004 Saturday

Late Edition

Copyright 2004 John Fairfax Publications Pty Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Pg. 44

Length: 2746 words

Byline: Edited by Alan Kennedy. Joel Gibson for "What to say about ... Peter Costello" only.

Body

WHAT TO SAY ABOUT . . . PETER COSTELLO

"Oh God," you moan, echoing the response of the federal Treasurer to a gaggle of reporters last weekend. "Not this again." Just quietly, though, you enjoy the furtive whispers of a leadership challenge just as you expect Peter Costello and your dining table full of Melbourne businesspeople do.

"Mr Costello has ignored the question of leadership, despite media attempts to get him to comment, focusing on his desire for continuing strong economic management and continuance of good government," you declare to the diners, quoting a letter writer to The Age this week. "And somehow this has raised speculation of his intentions rather than praise for his dedication and his many achievements."

Turn to the diner alongside and chuckle quietly over the biblical symbolism of Peter denying his leader three times. "There comes a time in a relationship when no amount of promises and gifts from one party will rejuvenate interest from the other," you mumble secretly, repeating a letter to The Australian. "Frankly, the public is tired of John Howard, no, just bored, and wants out. Peter Costello, if he wants a chance, must take a risk. He has to go for it now. Faint heart never won fair public."

"Besides," you say, engaging the whole dinner party once again, "it wasn't even mentioned in the Coalition party room this week. And Bob McMullan asked him in Parliament on Thursday, 'Would the Treasurer confirm that he will acquit his statutory responsibility [to table the final budget outcome] in this matter by remaining as Treasurer and rule out challenging for the leadership?', to which Costello answered, 'Yes.'"

"If anything," you pipe up again, using BRW magazine as a source now, "it is reminiscent of 2001, when Howard's popularity was at a low ebb and it appeared he was heading for electoral defeat. Labor was peddling the rumour that Costello was considering a challenge and daring him to do it (hoping to capitalise on internal divisions). This was about the time of a leaked memo from the then Liberal Party president Shane Stone which said the public's impression of the Government as mean and tricky was largely the fault of the Treasurer. Costello, despite his obvious anger, was faced with a difficult choice and it was strikingly similar to the one he faces now."

He didn't have a stab then, you conclude, and he's not sharpening the knife now. He's taking the same line Howard took when under Peacock, you point out. Reminisce with Alan Ramsey in the Herald: "Nineteen years ago, when Howard was deputy and Andrew Peacock was the Liberals' opposition leader, someone or other was always demanding to know why Howard wouldn't rule out, absolutely, a leadership challenge. I went through the files and

THE WEEK

counted 11 different occasions the issue came up in the first eight months of 1985. Never once did Howard waver. It wasn't necessary, he would say. His loyalty to the Liberal Party had never been in question." And Howard made his way to the Lodge, didn't he? you say. Eventually.

Joel Gibson

Editorials

Fat tax

The call by some MPs for a tax on fat-rich and sugar-rich foods would be bound to be a veritable dog's breakfast. If society is to stigmatise the fat and the obese because their health is fragile and health care is expensive then we might as well tax sportsmen and women, who keep getting injuries which are expensive to treat. And while we're at it let's tax the poor, too, for they cost the welfare services quite a lot.

Geneva, March 9

Religious attack

Two recent attacks on Muslim places of worship in the Haute-Savoie region of eastern France are a serious matter. It is worrying that it took a five-column article in The New York Times a view from outside to bring home the true gravity of these attacks. Although the attacks were premeditated, there was no immediate expression of indignation or solidarity from the authorities.

France, March 10

Back to the colonial days

Our plain question to the British High Commissioner, Steven Evans, is: is he defying the decision taken by the British Parliament and negotiating with the Tamil Tigers? If the British Government was not serious about the imposition of the ban, what was the objective of making such a song and dance about it? Was it to seek the co-operation of Third World countries like Sri Lanka in their fight against global terrorism? Or does Britain, in this post-Cold War era, think that we can once again be kicked around as a British colony whose people can be taken for granted? The great majority of the people of this country are sick in the stomach with the duplicity of most Western nations.

Sri Lanka, March 11

Ugly affront

Cries of protest have arisen over the revelation that some Arab-Israelis were required to wear distinctive red stripes on their helmets while working on the expansion of the Knesset in Jerusalem. The Israeli Speaker, Reuven Rivlin, has ordered an end to the practice, but nothing can erase so ugly an affront to humanity in general and to Jewry in particular. It is no surprise that Jews of all nationalities figure prominently among those most outraged by examples such behaviour.

Lebanon March 10

WINEGATE IN QUEENSLAND

Report

Herald Sun, March 10

The Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie, said yesterday that he will reinstate Teresa Mullan, the ministerial adviser sacked over the Winegate affair.

THE WEEK

Ms Mullan was a senior media adviser to the Indigenous Affairs Minister, Liddy Clark, until last week when she was sacked after taking the blame for carrying a bottle of red wine onto a government plane during a trip to the alcohol-restricted Lockhart River Aboriginal community. She later changed her story, saying Ms Clark and the director-general, Warren Hoey, knew the wine was on the plane.

Report

News.com, March 11

A legal loophole forced Premier Beattie to reinstate a media adviser who lied to police over the Lockhart River wine affair even though she maintains the minister, Ms Clark, committed a much greater deception.

Police have legal advice that suggests Aboriginal community alcohol bans do not extend to airport tarmacs, undermining Mr Beattie's decision to sack Ms Mullan on the grounds that she had illegally taken a bottle of wine to the Cape York community. Ms Mullan yesterday took her lawyer, Tony Morris, QC, into a 90-minute meeting with Mr Beattie and the Deputy Premier, Terry Mackenroth, before the media was informed of the extraordinary backdown.

Report

The Australian, March 12

Queensland taxpayers could end up paying the legal expenses of everyone involved in the Winegate scandal even the reinstated staffer who admitted she lied to police Mr Beattie said yesterday.

The Premier said those aboard the government jet that took a bottle of wine into the Lockhart River community were free to seek reimbursement. He thought at least one of the players would put in a bill, but said no decision had been made to pay up. Editorial

Courier-Mail, March 11

Teresa Mullan has her job back. Well, not quite. Given that she effectively accused Liddy Clark, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, of lying, she could hardly be restored to her previous position as Ms Clark's senior media adviser. Instead she has been rostered on the Premier's staff, where no doubt she will be kept out of harm's way when she returns from four weeks of holidays. In the meantime the Government will be hoping that the Winegate controversy will evaporate.

Ms Mullan's rehiring means there will not be a very messy legal action for unfair dismissal pursued through the courts. That would have been disastrous for the Government. It would have directly raised the question of why Ms Mullan was sacked.

IRAQ THE ROAD AHEAD

Report

Japan Times, March 11

After a weeklong delay, Iraq's Governing Council has agreed to a new constitution for its country. The document . . . establishes a framework for democratic self-government and safeguards individual rights. The transition from dictatorship to democracy will not be easy, however: Shiite Muslims strongly criticised the document they had signed only minutes before. Their willingness to sign is a promising indication of a readiness to compromise for the country's sake. Iraq's future rests on their willingness to continue along that path.

Editorial

The Independent, London, March 9

THE WEEK

Ayatollah Sistani decided that holding up the signing again would create more ill-will than it was worth: he knew the real fight was still ahead. What has been agreed are safeguards for basic freedoms expression, assembly, religious belief and political activity and a provisional timetable for the formation of a government by December next year. Almost everything else has been fudged.

Editorial

Gulf Times, Qatar, March 9

The Shia leader's agreement to accept a document that he patently dislikes was apparently prompted by concern that other communities might feel that the Shia objections amounted to an attempt to take effective control of the country. If and when free elections are held, it is probable that the majority community will have a built-in majority in the national assembly. In order to preserve Iraq's unity it is essential that the constitution guarantees the rights of minorities.

Bruce Fein

Washington Times, March 9

The idea of an interim authority enjoying the legitimacy and competence to enforce an interim constitution is chimerical. Iraqi criminal justice is anaemic and dysfunctional. The police force is a joke. Not a single Iraqi figure commands nationwide popularity. The prospect of a splintered and convulsed Iraq after June 30 is overwhelming unless President George Bush directs an indefinite continuation of the coalition provisional authority.

Editorial

Liberation, France, March 10

It is difficult to criticise US objectives in Iraq . . . but the Bush Administration is clumsy and easily causes offence. George Bush presented his plan for modernising the Islamic world to a think-tank full of hawks, the American Enterprise Institute. His advisers suggested a parallel with US policy towards the old Soviet Union within the framework of the Helsinki process, but comparing Islam with communism has not met with universal approval.

THE NATION

VICTORIA

Drug bust

A major drug-trafficking ring has been smashed after 34 kilograms of ecstasy worth \$12 million was seized in a raid on a Caulfield house. Federal police arrested five men on Wednesday night and seized 255,000 ecstasy pills, which had been smuggled to Melbourne last month on a cargo vessel.

QUEENSLAND

Memories are made of this

A former National Party minister, Di McCauley, has said in her new book, *Diving off the Ironing Board*, that she fears for the future of the party and refuses to vote for the man who now holds her old seat of Callide, the Deputy Opposition Leader, Jeff Seeney. McCauley spent 12 years in Parliament from 1986 in the safest seat in Queensland for some of that time. In the book she says male MPs had a fixation of discussing their libidos, quoting fellow National MP Judy Gamin who said: "I'm so sick of old fellas talking about their old fellas". McCauley says the former premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, lost her support and respect when he told her he had the power to ring her local newspaper editor and tell him she was a "useless MP", thereby ensuring she would not hold the seat.

TASMANIA

THE WEEK

Lightening up

As Tasmanian cricket fans tried to come to terms with their exclusion from the Pura Cup final they pointed not at the players, but to the night sky at Bellerive Oval. Queensland played on at the SCG under lights to 7.35 to snatch victory over NSW with six balls to spare, nudging Tasmania out. Local planning rules forbid the use of lights at Bellerive, which is in a residential suburb. Stumps were pulled there 70 minutes earlier with Tasmania four wickets away from a win against Victoria.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dressing up

State school teachers will have to pull their socks up and leave shabby clothes at home under a new dress code. In a bid to lift the professional standards of government schools, the Education and Training Minister, Alan Carpenter, has targeted teachers who dress in casual or revealing clothes. Among the worst examples he had seen was a teacher who was wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with an American beer label while supervising a visit to State Parliament.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Taxing matters

Frustrated property investors have given the Government a list of changes they want to "unjust" land tax laws. Members of the Land Tax Reform Association, including former valuer-general John Darley, met the Treasurer, Kevin Foley, to urge the Government to stop pocketing tax windfalls at the expense of self-funded retirees and "mum and dad" investors.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Education overhaul

Territory schools should undergo a full-scale overhaul, a review into secondary education recommends. The report recommends replacing the two-tier school system with a four-tier structure. The change would require a restructuring of the curriculum and an increase in the cost of teacher training. The review also suggests the new senior secondary schools be aligned with Charles Darwin University.

NSW

Money-back guarantee

The State Government is set to investigate the disappearance of tens of millions of dollars in wages from Aboriginal trust funds in NSW. The Premier, Bob Carr, has promised that anyone who can prove they are owed money will have it returned. However, Aboriginal groups called on the Government to implement a draft plan prepared two years ago, which says up to \$69 million could be owed to claimants.

THE FALLOUT

No nudes is good news

Hong Kong's first naked newsreader has been taken off the air. Fire/Ice News had Chan Long, 18, reading the news while undressing until she was naked. Internet TV network NOW Broadband said the show had been taken off its adult channel.

Unhappy returns

THE WEEK

A henpecked robber who stole more than '1300 (\$2170) from a shop in Germany returned it an hour later because his wife nagged him. He said he needed the money to pay off debts but his wife had given him such a hard time that he returned it.

Good hare day A cocker spaniel which caught a hare in Holland has adopted the animal instead of killing it. Joke Poortman's dog, Tosca, caught the hare in the woods, reports the Nu website. Tosca and the hare now share a basket.

Holy pets

The Wall Street Journal reports some clergy are welcoming animals into church because of a fall in attendance. Not all worshippers at Connecticut's St Francis Episcopal Church are happy. One said his son-in-law had an allergy attack because of the animals.

Foul play

A Belgian referee says he won't officiate at another soccer match after his shorts and pants were pulled down during a game. Jacky Temmerman was refereeing a club game when a fan ran onto the pitch. "They can look for another idiot who is prepared to stand with his ass naked for '20 a game."

QUOTES

Technological development that is a project that we control rather than a gift we receive is a concern.

Bishop Anthony Fisher, from the Catholic Church, regarding the IVF baby created to save his brother, who has a rare genetic disease.

If the intent is to create another child that is disease-free and in doing so that child is able to help the child that is currently living with the disease, then I think ethically you could argue that is correct.

The AMA president, Bill Glasson, on the created baby.

It is stated in the Koran that those who rally behind Islam are also those who want to live under divine laws laid down by Allah. Naturally, they will go to heaven for choosing an Islamic party, while those who support un-Islamic parties will logically go to hell.

Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the chief minister of the north-eastern Malaysian state of Kelantan, campaigning for the nation's March 21 election.

These offences were so vile they were almost beyond comprehension to the community. I believe in capital cases, more than anything else we do in the justice system, the jury reflects the conscience of the community.

Judge LeRoy Millette, sentencing the Washington sniper John Allen Muhammad to death for his part in the shooting deaths of 10 people.

You can take that bloody thing away.

The Queen to a police constable patrolling the gardens of Buckingham Palace armed with a machine-pistol.

I don't think it is hard at all, at least from my point of view.

Michael Schumacher on staying motivated, after winning his fourth Australian Grand Prix.

Yes.

Peter Costello, on whether he would remain Treasurer until the next election.

Graphic

ILLUS: Out of the blue . . . going for a morning surf at Maroubra proved something of an obstacle course for Dr Michael Breakspear yesterday after recent heavy seas churned up kelp beds off the coast and dumped huge amounts of the brown slimy weed on our beaches. Photo: Edwina Pickles

Load-Date: July 17, 2007

End of Document

Looking back: A diary of events for 2006

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

December 30, 2006 Saturday

Copyright 2006 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. C9

Length: 3360 words

Byline: THE CANADIAN PRESS

Body

Here is a brief look at the major news events of Canada and the world in 2006: JANUARY 10 - Iran removes UN seals from its nuclear enrichment facility at Natanz, effectively ending a freeze on the process that can produce fuel for nuclear weapons.

12 - At least 363 Hajj pilgrims are killed and more than 1,000 injured in a stampede during the stoning the devil ritual in Saudi Arabia.

15 - Canadian diplomat Glyn Berry is killed, three Canadian soldiers injured in suicide bombing in Afghanistan.

23 - Stephen Harper's Conservatives win slim minority in Canada's 39th general election, ending 12 years of Liberal rule. Defeated prime minister Paul Martin resigns as Liberal leader.

25 - Frank McKenna resigns as Canada's ambassador to the United States. Hamas wins huge majority in Palestinian parliamentary elections as voters rejected the longtime rule of the Fatah party.

26 - Hudson's Bay, Canada's oldest company, accepts \$1.5-billion friendly takeover offer from U.S.-based Maple Leaf Heritage Investments, headed by Jerry Zucker.

29 - Seventy-two miners are trapped after underground fire at potash mine in Esterhazy, Sask. All are rescued after 30 hours.

30 - Trial of accused serial killer Robert Pickton officially begins in New Westminster, B.C.

FEBRUARY 1 - In final report on the federal sponsorship scandal, Justice John Gomery proposes rules to make government more accountable and transparent. French and German newspapers republish caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in an effort to defend freedom of expression, re-igniting anger of Muslims who were outraged when a Danish newspaper first printed the cartoons five months earlier.

2 - Sea King helicopter with five crew members aboard crashes in ocean off Denmark; all are rescued.

3 - Red Sea ferry sinks after fire breaks out, killing 1,000 of the 1,400 people aboard.

6 - Stephen Harper is sworn in as the 22nd prime minister of Canada.

Looking back: A diary of events for 2006

14 - Former Ontario premier Mike Harris tells judicial inquiry into the 1995 police shooting of a native protester that he uttered a profane slur at aboriginals at a meeting with police just before the shooting.

17 - At least 1,800 people believed dead in mudslides caused by torrential rains in the Philippines.

22 - Insurgents detonate bombs inside one of Iraq's most famous Shiite shrines in Samarra, destroying its golden dome and triggering reprisal attacks on Sunni mosques.

24 - Rodney MacDonald, 34, becomes Canada's youngest premier when he is sworn in Nova Scotia.

28 - Canadian Brig.-Gen. David Fraser takes command of coalition troops in southern Afghanistan.

MARCH 1 - Marshall Rothstein is confirmed as the newest member of the Supreme Court.

2 - Cpl. Paul Davis, and Master Cpl.

Timothy Wilson are killed when their armoured vehicle runs off the road in Afghanistan. Former Beatle Paul McCartney and his wife Heather stage a seal hunt protest on ice floes in the Gulf of St.

Lawrence.

5 - Underdog Crash, directed by Canadian Paul Haggis, wins best picture honours over Brokeback Mountain at the Academy Awards.

11 - Former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic, on trial for war crimes, is found dead in a prison cell in the Netherlands.

12 - In his first foreign trip since taking office, Prime Minister Stephen Harper pays surprise visit to Afghanistan.

13 - C.R.A.Z.Y., the movie of a gay youth coming of age in 1960s Quebec, wins 10 awards at the Genie Awards.

16 - Long-awaited first session of Iraq's new parliament lasts about 30 minutes before being indefinitely adjourned because of a deadlock between political parties.

22 - The B.C. ferry Queen of the North goes off course, hits a rock and sinks off the coast of Prince Rupert, B.C. All but two of the 101 people aboard are rescued.

Basque militant group ETA announces permanent ceasefire to end a decades- long campaign of terror aimed at winning independence for the northern Spanish region.

23 - Canadian hostages James Loney and Harmeet Sooden and a Briton, Norman Kember, were freed after being held for four months in Iraq.

28 - Former Liberian president Charles Taylor, facing war crime charges, is captured on the run in Nigeria. Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's Kadima party wins 28 of 120 seats in the Israeli election, more than any other party. Massive protests and a nationwide public transport strike hit France over a new youth employment law.

29 - Pte. Robert Costall, 22, killed in a firefight in Afghanistan.

APRIL 4 - Alberta's Ralph Klein, the country's longest-serving premier, announces plans to step down by the end of the year.

Three Canadian-Venezuelan brothers found dead outside Caracas after being kidnapped by men dressed as police.

5 - Gail Vickery is named Alberta's first **female** chief judge.

Looking back: A diary of events for 2006

7 - At least two suicide attackers wearing women's cloaks blow themselves up in a Shiite mosque in Baghdad, killing at least 85 people and wounding more than 164. London court rules that author Dan Brown did not steal ideas for his massive bestseller The Da Vinci Code from a nonfiction work.

8 - The bodies of eight men with ties to the Bandidos biker gang are found stuffed in four abandoned cars near Shedden in the worst mass killing in recent Ontario history. Other gang members are charged in the killings.

10 - Federal government makes it illegal for anyone in Canada to support or help the Tamil Tigers, fighting for an independent state in Sri Lanka.

11 - Iran announces it has successfully enriched uranium for the first time.

20 - Ontario Provincial Police try and fail to end a 52-day occupation of a southwestern Ontario construction site by aboriginals claiming it is their land.

22 - Cpl. Matthew Dinning, Bombardier Myles Mansell, Lt. William Turner and Cpl. Randy Payne are killed by roadside bomb in Afghanistan. It is the Canada's worst one-day combat loss since the Korean War.

27 - Federal government announces it has reached framework deal to end the longstanding softwood lumber dispute with the United States.

MAY 1 - Federal government calls public inquiry into the Air India tragedy.

2 - In his first federal budget, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty announces GST will be cut by one percentage point on July 1.

3 - U.S. federal jury rejects death penalty for al-Qaida conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui, sends him to prison for life for his role in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

5 - In the first slaying of a Windsor police officer on duty, Const. John Atkinson is killed while approaching two drug suspects at a convenience store in Windsor, Ont.

10 - Federal cabinet approves \$2-billion deal to compensate former students of aboriginal residential schools for physical and sexual abuse.

15 - Iraqi officials formally charge dictator Saddam Hussein with crimes against humanity.

17 - Federal government announces plans to kill the long-gun registry, as well as an immediate one-year amnesty so owners of rifles and shotguns will not have to register them. Capt. Nichola Goddard dies in Afghanistan, the first Canadian woman to be killed in action while serving in a combat role. House of Commons vote 149-145 to extend the deployment of Canadian troops in Afghanistan to February 2009. Former Beatle Paul McCartney and Heather Mills announce they are separating.

19 - Nepal declares itself a secular state, ending its unique status as the world's last Hindu kingdom.

25 - Former Enron chiefs Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling are convicted of conspiracy to commit securities and wire fraud in one of the biggest business scandals in U.S. history.

27 - Earthquake in Indonesia kills almost 6,000 people.

31 - Bans that prohibit smoking in all enclosed workplaces and public places take effect in Ontario and Quebec
JUNE 2 - Seventeen suspects arrested in Toronto area in biggest terrorism-related raid in Canada.

6 - Chuck Guite, former head of the federal sponsorship program, is found guilty of five counts of fraud totalling \$1.5 million, which he later appealed.

7 - Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the founder of al-Qaida in Iraq, killed in American raid near Baghdad.

Looking back: A diary of events for 2006

8 - Former aboriginal leader David Ahenakew's conviction for promoting hatred against Jews overturned, new trial ordered.

11 - The Drowsy Chaperone, a Canadianborn musical celebration of Broadway's past glories, wins five Tony Awards.

21 - Ed Byrne, natural resources minister in Newfoundland and Labrador, resigns post after audit raises questions about financial irregularities within the provincial legislature.

22 - Prime Minister Stephen Harper offers formal apology and compensation for head tax applied to Chinese immigrants between 1885 and 1923.

29 - **Women** vote for the first time in history in the Kuwait election.

JULY 1 - Canadian and U.S. trade officials work out final wording of the Canada- U.S. softwood lumber agreement reached in April. China opens first Beijing- to-Tibet railway, the highest-altitude railway in the world.

4 - In so-called keepsake scandal, report by Newfoundland and Labrador auditor implicates four politicians of overspending on office budgets by about \$3.4-million.

6 - Prime Minister Stephen Harper meets U.S. President George Bush during his first official visit to the United States. Official recount holds up presidential election result in Mexico, giving conservative candidate Felipe Calderon the victory.

7 -Two Saskatchewan RCMP officers are shot and seriously wounded after responding to a domestic disturbance in the hamlet of Mildred. They later die of their wounds; manhunt leads to the surrender of a suspect.

9 - Cpl. Anthony Boneca, 21, killed in battle in Afghanistan.

11 - Eight bombs hit seven trains on a commuter rail network in Mumbai, India, during evening rush hour, killing more than 200 people and wounding 700.

12 - To retaliate for the Hezbollah's capture of an Israeli soldier, Israel bombs southern Lebanon and sends ground troops over the border for the first time in six years. It starts 34 days of fighting that kills 855 Lebanese and 159 Israelis.

13 - Cormorant search and rescue helicopter crash off the eastern tip of Nova Scotia during a training exercise, killing three men and injuring four others.

17 - Undersea earthquake triggers tsunami on Indonesia's Java island, killing about 700 people.

19 - Canadian government charts seven ships to evacuate Canadians from Lebanon as the war between Hezbollah and Israel escalates.

19 - Jenna Lambert, 15, of Kingston, Ont., born with cerebral palsy, becomes the first woman with a disability to swim across Lake Ontario.

22 - Cpl. Francisco Gomez, 44, and Cpl.

Jason Patrick Warren, 29, are killed by suicide bombers in Afghanistan.

25 - Israeli bombs destroy UN observer post on the border in southern Lebanon, killing four peacekeepers, including one Canadian.

AUGUST 1 - After having surgery, Cuban leader Fidel Castro temporarily cedes power to his younger brother.

Looking back: A diary of events for 2006

3 - Four soldiers are killed and 10 injured in Canada's bloodiest day to date in fighting in Afghanistan. The dead are Cpl. Christopher Reid, Sgt. Vaughan Ingram, Cpl. Bryce Keller and Pte. Kevin Dallaire.

5 - Master Cpl. Raymond Arndt is killed in Afghanistan.

9 - Master Cpl. Jeffrey Scott Walsh killed in Afghanistan while on patrol, apparently in an accidental discharge of a firearm by another Canadian.

10 - British authorities arrest 24 men accused of being part of a terrorist plot to blow up aircraft heading to the United States using explosives smuggled in hand luggage. The arrests lead to tough restrictions on bringing liquids onboard flights.

11 - Cpl. Andrew Eykelenboom is killed in Afghanistan.

13 - The 16th International AIDS Conference opens in Toronto, attended by more than 30,000 delegates from 170 countries but not Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

14 - UN-brokered ceasefire ends Israel- Hezbollah combat in Lebanon.

21 - Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's trial begins in Baghdad on charges of genocide for a military campaign against Kurds in 1988.

22 - Cpl. David Braun is killed in a suicide bomb attack in Afghanistan. Parti Quebecois Leader Andre Boisclair sworn in as a member of the Quebec legislature.

24 - International Astronomical Union approves new definition of planet, stripping Pluto of its status and placing it in a new category known as dwarf planets.

27 - A Canadian-built commuter plane crashed on take off at Lexington, Ky., airport, killing 49 people, including two Canadians.

Toronto-bred Kiefer Sutherland and his action series "24" walk off with top honours at the Emmy Awards.

27 - Ecuadorian Maria Esther de Capovilla, believed to be the world's oldest person, dies at age 116.

SEPTEMBER 3 - Four Canadian soldiers - Sgt. Shane Stachnik, Warrant Officer Frank Robert Mellish, Pte. William Cushley and Warrant Officer Richard Francis Nolan - are killed at the start of Operation Medusa, an anti-Taliban offensive into the Panjwaii region in Afghanistan.

4 - A U.S. warplane mistakenly fires on Canadian soldiers, killing Pte. Mark Anthony Graham.

6 - U.S. President George W. Bush admits for first time the CIA operated clandestine prisons outside the United States.

7 - British Prime Minister Tony Blair promises to resign within a year. U.S. formally hands over control of Iraq's new military to Prime Minister Nuri al- Maliki's government.

9 - Canadian astronaut Steve MacLean and five crewmates lift off on the shuttle Atlantis on a mission to resume construction on the International Space Station.

13 - Kimveer Gill, 25, randomly opens fire at Dawson College in Montreal, killing 18-year-old Anastasia DeSousa and wounding 20 others. He kills himself after being shot by police.

15 - Ford Motor Co. announces plans to close two plants, one of them in Windsor, Ont., cutting 10,000 salaried jobs as part of a restructuring. Canada announces another 200 troops and 15 battle tanks will be sent to Afghanistan, bringing the total Canadian military contingent in Afghanistan to 2,500.

Looking back: A diary of events for 2006

18 - Public inquiry concludes RCMP provided Americans with inaccurate evidence against Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen who was deported from the United States to Syria in 2002, where he was tortured as a terrorist suspect.

Suicide bomber on a bicycle kills Pte.

David Byers, Cpl. Shane Keating, Cpl.

Keith Morley and Cpl. Glen Arnold in Afghanistan.

Liberal Shawn Graham bests Bernard Lord's two-term Conservative government in an election and becomes premier of New Brunswick.

20 - Commons unanimously apologizes to Maher Arar for Canada's involvement in his deportation from the United States to Syria.

21 - Prime Minister Stephen Harper makes his first address to the UN General Assembly in New York, appeals for more help in Afghanistan.

25 - Air India inquiry opens in Ottawa.

26 - Former Enron financial whiz Andrew Fastow receives six-year prison term for his role in the 2001 collapse of the energy giant.

28 - RCMP Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli apologizes to Maher Arar and his family for the force's role in his deportation.

29 - Pte. Josh Klukie killed in Afghanistan.

30 - Five people are crushed to death when an overpass in Laval, Que., collapses.

OCTOBER 2 - Five Amish schoolgirls are massacred after gunman enters their one-room schoolhouse in Pennsylvania.

3 - Sgt. Craig Gillam and Corp. Robert Mitchell are killed in Afghanistan.

5 - Premier Rodney MacDonald announces his government will not appeal Nova Scotia Supreme Court decision striking down regulations stopping Sunday shopping.

7 - Trooper Mark Andrew Wilson killed by roadside bomb in Afghanistan.

9 - North Korea conducts its first test of a nuclear weapon.

14 - Sgt. Darcy Tedford and Pte. Blake Williamson are killed in a Taliban ambush.

18 - Outspoken MP Garth Turner is suspended from the Conservative caucus, accused of breaching party confidentiality with entries on his Internet blog. Norwalk virus is blamed for making more than 300 students ill at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B., and 60 at St.

Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, N.S.

27 - Quebec Inuit vote overwhelmingly in favour of a massive land claim agreement that gives them ownership of 80 per cent of the small islands in the waters off their northern shore and a share of offshore resource royalties.

30 - Government task force recommends the Canadian Wheat Board give up its monopoly on Canadian wheat and barley sales and compete with other companies on the open market. Cpl.

Michael Seeley of Fredericton is killed by insurgents while on patrol with U. S.

Looking back: A diary of events for 2006

forces in Iraq.

31 - Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty announces new tax on income trusts, sparking outrage because the Conservatives had promised during the election campaign they would not tax the trusts.

NOVEMBER 1 - Canadian Brig.-Gen. David Fraser officially hands over control of NATO operations in Afghanistan to the Dutch.

5 - Saddam Hussein is found guilty of crimes against humanity for a campaign against Shia Muslims in 1982 and sentenced to death.

7 - Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega is named winner of the presidential election in Nicaragua. Republicans suffer stinging losses in the U.S. mid-term elections, losing control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate to the Democrats.

8 - U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld resigns.

15 - Major storm knocks out power and causes flooding in B.C.'s Lower Mainland and boil-water advisory for about two million people in the Vancouver area.

18 - Actors Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes are married in a Scientology ceremony at a 15th-century castle in Bracciano, Italy.

22 - More than 70 people are arrested in raids that Quebec police say deal a major blow to the Montreal mafia.

23 - Prime Minister Stephen Harper introduces legislation to make people charged with gun crimes prove they are not a threat to society in order to be freed on bail. Former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko dies in London hospital of radiation poisoning.

27 - Motion recognizing the Quebecois as a nation in a united Canada, introduced by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, passes in the Commons by a vote of 222-16. In byelections, Liberals retain Ontario riding while male-prostitute-turned-priest wins for BQ in Quebec.

Rare winter storm dumps up to 50 centimetres of snow on B.C.'s Lower Mainland. Chief Warrant Officer Bobby Girouard and Cpl. Albert Storm killed in Afghanistan.

28 - Auditor General Sheila Fraser says Ron Stewart, former CFL star, made more than \$325,000 in questionable claims and improperly cashed out vacation entitlements when he was ombudsman for federal prison inmates.

30 - After 22 years in prison for murdering his wife, former Saskatchewan cabinet minister Colin Thatcher is granted full parole.

DECEMBER 1 - Pope Benedict XVI ends four-day trip to Turkey that is seen as a landmark to reconciliation of Islam and Christianity.

2 - Liberal delegates choose Quebec MP Stephane Dion as their new federal leader at Montreal convention.

3 - Ed Stelmach is elected Alberta Conservative leader, replacing Premier Ralph Klein.

6 - Iraq Study Group report, a sweeping rejection of current U.S. policy in Iraq, recommends pulling out most U.S. combat troops from the country by 2008.

7 - Giuliano Zaccardelli is forced to resign as RCMP commissioner after misleading parliamentary committee probing Maher Arar case.

12 - In response to the release of a second report into the Maher Arar affair, Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day announces an inquiry into the cases of three men who suffered a fate similar to Arar.

Looking back: A diary of events for 2006

- 13 - Bernard Lord announces resignation as leader of New Brunswick's Progressive Conservative party.
- 15 - Hurricane-force winds knock out power in southern British Columbia, leaving about quarter-million people in the dark.
- 19 - Federal government fires the head of Canadian Wheat Board, Adrian Measner, after he openly disagrees with Conservative policy.
- 20 - Canadian troops launch first major offensive in Operation Baaz T'suka in the Panjwaii district of Afghanistan, in an area believed to be a gathering point for Taliban forces.
- 22 - Olympic champion Myriam Bedard is arrested in Maryland over allegations she abducted her 12-year-old daughter.
- 26 - Alleged Russian spy who used the name Paul William Hampel is deported from Canada to Russia. At least 260 people die after gasoline pipeline explodes in Lagos, Nigeria.
- 28 - Somali troops backed by Ethiopian forces enter Mogadishu, ending six months of domination of the city by an Islamic movement.

Load-Date: January 8, 2007

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

US Fed News

October 16, 2006 Monday 4:34 AM EST

Copyright 2006 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 10799 words

Byline: US Fed News

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

The United Nations issued the following press release:

Member States must adopt without change or delay the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) as it began its discussion of indigenous issues.

The adoption of the draft Declaration by the Human Rights Council at its first session was a result long-awaited by indigenous people and the human rights community, coming after almost 20 years of negotiations in Geneva, he said. The Declaration represented a new path for the protection of the human rights of indigenous people and reflected the emerging international consensus on the content of their rights. He appealed to Member States not to disappoint the hopes of indigenous people of the world.

Mr. Stavenhagen drew attention to the "implementation gap" between legal standards and substantive change in the lives of indigenous people. That gap was a serious problem that deserved the careful attention of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. He noted that in many countries, international norms and principles were not always applied in domestic legislation. Generally speaking, there were no adequate mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of indigenous legislation and to evaluate its impact, he said. The bodies responsible for protecting indigenous rights were often weak and vulnerable and did not have the necessary political and financial support. Organizations defending indigenous people were often pressured and sometimes threatened and harassed, he said.

José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, echoed the call for adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at this session of the General Assembly. The Declaration provided the international community with a comprehensive international standard towards which all should strive together, he said. Mr. Ocampo noted that too often indigenous people experienced violations of their basic human rights and were excluded from national development processes. The United Nations, therefore, had an obligation to continue to promote respect for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in development processes at all levels.

While many delegations expressed support for the draft Declaration - including Estonia, Greece, Mexico, the Nordic countries, Peru and Spain - some expressed strong reservations. The representative of New Zealand, speaking also on behalf of Australia and the United States, said those countries could not accept the adoption of a text that was confusing, unworkable, contradictory and deeply flawed. For example, the Declaration's reference to

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

self-determination could be misrepresented as conferring a unilateral right of self-determination and possible secession, thus threatening the political unity, territorial integrity and stability of existing Member States, she said.

She noted that there was no consensus on the draft and no opportunity for States to discuss the current text collectively. The Human Rights Council and its President had rejected calls for more time to improve the text, setting a poor precedent for the work and role of the Council, she said. The Declaration's provisions on lands and resources would be "unworkable and unacceptable", she said, adding that the text lacked even a definition of "indigenous peoples". It might be true that the Declaration was not legally binding in any way, but indigenous people deserved a declaration that was clear, transparent and capable of implementation. The current text failed all those tests and could lead to disputes, bitterness and unfulfilled expectations on all sides.

The representative of Colombia also expressed concerns over the manner in which the Human Rights Council had adopted the Declaration, noting that more work was needed to achieve a text that could be adopted without reservations.

Nearly all delegations expressed concern over the ongoing problems facing indigenous people, urging greater international cooperation to address remaining challenges. The representative of Ecuador noted that the Second International Decade for Indigenous People took into account that most indigenous people in developing countries grappled with inequality, economic and social exclusion as well as hunger, malnutrition, unemployment and little or no access to health care, education and housing. Governments needed to show greater political will and concerted action to end such abuses, she said.

Also speaking on indigenous issues were the representatives of Fiji, Panama and the Russian Federation.

Representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) also made statements.

In other business, the Committee this morning concluded its debate on the promotion and protection of the rights of children, hearing from the representatives of Suriname, Peru, Albania, Morocco, Iran, Bahrain, the Gambia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Israel, the Congo, Jamaica, El Salvador, Kenya, Palestine, Fiji, Burkina Faso, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mali and Cameroon. An observer from the Sovereign Military Order of Malta also spoke, as did a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The representative of Lebanon spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

The Committee will meet again at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 17 October, to conclude its debate on indigenous issues.

Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met today to conclude its discussions on the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

For more background on this issue, please see Press Release GA/SHC/3852 of 11 October.

The Committee also began its general discussion of issues concerning indigenous people. Presented before it was the Secretary-General's note transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people (document A/61/490). The report highlights activities carried out by the Special Rapporteur from November 2005 to October 2006, noting concerns demanding urgent attention.

His work included a thematic report on implementation of standards and jurisprudence relating to the rights of indigenous people; country visits to New Zealand and Ecuador; follow-up visits to Guatemala, Mexico and Canada; and communications with Governments regarding alleged human rights violations of indigenous people worldwide. The report refers to the relevance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted at the Human Rights Council's first session.

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

In addition, the Committee had before it the Secretary-General's note on the status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations (document A/61/376), which discusses the Fund's activities, income and expenditures, as well as pledges and payments made. It also provides updates to the previous biennial report (document A/59/257) and reports on the 2005 and 2006 sessions of the Board of Trustees.

The note states that the Board of Trustees would need an additional \$733,600 to process 2007 applications and successfully fulfil its mandate before its twentieth session scheduled from 26 February to 2 March. Further, the note strongly encourages Governments that have not yet contributed to the Fund to do so and encourages donors to contribute to the Fund by year's end so that the United Nations Treasurer could record their contributions before the upcoming annual session.

Statements on Children's Rights

ROSITA HUBARD (Suriname) said the development of children has often been inhibited by poverty, lack of education, discrimination, armed conflicts, exploitation, violence and abuse. The social situation of families should be improved as a first step to addressing situations that impede the development of children. Children had often been considered as representing the future, but they were also part of the present. Investing in children was therefore an investment in sustainable development and enhanced human security.

Suriname had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993 and its Optional Protocols in 2002, she said. Its lead institution for monitoring and coordinating social policy and programmes for children had been the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing. In cooperation with non-governmental organizations, a Child Abuse Network had been established, and a national policy plan had been drafted giving priority to policy regarding children. The implementation of that policy framework had taken place in cooperation with United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

ROMY TINCOPA (Peru) noted that her Government had adopted an agenda to protect children's rights that prioritized the poverty reduction and improved access to health care and education, protection against violence and exploitation, and the inclusion of young people in decision-making. Also, the Government had taken measures to eradicate child sex tourism and address the problem of child rape. Since 2002, the country had been following a national plan of action for children and adolescents aimed at eradicating all forms of violence against children. School curricula had adopted a gender-sensitive approach. A programme had been launched to train youth advocates.

While Peru had made progress, a great deal remained to be done, she said. Her country was committed to continue working towards the complete elimination of violence against children and noted the importance of implementing the recommendations of the in-depth study on this issue. Her delegation welcomed the report's suggestion for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to act as global advocate for children, noting the need for better coordination within the United Nations to cope with the problem of violence against children.

LORENC XHAFERRAJ (Albania) said his country, having signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union, had been striving to implement European Union standards especially those regarding human rights. It strongly believed that the future belonged to children and was firmly committed to promoting and protecting their rights. Albania had ratified the most important international instruments dealing with the protection of children including those in the areas of organized crime, labour and cyber crime. A number of policymaking structures responding to violence had been set up. The Government was fully committed to reviewing its strategy and analyzing gaps, failures and other situations in order to achieve better implementation.

A National Strategy for Children had been adopted by the Government in 2001 and a Tirana Child Helpline, established a year ago, was now fully operational, he said. The Government had been cooperating with UNICEF and other United Nations specialized agencies. Exclusion of children in Albania had mainly derived from past rural poverty and weak institutional decentralization, and from today's internal and international migration, insufficient policies and funds, inadequate mechanisms enabling the better implementation of laws, et cetera. Reducing

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

poverty, launching special educational and cultural programmes and projects for children, and - in parallel - tough measures against abusers and traffickers, had been among concrete measures and priority targets of the Government.

Mr. KADIRI (Morocco) noted that despite the progress achieved, the international community was still far from achieving its agreed objectives. Millions of children were denied their most basic rights including access to health and education. Many were cruelly exploited and subjected to violence, which was further exacerbated in conflict situations. His delegation called upon the international community to strengthen joint action and take concrete measures to protect children and ensure their right to a dignified life.

Morocco had undertaken efforts to harmonize its national laws with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, he said. It had reformed the penal code, organized tribunals for children and reformed procedures for dealing with under-aged accused. The Government also worked to increase school enrolment and had launched a national programme to distribute schoolbooks to children from poor families especially girls from rural areas. He noted the growing synergy between the efforts of the Government and non-governmental organizations working to protect children's right to life, development, protection and participation.

PAIMANEH HASTEH (Iran) said that, four years on, the objectives of the United Nations Special Session on Children had yet to be achieved. An important issue that had received little attention related to factors which had increased demand for the commercial exploitation of children. The impunity of sexual exploiters, the pernicious effects of a globalized free market, discriminatory attitudes - especially discrimination on the basis of race, colour and ethnicity - and traffickers' greed had been among the main factors, which went hand in hand with poverty, social inequity at the local level and economic disparities at the global level. It was very important to take the necessary measures to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children by adopting a holistic approach and addressing the contributing factors.

The situation of children in armed conflicts was another area of concern that needed attention, she said. The international community should make necessary efforts towards combating the violation of rights of children in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Palestinian children had been routinely harassed and intimidated by the occupying forces of the Israeli regime, through the shelling of houses and schools, the killing and injuring of children or their detention, raids on schools, the beating of teachers in front of students, and the prohibiting of the construction of schools. Iran had vigorously pursued the objectives set down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and there had been greater emphasis on conditions likely to contribute to quality improvements for disadvantaged children.

Mr. ALHIDDI (Bahrain) stressed that the international community must honour its commitments to protect children. Bahrain had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on children and armed conflict. Bahrain's laws, policies and programmes were consistent with its treaty obligations. The Kingdom also had acceded to the Convention on the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour. He said a national commission for children had been formed. The Kingdom had undertaken a programme for orphans beginning in 2001, providing monthly financial assistance. The Government was committed to efforts to improve the social well-being of young people and was working to strengthen coordination with civil society.

CRISPIN GREY-JOHNSON (Gambia) said the United Nations study on violence against children led by Paulo Sergio Pinheiro had been timely and momentous in refocusing the world's attention on an issue that for decades had been a taboo. It had generated momentum for serious policy and programmatic discussions at the national and international levels to tackle that ugly phenomenon. The Gambia commended the collaborative, inclusive and participatory way in which the study had been prepared including the active involvement of Gambian children.

Quoting the First Lady of the Gambia, H.E. Madam Zineb Yahya Jammeh, at the launch of the All Africa Special Report titled Ending Legalized Violence Against Children, he said the dynamic role played by children could not be downplayed; discipline without doubt was quite cardinal in raising children, but policymakers should make sure that the enforcement of disciplinary values did not marginalize or brush aside the rights of the child. In the Gambia, the

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

Government had been collaborating with UNICEF and civil society under the umbrella of a Child Protection Alliance to address child sex tourism, child trafficking and violence in schools and communities. International and subregional cooperation would remain crucial to success. In education, gender parity in basic education - one of the Millennium Development Goals - had been achieved; it was hoped that by 2015 there would be equal enrolment of boys and girls with a view to achieving universal access.

HAJI FADILLAH HAJI YUSOF (Malaysia) said that many problems facing children were closely related to under-development, poverty and conflicts in developing countries. The problems could not be solved unless these underlying issues were addressed. As had been previously noted, obstacles to achieving internationally agreed goals included lack of resources and the decline in international funding. Malaysia's National Plan of Action for Children focused on development, protection and participation of children including programmes for children with disabilities.

There was an urgent need for a strong international partnership to address the root causes of the problem and for mechanisms to be put in place to prevent violence against children, he said. Ensuring that children were protected from violence was critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He commended the independent expert for his in-depth study on all forms of violence against children, but noted one glaring omission in the report's failure to address the situation of children in the Middle East, particularly in the occupied territories.

MARIE YVETTE BANZON (Philippines) said her country had in April 2006, in response to a call from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, passed the Comprehensive Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act that raised the age of criminal liability, introduced a diversion programme to deal with youth offenders without resorting to formal trial procedures, and established a juvenile justice and welfare council to monitor compliance and implementation. Consultations had meanwhile been initiated on banning corporal punishment, strategic planning on children and HIV/AIDS had been done, and ongoing regional training on the protection of children in armed conflict had begun. Investigative studies and discussions with parents and children on how to improve efforts to combat child pornography had also begun.

October had been National Children's Month in the Philippines aimed at emphasizing the importance of the role of the child within the family and society, she said. The Philippines had intensified the implementation of its Child 21 Plan, a national strategic framework plan for the development of children. Regarding resource mobilization, the Philippines continued to call on international partners, the United Nations system and international organizations to continue to assist States in implementing their goals for children. The family - the natural environment for growth and well-being of children - had to be supported in order for children to be protected from all physical, emotional and psychological harm.

TUVIA ISRAELI (Israel) said children made up nearly one third of the country's population and 10 per cent of those children were immigrants. Israel focused on prenatal care and on providing a first-rate and comprehensive education. Remaining challenges included child poverty, with 35 per cent of children in Israel living below the poverty line, an increase of 2 per cent from the previous year. The Government had undertaken a number of initiatives to address that problem with the goal of reducing child poverty to 15 per cent within a decade.

There were external challenges as well, with Israeli children subjected to the constant threat of terror. Currently, children in the southern city of Sderot and other villages in the area were under constant threat of attack from Hamas terrorists who launched Qassam rockets at Israel from the nearby Gaza Strip. He expressed dismay at the statement of the representative of Lebanon last week blaming Israel for the suffering of Lebanese children. It was Hizbollah that was to blame, he said, for attacking Israel on 12 July 2006 and holding all of Lebanon hostage to its selfish and unholy aspirations. During that time, one million Israelis, one third of them children, were forced to flee their homes and live in bomb shelters.

EMILE ANGE MILO MBOU-MYLONGO (Congo) said that, since the special session on children, efforts had been made worldwide to offer children a better life. However, despite advances made in some individual countries, much remained to be done at the global level. Tens of millions of children continued to die every year from preventable

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

illnesses; 100 million - 60 per cent of them girls - lacked education; and millions were victims of HIV/AIDS, poverty, armed conflicts, discrimination, et cetera. The Congo had adopted two governmental strategies to address the problems of children and had put the Ministry of Social Affairs in charge of coordinating activities for the promotion of children. Children's welfare had been taken into account in the elaboration of the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Document.

Children in the Congo had the means for free expression and participation in decision which affected them such as a Children's Parliament, established in 2003, which had proven itself as part of the institutional landscape, he said. During its second national gathering, its young deputies had reflected on the problem of mistreatment. Their conclusions had informed the action of the Ministry of Social Affairs, notably in this year's celebration of the Day of the African Child. As in many other sub-Saharan African States, HIV/AIDS had been an obstacle to development in the Congo, where the Government and UNICEF had put into place a national plan for 2003-2006 that included strategies for reducing the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child and for supporting the orphans of affected families.

ARIEL BOWEN (Jamaica) pointed out that the reverse side of violence against children was the involvement of children in armed conflict, where children themselves were forced by adults to become the perpetrators of violence in societies. Her delegation had taken a special interest in that issue, firmly believing that there could be no justification for the forced recruitment of children as soldiers or engaging them in violence.

The promotion and protection of the rights of children in Jamaica was a priority of her Government, which had undertaken a number of initiatives to protect children from abuse, promote healthy lifestyles and provide quality education, she said. Jamaica had reduced infant and maternal mortality and reduced severe and moderate malnutrition among children under age five. There was also an ongoing programme of immunization and increased access to safe drinking water. Her country continued to grapple with the problem of HIV/AIDS and the increasing rate of infection of women and girls. Efforts to achieve the target of reducing the proportion of infections among infants by 20 per cent by 2005 and 50 per cent by 2010 rested with Jamaica's ability to find adequate funds to support its political commitment.

CARLOS ENRIQUE GARCIA GONZ?LEZ (El Salvador) said his Government attached great importance to the rights of children. It wanted to stress the work of a Salvadorian institute, which had helped children up to the age of 18 who had been at risk from mistreatment, violence within the family, gangs, begging, child labour and sexual exploitation. Cases had been dealt with by family and community means and through 11 centres administered by the institute. Special attention had also been given to disabled children, those with HIV/AIDS, migrant children and those up for adoption.

Multilaterally, El Salvador welcomed the report on violence against children, he said. It did not share all its recommendations, but it hoped it would make a contribution towards a more secure future for children. El Salvador reiterated the principles of non-discrimination, participation and the survival of children. There had to be more resources, earmarked effectively, in order to attain time limits that had been set for eradicating poverty. El Salvador commended the work of UNICEF, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations agencies with concerning child-related issues.

Ms. WAMALWA (Kenya) stressed that children affected by war should receive priority attention. She drew particular attention to the plight of Somali children, including those living in refugee camps in Kenya. Her country was committed to the goals agreed in the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly, "A World Fit for Children". Kenya had expanded the provision of quality education, including by providing free primary education. It also had opened non-formal education centres for older children. Girls who had left school due to pregnancies were being readmitted. However, the number of new students had exceeded existing capacity and Government expenditures were stretched.

On improving the protection of children from violence, she said, Kenya had enacted the Sexual Offences Act - a major milestone - but there was still the need to improve enforcement of such legislation. She also highlighted a law

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

prohibiting female genital cutting, which had posed a major challenge. Among the health challenges cited was the threat posed by HIV/AIDS, though prevalence rates among children had dropped from 17 per cent in 1997 to 5.7 per cent currently. Concluding, she noted that the burdens of national debt and unfair global trade practices were carried by children. It was a major concern if children grew up thinking that this was an unfair world with different standards for different classes.

NADYA RASHEED, Observer of Palestine, said the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, had negatively impacted all aspects of life for Palestinian children. Since September 2000, Israeli occupying forces had killed over 900 Palestinian children, the highest number in any six-year period since the onset of the occupation in 1967. At least 91 Palestinian children had been killed during this year alone, almost double the number for 2005, according to UNICEF. Countless other Palestinian children had been injured, arrested, detained, left homeless and in many cases left motherless and fatherless.

The deaths of Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli occupying forces had usually been given only a cursory investigation, if at all, she said. This had fostered a culture of impunity among the occupying forces and had heightened their perception that they were immune from the law and would not be held accountable for their illegal actions. Such a culture of impunity would only grow with even more disastrous consequences unless measures were taken to bring the perpetrators to justice. It was impossible to reconcile the ideals of A World Fit for Children with the world in which Palestinian children lived under occupation.

SIMIONE ROKOLAQA (Fiji) said that the international community needed to

re-evaluate its commitment to end violence against children and develop a multifaceted and systematic framework to better respond to the problem. His delegation supported the recommendation of the independent expert for the appointment of a Special Representative on Violence against Children who would have a clear mandate with specific, time-bound goals.

He said Fiji had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and signed its two Optional Protocols. It also had undertaken a number of reforms to ensure that its national laws were in line with international Conventions, including by making revisions to the Family Law Act and to the Criminal Procedure and Penal Codes. The Fiji Police Sexual Offences Unit provided specialized services to victims of sexual offences and child abuse, and the Director of Public Prosecution had developed an inter-agency guideline for the handling of neglected children and victims of abuse. The country's Constitution guaranteed children's right to life and basic education, and tuition assistance was provided to children in primary and secondary schools.

KARIME GANEMTORE (Burkina Faso) said nothing could justify violence against children and his country had judicial and institutional instruments favourable to the protection of children. However, enormous hurdles remained. Five million children had not been registered; the infant mortality in 2003 had remained high at 83 per 1,000; and malnutrition had affected 19 per cent of children under five. Orphans and other vulnerable children faced greater problems such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and a lack of means for foster families. Adolescents had often been the victims of many forms of injustice such as physical violence, sexual abuse, forced labour and prostitution.

The Government had a manifest conviction to pay particular attention to the promotion of childhood, he said. More and better pre-school education and programmes aimed at the needs of children were needed. Other priorities included reinforced parental education and more accessible texts of laws concerning children, women and the family; the elimination of all forces of discrimination at the family level; putting into place social services; the involvement of children in decisions which concerned them; and the promotion of programmes addressing the risks faced by orphans and vulnerable children.

A.L. ABDUL AZEEZ (Sri Lanka) noted that the issue of children and armed conflict was of critical concern to Sri Lanka, which had been afflicted by violence and terrorism by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for almost two decades. Noting the report of the Special Representative on children and armed conflict, he said that his Government was resolved to do what it could to protect children but could not act alone. The LTTE must take urgent, verifiable, concrete measures to cease recruitment and use of children and armed conflict as promised to

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

the previous Special Representative in 1996. It was time to consider punitive action against the LTTE if it failed to bring an end to that abusive practice and release all children in its control. He said the Government welcomed the upcoming visit in November of the Special Adviser of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and hoped his visit would make the LTTE fulfil its long-overdue commitment to ending the use of children in armed conflict and to agree to a human rights framework that respects the rights of children and democratic freedoms.

LULIT ZEWDIE MARIAM (Ethiopia) said his country agreed with the way forward indicated in the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the special session. A strengthened poverty reduction programme could have a strong influence on the improvement of the situation of children as they were the ones who to a large extent bore the brunt of poverty. The Government had been taking concrete measures towards ensuring the welfare of children in accordance with international agreements and a National Plan of Action - established with the direct involvement of children, among other stakeholders - had been showing encouraging results.

Responsibility for coordinating children's issues had been given to the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs, he said. In an effort to attain the Millennium Development Goals, the Government had allocated the lion's share of its budget to education. Violence against children committed by close family members was the most heinous crime of humankind. In the new Penal Code, the abduction, trafficking, exploitation and abuse of children as well as female circumcision had been deemed criminal acts, punishable by 5 to 20 years imprisonment. The Family Code had meanwhile been revised setting a minimum age for marriage.

ARAYA DESTA (Eritrea) noted that his country had a long-standing commitment to improving the welfare of children and was Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women. Despite limited human, financial and material resources, the Government had made considerable efforts to meet the basic social needs of children, including through improving access to health services and to education. Infant mortality and under-five mortality rates had declined. The student population had grown from about 200,000 in 1993, when the country became officially independent, to about 700,000 currently. To address the challenges of poverty and malnutrition, his Government had made food security a top priority.

His delegation appreciated the role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and was pleased that her report indicated that the condition of children in several countries had improved considerably, including in Eritrea. He stressed that the protection, rehabilitation and development of war-affected children in conflict and post-conflict situations should be highlighted in national and international policies and programmes.

AMI DIALLO (Mali) said that 16 years after the World Summit co-chaired by her country, Mali believed it had fulfilled part of its obligations through a series of actions at the national, regional and international levels. Nationally, a Plan of Action had been adopted that included the promotion of quality education, a solidarity fund for underprivileged children, the promotion of better health, the protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence, and the creation of a children's parliament. On the regional level, Mali had become party to the African children's rights charter; internationally, it had ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

He said that more evidence for Mali's respect for its commitments included the struggle against child labour; the creation of an official travel document for children; awareness-raising to halt female mutilation; the struggle against the trans-border traffic of children through bilateral agreements with such countries as Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Guinea; and the signing of a multilateral cooperation agreement against trafficking in children in West Africa.

MARTIN BELINGA-EBOUTOU (Cameroon) said the current debate was one of the most important for the Committee as children represented the future of societies and families. Unfortunately, as the delegates had heard during the debate, the fate of children in many parts of the world particularly in Africa was a cause for anguish and despair. Life for hundreds of millions of them was a daily fight against adversity. For how long would the

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

international community accept that children died every year from preventable diseases; that 150 million children went hungry; that almost 100 million children, mostly girls, did not have access to schooling?

Attempts to eliminate poverty represented the vanguard in all efforts to ensure respect for children, he said. However, resolutions adopted on the economic, social and cultural rights of children were far from being respected. The international community had a moral responsibility to live up to its commitments. Cameroon, for its part, had ratified almost all relevant international instruments regarding children's rights. Its domestic legislation also promoted children's rights. The Government had undertaken a number of initiatives to improve the lives of children, including the provision of universal free primary education, the provision of safe drinking water, vaccination programmes and efforts to counter HIV/AIDS. Such efforts must be supported by the international community, he concluded.

MARY REINER BARNES, Representative of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to the United Nations, said the promotion and protection of the rights of children had been fundamental to the Order. Through the dedication of its more than 80,000 volunteers, it had been helping to assure children the right to be born, protected, educated and nurtured. It had improved and expanded its programmes for children in Palestine, Afghanistan and elsewhere and would continue to do so.

Children were particularly vulnerable to human rights violations often unaware that they had rights, she said. In the north of Gujarat, India, the Order provided pre-school education and daily meals to children from the so-called Untouchable class. In Thailand, where 300,000 children had been orphaned by HIV/AIDS, the Order had been operating a health care project in remote mountain villages. The signing by 122 nations of the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict had been encouraging, but it was not enough. The Order hoped for successful peace negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, which had abducted large numbers of children and trained them as guerrilla fighters.

DOMINIQUE BUFF of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) noted the organization's grave concern over the plight of children in armed conflicts and other violent situations. It was unacceptable that children continued to be enrolled into armed forces and armed groups, separated from their families, killed or maimed, forced to flee their homes and abused sexually or otherwise exploited. The past year marked an important turning point reflecting the ever-growing commitment of the international community to protect children in armed conflict with the appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1612, and the upcoming revision of the Cape Town Principles.

The fate of children affected by war, especially children associated with armed forces and armed groups, was of particular concern to the ICRC. He stressed that working with children formerly associated with armed forces required commitment over time and therefore required long term vision, planning and funding. Working with children separated from their families as a result of armed conflict also was a long term process. The ICRC was concerned that while typically there was a rush of public attention at the outset of a new emergency, there was a limited commitment for long term funding essential for continuity and a durable presence on the ground.

Statement in Right of Reply

Exercising the right of reply, the representative of Lebanon said his country had been the victim of State terrorism, the ultimate form of terrorism, in the form of Israeli aggression. In its statement Lebanon had condemned the killing of all children; it would have liked to have heard a similar stance from the representative of Israel. It was striking to note that in the recent conflict a third of the victims had been children. Had Israel been at war with Hizbollah, or with children and civilians in Lebanon? Children in Lebanon needed to play to recover from the trauma of Israeli aggression, but bomblets designed to look like toys or chocolate bars continued to terrorize, kill and wound children every day.

Statements by Under-Secretary-General on Indigenous People

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

JOSE ANTONIO OCAMPO, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, noted that the United Nations agenda on indigenous issues had been revitalized by recent developments, including the 2005 World Summit. The Organization's comprehensive understanding of "development" as progress of all societies encompassing economic, social, environmental and human rights dimensions echoed many of the calls from indigenous peoples. In working towards the Millennium Development Goals and the broader United Nations Development Agenda, there must be greater cooperation with indigenous peoples, he said. At the end of the First International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, the High Commissioner for Human Rights had found that indigenous people in many countries remained among the poorest and most marginalized. The second Decade had been launched on 1 January 2005 with the goal to "further strengthen international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as culture, education, health, human rights, the environment, and social and economic development".

Mr. Ocampo, as coordinator of the Second Decade, was most pleased to welcome the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the first-ever session of the Human Rights Council in June 2006 and looked forward to its final endorsement by the General Assembly during the current session. The Declaration provided the international community with a comprehensive international standard towards which all should strive together, he said.

He noted some developments regarding the work on indigenous issues since the adoption of the Decade's Programme of Action, highlighting the work of the Permanent Forum, which had held its fifth session in May. The session had focused on the Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples, making valuable recommendations on how to interpret and apply the targets so that indigenous peoples could be included and benefit from those processes. The Forum provided fertile ground for the growth of a tripartite partnership among indigenous peoples, States, and the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations.

Turning to the Trust Fund established by the Assembly to grant financial support to Decade-related projects benefiting indigenous peoples, he noted that the Fund had received more than 200 project proposals from around the world. In 2006, the Fund would be able to support 23 projects, involving some \$400,000. He appealed to all States, intergovernmental organizations, foundations and others to contribute to the Fund, whose resources continued to be very limited. Regarding the Programme of Action generally, one of the main challenges was limited resources both human and financial, he said. It was clear that more Member States and international organizations, and more indigenous organizations and civil society actors should be engaged in pursuing the objectives of the Second Decade. There was a need to act now to include indigenous issues among policy and budgetary priorities at the national and international levels.

Discussion

In response to a question from the representative of Cuba, Mr. OCAMPO said it was hoped that the Declaration would be adopted by all Member States as a fundamental framework for guiding national policies on indigenous peoples, with their active participation. Within the Development Group at the United Nations, it had been felt that the Declaration had to be disseminated throughout the system so that everyone knew about it and that it could be promoted. Work had also been under way for several months on how it could be incorporated into the efforts of working groups of the United Nations at the national level. Funds had been very limited, however, and it was hoped that funding facilities would be generously replenished by many Member States. It was also expected that with more activity by working groups at the national level, resources could be made available to different countries to support programmes for indigenous peoples.

Statement by Special Rapporteur

RODOLFO STAIVENHAGEN, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, provided a general overview of his activities over the past year. He noted that while there had been some progress in the legal situation, notably in Latin America, there remained an "implementation gap" between the legal standards and the substantive change in the lives of indigenous people. That gap was a serious

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

problem that deserved the careful attention of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. He noted that in many countries, international norms and principles were not always applied in domestic legislation. Public officials often were ignorant of international norms and the jurisprudence of courts often did not reflect international standards. The divide between "formal" and "real" protections represented a violation of the human rights of indigenous people, he said. Closing the gap represented a challenge and must be addressed by a programme of action for the human rights of indigenous people.

Generally speaking, there were no adequate mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of indigenous legislation and to evaluate its impact, he said. The bodies responsible for protecting indigenous rights were often weak and vulnerable and did not have the necessary political and financial support. Organizations defending indigenous people generally were pressured and sometimes even threatened and harassed. One of the clear manifestations of the implementation gap could be seen in institutional structures of public administration where bureaucratic inertia, "vertical authoritarianism" in decision-making and a lack of popular participation in decision-making were common problems. The judicial sector was increasingly engaged in those issues and more training of judges and others involved in judicial processes was needed.

He noted that indigenous people were increasingly using international mechanisms to secure their human rights. The inter-American human rights system was playing an increasingly important role as was the African system. United Nations treaty bodies also were being increasingly used to defend the rights of indigenous people. All of that activity helped create a new pattern of good practices. He reviewed the principle findings from recent missions to New Zealand and Ecuador, and from a follow-up visit to Guatemala. He also noted that his office continued to receive a growing number of communications from indigenous and civil society representatives containing complaints of violations of indigenous people's rights. Very few States had followed up systematically on communications regarding those violations, prompting him to recommend to the Human Rights Council that special attention should be given during the universal periodic review of special procedures to the lack of adequate procedures for protecting the rights of indigenous people.

In conclusion, he noted the importance of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the Human Rights Council at its first session. That had taken place after almost 20 years of negotiation in Geneva, he noted, and had been long-awaited by indigenous peoples and the human rights community. The Declaration represented a new path for the protection of the human rights of indigenous people and reflected the emerging international consensus on the content of their rights. He appealed to Member States not to disappoint the hopes of indigenous people of the world and to adopt without change or delay the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Discussion

In response to the representative of Ecuador, Mr. STAVENHAGEN said that many countries faced the problem of making regular law and indigenous law compatible. No satisfactory solutions had been found, but the problem had to be confronted in those places where it existed in cooperation with international organizations and with indigenous organizations as well.

In response to the representative of New Zealand, he said he hoped that suggestions in his report referring to her country would contribute to the open democratic debate that had been under way concerning the Maori people.

In response to the representative of Finland, he said he was very happy that the Declaration had been endorsed by the European Union, Finland and Norway. If the Declaration was adopted, there would begin a search for ways to implement it. Here the Special Representative would have a role to play, as too would others such as the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

Statements

X?CHITL G?LVEZ RUIZ, Director General of the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Mexico, said that one of the main purposes of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

been to provide a basis for an improved relationship between States and indigenous peoples based on the spirit of harmonic coexistence, full respect and consultation. As a multicultural country with 62 groups of indigenous peoples, Mexico was fully convinced of the need to reach that objective. Too many years had gone by in the negotiation of the Declaration; the results represented a maximum consensus. It was now up to Member States to seize a historic opportunity to turn words into action.

It had been clear that the concerns of States regarding such issues as

self-determination, lands, territories and resources had been well-covered by the safeguards included by the President-Rapporteur, he said. All necessary provisions to preserve the integrity of States and to protect the human rights of all had been included. The Declaration should be seen in the context of the existing international framework; as well, it included safeguards which explicitly subjected it to obligations set out in the United Nations Charter and to international human rights obligations.

Mr. HEINES (Norway), speaking also on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden, noted that the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People was the result of more than 10 years of hard work by indigenous people and Member States. While it was an imperfect document, the Declaration was the best solution that could be reached and would help strengthen protection of the rights of indigenous people worldwide. It was first and foremost a political document, which meant that it was of utmost importance that the draft Declaration be adopted by the General Assembly. It was important that the process be brought to an honourable and meaningful end.

On progress achieved during the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous People, he noted the significant role played by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The Forum had made Member States more aware of issues regarding indigenous people and played an important interactive role, acting as catalyst and adviser for the United Nations system as a whole. The Forum's fifth session in May had drawn a high degree of interest from United Nations agencies and the World Bank, evidence that the Forum had established itself as a key focal point on those issues.

Indigenous people were among most marginalized groups in their countries and dispossession of land remained a major source of impoverishment, he said. As one of the Millennium Development Goals was the eradication of poverty, there was a need to ensure that indigenous people had a real say in the way their traditional lands were administered. The Nordic countries had lent their full support of the goals of the Second Decade and appreciated the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people. Noting the Special Rapporteur's findings on the gap between written laws and their implementation, he said there was still a long way to go before indigenous people enjoyed the same rights that others could take for granted.

CLAUDIA BLUM (Colombia) said that, according to a census done last year,

3.4 per cent of the Colombian population self-identified as members of indigenous communities. A wide majority of them lived in legally protected traditional territories known as resguardos, where they had their own social organization and collective property titles that were not subject to seizure and non-transferable. Resguardos, which occupied nearly 30 per cent of the country's territory, participated in the budgetary transfers of the central Government and administered local justice. There were indigenous representation quotas in both chambers of congress. Since nearly 90 per cent of indigenous communities lived in the countryside, they underwent problems similar to those of the rural population. They had been affected by violence from terrorist groups financed by drug trafficking, the lack of credits and, in some zones, the difficult conditions of road communication and services. For that reason, the national Government had undertaken actions to reduce their vulnerability, including universal access to State-subsidized health care and the establishment of a Commission of Human Rights for the Indigenous Communities.

She said that the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must bring together the consensus of United Nations Member States and regretted that the Human Rights Council had adopted the draft through a vote. More work was needed on its content to obtain the appropriate language that could be adopted without reservations.

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

Several items within it required adjustments for them to have a realistic and adequate scope. Many concepts and definitions required broader analysis. The importance of carrying out the necessary efforts to reach consensus were even more clear, when keeping in mind that the Declaration was meant to become a new framework for international jurisprudence and for other organisms that followed international agreements.

ROSEMARY BANKS (New Zealand), on behalf of Australia and the United States, said the Working Group charged with drafting the Declaration had been unable to reach a consensus and that there had been no opportunity for States to discuss the current text collectively. The Human Rights Council and its President had also rejected calls for more time to improve the text, setting a poor precedent for the work and role of the Council. The text was not clear, transparent and capable of implementation. In its application, it would risk endless and conflicting interpretations and debate.

In some countries, the situation for indigenous peoples had been very worrying indeed, she said. The world needed a declaration that could make a practical and positive difference in their lives; instead, the text was confusing, unworkable, contradictory and deeply flawed. Australia, New Zealand and the United States could not support its adoption. For example, its reference to self-determination could be misrepresented as conferring a unilateral right of self-determination and possible secession upon a specific subset of a nation's populace, thus threatening the political unity, territorial integrity and stability of existing Member States.

In addition it appeared to purport to confer a power of veto upon a

sub-national group over the laws of a democratic legislature, he said. Its provisions on lands and resources would be unworkable and unacceptable. The text also lacked a definition of "indigenous peoples". It might be true that the Declaration was an aspirational document, not legally binding in any way, but indigenous peoples deserved and needed a declaration that was clear, transparent and capable of implementation, and which represented a standard of achievement against which all States could be measured. The current text failed all those tests; it could lead to disputes, bitterness and unfulfilled expectations on all sides.

TIINA INTELMAAN (Estonia), quoting an Estonian semiotician, noted that there were no small languages or small cultures in the world. When a culture perished, when a language was no longer spoken, it was not merely a local tragedy of a single people, but a disaster of global proportions. In that context, she noted that the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People was of crucial importance. It would be unfortunate if the United Nations moved back from its own positive decision at the Human Rights Council.

Estonia considered the issue of indigenous peoples to be among its own priorities, she said. The Estonian language belonged to the Finno-Ugric language group. Over the last decade, the number of Finno-Ugric indigenous populations had declined substantially, and the situation concerning the use of native languages was most alarming. Estonia supported the Finno-Ugric indigenous peoples, especially in the field of education, science and culture. The European Union membership of three Finno-Ugric States - Finland, Hungary and Estonia - had opened up a new dimension for aid schemes directed primarily at the Finno-Ugric peoples living on the territory of the Russian Federation, she noted. Estonia also continued to support indigenous populations through the United Nations voluntary funds.

Ms. MOREIRA (Ecuador) supported the work of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in promoting integration and coordination of all of the Organization's efforts concerning the rights of indigenous peoples. The 2005-2014 Programme of Action for the Second International Decade for Indigenous People took into account that most indigenous people in developing countries grappled with inequality, economic and social exclusion, as well as hunger, malnutrition, unemployment and little or no access to healthcare, education and housing. Last month's High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development revealed that indigenous people were among the groups most vulnerable to labour exploitation, trafficking of migrants and violence against women and children. Governments needed to show greater political will and concerted action to end such abuses.

Ecuador's National Council on Indigenous Issues with civil society's support was doing its part to implement the Plan of Action, she said. Complex adverse factors thwarted the efforts of indigenous communities to enjoy their

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

human rights. Ecuador's Constitution recognized the collective rights of indigenous people in accordance with Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization. Ecuador's guidelines incorporated the mandates of the 1993 Vienna Plan of Action and the 2001 Durban Plan of Action. The Special Rapporteur had conducted a field visit to Ecuador in April and early May to evaluate Ecuador's compliance with international human rights instruments. The Rapporteur's report and recommendations would be submitted to the Human Rights Council during its upcoming periodic session.

SAINIVALATI NAVOTI (Fiji) said indigenous people's obstacles were symptoms of complex social problems due to marginalization, social exclusion and discrimination. Land played a crucial role in the search for justice. A bill titled "Indigenous Claim Tribunal Act" was under consideration in Fiji's Parliament to set up and set jurisdiction, powers and functions of a Tribunal to consider and recommend courses of action over historical indigenous land claims. The Tribunal would have the power to recommend that the Government take remedial actions including compensation for loss of right to or occupation, use or enjoyment of ancestral lands or, if the land was under State control, the reversion of such land to indigenous lands.

Fiji officials were also consulting with citizens over the "Qoliqoli Bill", which would provide for transferring ownership from the State to indigenous people any area of seabed or soil under the waters, sand, reefs, mangrove swamps, rivers, streams or wetland of any other area, recognized and determined to be within customary fishing grounds, he continued. The Special Rapporteur had indicated that a gap between international standards and principles governing the human rights of indigenous people and domestic laws existed in many countries. Further, laws concerning natural resources management were inconsistent with indigenous and human rights laws. The "Qoliqoli Bill" aimed at closing the "implementation gap" between existing human rights legislation and administrative, legal and political practice.

LUIS ENRIQUE CHAVEZ (Peru) said that despite advances in indigenous people's rights over the past 12 years, much more remained to be done. The rich cultures of indigenous people were disproportionate to their resources. Poverty and inequality in developing countries, including in Peru, was a major concern for indigenous peoples. He supported creation of the Human Rights Council. The Outcome document of the 2005 World Summit had established a new type of relationship between States and indigenous groups, aimed at balancing development with the human rights of indigenous people and recognizing them as a vulnerable group with specific rights.

Peru would continue to advocate adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, he said, calling on all delegates to also support the initiative. The Special Rapporteur's report on the human rights situation and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people revealed the suffering that indigenous communities had endured in various parts of the world and the need for Governments and the international community to find concrete solutions. He supported the Special Rapporteur's work and took note of his report on implementation of norms and jurisprudence concerning indigenous people's rights.

MARY MORGAN-MOSS (Panama) said the situation for indigenous people in her country - where they represented 10 per cent of the population - had been alarming, with 98.5 per cent living in poverty demonstrating their exclusion from benefits enjoyed by the rest of the country. The Government had been aiming to reduce poverty and improve the distribution of earnings by creating new jobs and cleaning up public financing. A network of social protection existed that included human resources training and providing information on generating family income.

Steps now being undertaken for indigenous peoples in Panama included strengthening the national council for indigenous development, facilitating social policy design and human development for indigenous people, and developing a participatory methodology for policies affecting indigenous peoples, she said. However, States alone could not solve the problems of indigenous peoples, who had to be prepared to work with Governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system in order to attain their goals and make the content of the Declaration a reality.

DECLARATION ON RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MUST BE ADOPTED WITHOUT CHANGE TO
AVOID DELAY, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

ANDREY A. NIKIFOROV (Russian Federation) noted that protection of the rights of indigenous people was a priority for the United Nations and for his delegation. The Russian Federation welcomed the launch of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People and the adoption of a Programme of Action. Adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People would be a significant action, he said. His delegation noted that the draft as it stood was incomplete and included many controversial provisions, especially for States where many indigenous people lived. There had been complaints about provisions within the Declaration on the rights to land, mineral wealth and natural resources.

The starting point for addressing issues of indigenous people should be the actions of States themselves, he said. The Russian Federation had a large number of indigenous people living on its territory and strove to strengthen international cooperation to protect their rights and interests. The Government had devoted significant attention to strengthening the legal framework safeguarding the rights of minorities, protecting native homelands and regulating the use of the natural environment. The Government also worked to improve the social and economic development of indigenous people, including through education programmes. The Russian Federation was one of first countries to undertake a national launch of the Second Decade and had set up a national organizing committee to prepare plans to achieve its goals. Unfortunately, the problems faced by indigenous peoples were far from being resolved and continuing efforts were needed at the national and international levels, he said.

ERICA-IRENE DAES (Greece) appealed to all Member States to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the Human Rights Council. Having herself started the elaboration of its principles and provisions in 1984, she said that no other United Nations document had ever been developed with such full and free participation of all parties.

The rest of the document can be viewed at:

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/gashc3855.doc.htm>

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: October 17, 2006

End of Document

Torn From Moorings, Villagers Grasp for Past

The New York Times

March 6, 2005 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2005 The New York Times Company

Section: Section 1; Column 3; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1; TRAGEDY'S WAKE: Facing the Future Alone

Length: 2827 words

Byline: By AMY WALDMAN

Dateline: NAVALADY, Sri Lanka

Body

This village had been the loveliest of places to live, sitting on a narrow sandbar that extended into the Indian Ocean like a skeletal finger. On one side was a resort-caliber beach, on the other, a lagoon that separated the village from the nearby town. Palm trees dripping with coconuts provided shade. Water glittered all around.

But beauty was not why Santosh Chinnathambi Selvam had decided to return. Nor was the draw purely livelihood, although he, like everyone here, had once done well by the water. It was the idea of community that lured him, even though about one-third of his community was dead.

This eastern village was one among thousands affected by the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami, which killed nearly 180,000 people across Asia and Africa.

Navalady was luckier than some, harder hit than most.

Of about 1,900 inhabitants, at least 620 died, the government says. The school in Navalady had 365 students. Only 178 are left. "I am the balance" -- the remainder of a family -- has become a prosaic self-description here.

Today most houses are gone, reduced either to piles of bricks or to their foundations. The only sounds are the wind, waves and birds, and the dogs that survived whimpering for masters who did not. A few men wander through like ghosts, or in search of them, Mr. Selvam, 41, among them.

If a charismatic, mammoth man with a flowing black beard can be an orphan, he is, though he calls himself a bodybuilder. He could eat 10 1/2 loaves of bread at a sitting. He could hoist 330 pounds of cement, and lift a woman with his leg. But when the tsunami came, with all his strength, he could not save even one of his four sons, or the wife who bore them.

He recited the boys' names, oldest to youngest, like a descending scale. Shankar Das, 12. Sadishwaran, 10.

The younger the son, the harder the name was for Mr. Selvam to say. At Tara Singh, 6, he began to choke up. By the time he reached King Kong, a 4-year-old who was already trying to lift weights like his father, he was crying.

Mr. Selvam was standing before what had been his house, which now looked as if a chain saw had neatly sliced it into geometric pieces. He had come back to bury for safekeeping what little he had left, which seemed to suggest a

Torn From Moorings, Villagers Grasp for Past

certain resistance to fate. But as he watched looters -- "outsiders," he called them -- picking over the bones of his village in the distance, he professed indifference.

"My family's not here," he said to no one in particular. "Anything you want, you can take."

Most of the 490 families who lived here before the tsunami were related in one way or another, united by blood and shared history, if separated by class. With his immediate family gone, only relatives and neighbors were left.

If he got sick among strangers, he asked, who would care for him?

Placeless people can find themselves nostalgic even for homes linked with horror. More than the longing for a specific piece of ground, it is the ache for normalcy, familiarity, routine, the ability to locate themselves in a web of known people. Devastation followed by deracination for many survivors was proving too difficult to bear.

Perhaps that was why Navalady's residents, all of whom had decamped for a school in Batticaloa, the nearby town, wavered between vowing they would never return here and saying they would come if everyone else did.

Mr. Selvam, for one, had made up his mind: There was no place like home, even if home no longer existed.

Adrift and Aggrieved

If someone would clean the wells and provide tents, Mr. Selvam said, he could do the hard part -- persuade even grief-stricken neighbors like Sellamanikkan Manokaran, 43, who lost four of his five children and had vowed never to return, to come back.

But even Mr. Selvam's simple wishes seemed unlikely to be fulfilled. More than a month after the tsunami struck, not an ounce of debris had been cleared from here except by thieves. The road to the village, washed out by the tsunami, had not been repaired.

That inaction seemed to portend neglect for a region that has always been a stepchild for the southern-oriented government and the northern-dominated rebel group it has fought for two decades, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The area is dominated by Tamils, the bulk of them Hindus, who constitute a minority in Sri Lanka.

For these people adrift, then, there was no champion, and they seemed to sense that.

At first, the refugees had rebelled against a proposal to shift them from the school to a tent camp under construction outside Batticaloa. The camp had no electricity, said Pillyar Kannamuttu, 61, no markets, no transport. What would they do? Nine days later, he and others were already acquiescing, exhibiting the resignation that is the lot of refugees.

"We have to go there -- there is no other option," he said.

They wanted to stay together as a village, but no tent camp had room for so many families. Their division, too, would have to be accepted with a passive equanimity.

Life had a flatness now, which was different from a routine. Going forward, it was becoming clear, would not be the same as going back.

Methodist Central College in Batticaloa, where the people of Navalady were now living, was founded in 1814 by an English missionary. On the ornamental fence outside the college were slogans of uplift.

"Determination in tasks can even make storms go back," read one. "Social happiness depends on the ability to bear up," said another.

Social happiness, in the school that was housing 1,132 refugees, also meant the preservation of a certain social order. Navalady had had rich men, who owned large boats and brick homes. And it had poor men, with small huts

Torn From Moorings, Villagers Grasp for Past

and paddleboats who often earned just enough to eat. In the refugee camp, rich and poor quickly segregated themselves. Paddle-boat owners took certain rooms, big-boat owners took others, even as their children mingled freely.

Rich people tend to have rich relatives, and so it was that even though all of the villagers came with nothing but the clothes on their backs, now, once again, the rich had more. They often bought their meals from outside, or took food from relatives, largely disdaining helping in the communal kitchen.

More reliant on the supplies from the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization, the aid group, closely linked to the Tamil Tigers, that was supplying food, the poor were thus more inclined to help cook for everyone.

Maheshwaran Nageshwari, 44, was among the poorer class. She helped in the kitchen as much as she could. She said it was the only thing that kept her from losing her mind. A diabetic, she could not even eat the food she cooked.

Seven families were sharing the classroom she now called home. How did they all fit? Two families spent most nights at the homes of relatives. But mostly, it was that they were remnants -- every family down to one or two survivors.

In the classroom, she and Ravindran Sivakulundu, 43, sat together looking for all the world like husband and wife. It was an illusion: he had lost his wife and four children, ages 6 to 18, she her husband and 25-year-old son. Once neighbors, they now seemed an awkward match, each reckoning with an uncertain future.

He feared the sea and did not want to return to it. Perhaps he would do river or lagoon fishing, he said.

Like many mothers, she wanted to withhold her surviving son from a ravenous sea. She would send him abroad, she said. Fishing was all he knew, but she did not want him fishing in Sri Lanka.

The men had never gone so long in their adult lives without going to sea. They dozed, chatted, at night sometimes drank, but mostly did nothing -- because there was nothing to do.

The women did laundry, or cooked, or did nothing themselves. Families bathed at the homes of neighbors, and filled out endless forms, detailing their lost possessions, lost children, and more.

"They have come and written and written and gone," Ms. Nageshwari said of various officials, as a reporter wrote still more. "Everybody's writing endlessly." At night a quiet murmur burbled through the school.

The smoke from mosquito coils drifted upward. Bare light bulbs, centrally wired, stayed illuminated in the classrooms-turned-bedrooms throughout the night, creating the illusion of a detention center.

Psyches were on edge. One night a man trying to work out some muscle kinks had banged on a metal waste can at 2 a.m. The noise had sent all the refugees running from their beds, even though they were nowhere near the sea.

Tempers were fraying. A fight broke out over whether people were secretly taking supplies from the storeroom and selling them.

The communal spirit was dissipating. With time, it was getting hard to find anyone to cook at all. The common spaces were becoming dirtier. People cleaned their own classrooms, and that was it.

The filth worried Velmurugu Nasaraja, 34, who had lost his wife and three daughters. Only his 13-year-old son, Danujan, the oldest, had survived, and the father was all the more protective of him now.

What would he do if Danujan got sick? He had other concerns. Young people played games for money in the camp; he worried that such games would turn children into gamblers. "Here he is always playing. He is not thinking about studies," Mr. Nasaraja said. "My son is obedient. He listens to me, but when he sees others playing he is also tempted to play."

Torn From Moorings, Villagers Grasp for Past

Other parents gave their children money to bet. He disapproved, at least in theory, but it was not easy to be strict with a boy who has just lost his mother and sisters. Mr. Nasaraja gave his son a 10 rupee note, and soon Danujan was playing marbles with a huge smile on his face.

By one estimate hundreds of children in the camp had lost at least one parent; some were orphans.

Leela Vadi, 56, watched her daughter drown in a fishing net during the tsunami and was now caring for her three granddaughters, ages 13, 12 and 4. Their father had been hospitalized, with wounds to his legs and holes in his memory.

In the room next door lived a cousin, Sumitra, 15. Her mother and father had died, with two baby siblings. That left just her and her brothers, Suvendra Raja, 12, and Yanasevaran, 8.

Technically, their aunt was caring for them. But she had lost her own daughter and grandson and was gripped by her own grief, too sad to properly comfort them.

Sumitra was not inclined to play. Besides, what was play without playmates? At least 10 of her friends had died.

'Who Now Calls for Dada?'

The force that swept away houses worked the same sort of obliteration on families, taking their women and children most often. The men left behind seem as lost as children without parents.

Mr. Selvam, the bodybuilder, re-enacted with extraordinary vividness the experience of the tsunami, showing how when the "boiling" water first came he had tried to swim, with the arms of his wife and mother-in-law wrapped around his neck.

Then, as the water surged in again, he heaved them upward in a vain attempt to save them, hit a wall, blacked out, awoke to see a naked woman, remembered his family and swam in search of them before being carried inland by another wave.

He still limped from his brush with the tsunami.

Four of his nine brothers and sisters also had died, but it was the mental and physical torment his children must have endured that haunted him most.

"My wife and children must have thought, 'Father is here, he is a bodybuilder, he will save us,'" he said, crying. "I couldn't do it."

He told how when some relief money had been handed out -- 1,000 rupees for families, 500 for bachelors -- he had been given the amount allotted for bachelors. He was now a bachelor, he repeated incredulously.

He could find another wife, he said, crying, "but I can't have those children again." Their voices filled the place, he said -- him asking for water, a little boy's answer: "Wait, Dada, I will bring it." He was crying again.

"Who now calls for Dada?" he asked. "There's not anyone to come and call."

Those with at least a wife or one child surviving had something to work for. Those without were at loose ends, waiting for a new purpose.

Vallapulai Venagamurthy said he could handle it when he lost his oldest son a few years ago, because the rest of his family could comfort him. Now all the comforters, his wife and four children, ages 12, 10, 8 and 4, were gone with the tsunami. "I am alone," Mr. Venagamurthy, 39, said, holding up a pinky to illustrate. When the tsunami came he had saved other people's children, but he was not home to save his own.

Torn From Moorings, Villagers Grasp for Past

He expressed confidence that he could regain his livelihood but also a complete lack of interest in doing so. He had been among the first to be given a new canoe by a Dutch aid group, Cordaid, working to restore fishermen's livelihoods.

But where some men quickly attached wooden balances to their canoes and pushed into the lagoon, Mr. Venagamurthy stayed on shore. His mind was not right to go back to sea, he said; he would give the boat to relatives.

People who did not drink before the tsunami were drinking now, he said, himself among them. At night, unable to quell memories of what he called that "fateful day," he numbed himself woozy with beers, then lay his mat where he could find space in the refugee camp and curled up like a stray dog.

Going Back to Go Forward

The present owes a debt to the past, the future to the present, so Hindus believe. Preserving the unbroken line of civilization means honoring that debt before moving forward; preserving peace for the living means satisfying the dead.

And so, according to custom, 30 days after the tsunami the people of Navalady returned to their village, which had become a burial ground, to cook a feast for their relatives who had died. In family after family, the guests would be multiple.

On the afternoon of the feast, a village that had been utterly bereft of life since the tsunami began to stir with it. Families climbed off the boats that had brought them across the lagoon. They dragged banana leaves as tall as men across the sand, and sat as if waiting for a picnic to begin.

As the men watched, the women worked. They chopped coconut ever finer, then squeezed its milk out with their bare hands. They peeled eggs, and sliced onion. They fried fish.

Around 6 p.m., the people of Navalady began to set out their meals. Pillyar Kannamuttu would have six lost loved ones at his feast, ranging from a 2-year-old granddaughter to his 54-year-old wife. The table was the foundation of a house he had given as a dowry for his youngest daughter, Uday Lakshmi. Both dowry and daughter were gone.

The women cut an enormous banana leaf into six pieces to make plates for the dead, and piled up food. Bananas. Fried yams. Jumbo peanuts. Vegetable cutlets. Rice and curry. Dates.

Above the sea, a full moon hung. Above the lagoon, the setting sun was striating the sky and water beneath an apricot-gold.

In the gloaming, a woman who had lost her mother and daughter cried out again and again. Another woman screamed: her estranged, drunken husband had eaten the feast she had prepared for their lost child.

With time the sky over the lagoon took on the color of a bruise. The women lighted sticks of camphor, and one by one, family members came forward, hands folded in prayer.

Night came. Other than where a few dead palmyra trees had been set alight, the blackness was punctured only by small points of light -- lanterns, candles, oil lamps. Each pointed to a mourning family, sitting in silence where its home had been.

This practice, carried out for centuries, was all the more important with an unnatural death, Mr. Selvam, the bodybuilder, said. He did not want the wishes of his children's souls to go unfulfilled. They would come and eat to their hearts' content.

He, the one who had been so sure he wanted to return, was less sure now. He no longer came every day to guard his things. It bored, and even worse, depressed him. He was not certain how to negotiate new rules mandating that houses be 100 meters from the shore. He did not know where he would live next, or what he would do.

Torn From Moorings, Villagers Grasp for Past

Back and forth, back and forth -- feelings as fluid as water flowed all around.

On the morning of the feast, Pillyar Kannamuttu had said he never wanted to return to Navalady. "There is nothing left there," he said. "It is like a cremation ground."

Yet at midday, here he was, strolling with his family through the ruins. Home, even ravaged, had an inexorable pull.

"Once the atmosphere of fear is removed, the houses are rebuilt, and the tsunami becomes the past, we can come and live here," he said.

He showed a smiling, plaster statue of Kadalaxshiaman, the deity who guards the sea. The tsunami had moved it out of its temple and about 110 yards inland.

"We installed this deity here," Mr. Kannamuttu said. "She survived, but she did not protect the people here."

Nonetheless, people had placed new offerings before her.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: Velmurugu Nasaraja, 34, who moved to the camp after his wife and three daughters were killed in the tsunami, said he was increasingly protective of his last child, a son.

Sumitra, 15, who lost her parents and two baby siblings in the storm, lives with her two brothers at a refugee camp at Methodist Central College in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka.

A flag flew on the beach at Navalady, a fishing village on the east coast of Sri Lanka, in memory of someone who died in the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami, which killed at least 620 of the village's 1,900 residents. (Photographs by Tyler Hicks/The New York Times)(pg. 22)

Tsunami survivors from Navalady sought refuge in a camp at Methodist Central College in Batticaloa. (Photo by Tyler Hicks/The New York Times)

Santosh Chinnathambi Selvam, amid the rubble of his home in Navalady, is a bodybuilder who could hoist 330 pounds, but could not save his wife and four sons from the wave. (Photo by Amy Waldman/The New York Times)(pg. 1)Map of Sri Lanka highlighting Navalady: In Navalady, tsunami survivors lost their relatives, homes and livelihoods. (pg. 22)

Load-Date: March 6, 2005

BJP chargesheet of UPA Government

Hindustan Times

May 22, 2007 Tuesday 2:34 PM EST

Copyright 2007 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 2498 words

Byline: Report from the Asian News International brought to you by the Hindustan Times

Dateline: New Delhi

Body

New Delhi, May 22 -- The Bharatiya Janata Party today said that the UPA Government has failed miserably on all the fronts of public welfare and nation building. It charged the anti-people, anti-poor UPA Government of compromising national security, nuclear sovereignty, food security, integrity of rulers, constitutional sanctity, India's position on Kashmir, interests of the aam admi and farmers, reforms and development and has resorted to the crass vote bank politics.

UPA compromised national security

UPA's soft policy on terrorism has spawned trans-national terrorist network in and around India facilitated by ISI which has established a clear linkage among dreaded militant organisations such as Maoist, ULFA, MULTA, LTTE, other insurgent groups in north-east and Hiju and other terrorist groups in Bangladesh.

UPA's abandonment of POTA without any substitute stringent anti-terror law has emboldened terrorist organisations resulting in increase in terrorist attacks. Ayodhya, Bangalore, Kashi, Delhi, Mumbai, Malegaon, Samjhauta Express, Jammu and now Hyderabad,the list is unending.

UPA's political manoeuvres like resolution in Kerala Assembly asking relief for Coimbatore blast kingpin Abdul Nasir Madani, putting on hold hanging of Afazal Guru - a brain behind attack on Indian Parliament and zero tolerance warning to security forces on human right violations, have emboldened terrorists and demoralised security forces.

UPA's tacit electoral understanding with terrorist outfits in Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Manipur and Assam was very much visible.

The government has not deported any infiltrator even after Supreme Court struck down IMDT Act and amendments to Foreigners Act.

UPA has not registered its strong protest against China's intrusion into Arunachal Pradesh. As a result, now we have a new boundary dispute with China.

UPA failed to revive and renew the pact with Nepal which would have helped us to act tough against terrorist networks taking refuge in Nepal.

Government failed to protect migrant labours in Jammu, Assam and elsewhere who are under attack by various terrorist organisations.

BJP chargesheet of UPA Government

The government has remained inactive vis a vis the developments in our neighbouring countries Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka where situation is deteriorating into anarchy.

UPA Compromised India's position on Kashmir

UPA government failed to build upon the promise of Pakistan President Gen Musharraf given to Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee on 6th January 2004 that the Pakistani land will not be allowed to be used by and for terrorist activity.

UPA converted Indo-Pak dialogue from terrorism centric during NDA regime to Kashmir centric.

UPA is carrying out negotiations on Jammu and Kashmir in a hush-hush manner without taking nation into confidence. The Union government is intentionally hiding the details of discussion of "non-paper". Gen. Musharraf and other Pakistan leaders are making revelations each day stating that much progress has been achieved on self-rule, autonomy, de-militarisation, and joint management.

Troop pull out from boundary districts of Doda, Poonch and Rajouri of Jammu region clearly points, that Manmohan Singh's government has buckled under the pressure of Mufti Mohammad Sayed of PDP. Large scale migration of Hindus is taking place from these border areas.

UPA failed to address the grievances and failed to provide justice to Kashmiri Pandits. Thus, the worst human rights abuse continues to remain unattended.

Third Round Table Conference on J&K issue drifted away from its original agenda of strengthening centre-state relations, rule of law, secularism, pluralism, justice and equity, instead there was growing clamour for soft borders, autonomy, self governance, demilitarization and withdrawal of anti terror laws, economic independence and joint management of state's natural resources.

The UPA has turned a Nelson's eye towards the protest march by pro-Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba activists carrying Pakistan flags and raising anti-India slogans.

UPA compromised nuclear sovereignty

Indo-US nuclear treaty draft is a compromise with our nuclear sovereignty and amounts to keeping the country's long term interests pledged to US.

The present government has attempted to undo the work of the last sixty years by accepting to cap our strategic nuclear programme. The UPA succumbed to expose our nuclear scientists to undue interference in their work, from sources outside India.

There is either no assurance of uninterrupted fuel supply or permission to reprocess even after accepting stringent conditionalities.

The separation of our nuclear plants and facilities, as between civilian and military is difficult, expensive and has implications for our strategic programme, and is unwarranted.

More strict obligations than CTBT and NPT.

On an issue of such importance, the Prime Minister has repeatedly misled the Parliament and the people of India. It is now clear from the statements made by the US officials and letter by US legislators that neither parity nor reciprocity will be made available to India under this deal.

The paradox is that while detailed discussions are taking place on the future of the Indian nuclear programme in the US Congress, Parliament of India is deliberately kept in the dark.

India had already assured the international community on a voluntary moratorium on further nuclear tests. And, pledged itself to a policy of no-first attack. Still, this treaty bans freedom of any future test and keeps no exit route.

BJP chargesheet of UPA Government

UPA compromised the welfare of "Aam Aadmi"

Rising prices and increasing shortages of essential commodities under the UPA rule have made the life of common man miserable. Rising prices of all essential commodities like wheat, rice, pulses, oil, vegetables, petrol, diesel, cement has adversely affected the living standards of the masses.

UPA converted Indian economy from a state of surpluses to a state of scarcity. Even for the cooking gas which was available across the counter during NDA regime, people have to wait for weeks together.

UPA Government instead of tackling the supply side constraints has gone in full drive to curb the demand by monetary measures resulting in unprecedented increase in home loan interest rates, thus hitting the middle class. Housing loan rates which had come down to 6% during NDA regime have doubled to 12% resulting in slow down in housing industry.

UPA has increased the prices of petroleum products seven times within a span of just two years. The total hike during this period is almost 58%. Despite a 33% fall in price of petroleum and 15% fall in dollar prices we have not seen corresponding decline.

UPA government has lowered interest on EPF which is of much importance to the working classes.

UPA compromised the interests of the farmers

Because of UPA's disastrous policies, more than 5000 farmers have committed suicides in various parts of the country. The UPA has failed to address the core issue of farmer's indebtedness and take necessary steps to save the farmers from their despair.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's relief package to the families of the farmers who committed suicide proved not only inadequate but a hoax. The rate of suicide increased after announcement of his so-called relief package.

The UPA has deliberately kept the MSP at the lowest band, which is the crux of the agrarian poverty. It is paying foreign farmers more than Indian farmers, while importing wheat and other food items.

UPA failed to guarantee remunerative prices, comprehensive insurance and adequate credit to the farmers.

Government failed to implement National Commission of Farmer's recommendation to offer agricultural loans @ 4% interest to small farmers.

Impulsive reactions by UPA negotiators in WTO has resulted in loss of momentum in protecting the interests of farmers of developing nation's who are unable to match huge subsidies provided by cash rich US and EU governments.

The July 2004 Framework Agreement at Geneva was a disastrous one from India's point of view. The outcome of the 2005 Ministerial Conference at Hong Kong was insignificant. Reactions post the Geneva 2006 deadlock has also been impulsive.

The Indian agriculture is in deep crisis as the growth has stagnated. The government has completely failed in ensuring "ever green revolution".

The Rs.50,000 crore Jayaprakash Narayan Rural Credit Fund launched by NDA for the benefit of rural masses has been scuttled by UPA government.

UPA Compromised food security

UPA allowed private companies to purchase directly from farmers resulting in reduction in government procurement. Government's godowns got emptied in the process. This was a deliberate decision based on McKinsey recommendations.

BJP chargesheet of UPA Government

Wheat, edible oils, pulses and many other food items had to be imported for the first time after a gap of eight years.

The NDA government has increased the food grain quota for BPL families from 18 Kg to 35 Kg per month. But the UPA government reduced it to 20kg per month. Government is considering hiking the issue prices under PDS.

The Approach Paper for the Eleventh Plan does not once mention food and nutrition security despite the fact that 20 crore people in India are underfed, 4 crore on brink of starvation and 44% of households deficient in calorie intake.

UPA compromised infrastructure

There is considerable slowing in all infrastructure projects initiated by NDA be it Golden Quadrilateral, Gram Sadak Yojana, North-South, East -West Corridors etc., NDA was adding 4.5 Km of roads everyday, which has come down to 1.5 Km a day in UPA regime.

There is severe power crisis, with many places witnessing 8-10 hours of load shedding a day. It seems that government has forgotten its own dream promise of adding 100,000 MW of power by 2012.

Government is not moving ahead on projects like Subhansi which has tremendous generation potential and has bungled badly in projects like Dabhol.

UPA shelved ambitious River Linking Project which would have protected the country from the floods and famine.

UPA diluted the concept of SEZ by granting hundreds of permissions resulting in a massive scandal. In the process, government became the biggest land grabber.

The entire land acquisition for SEZ has led to immense violence against farmers as witnessed in Nandigram and injustice as can be gauged by protests of farmers all over nation.

The government went ahead with the controversial alignment in the Sethu Samudram project which is environmentally disastrous and depletes precious thorium resources besides hurting the heritage and sentiments of the people.

UPA compromised integrity

In Iraq's food-for-oil scam, the Volcker report accused Congress of being one of the recipients of slush money.

The Scorpene submarine scandal and the related scandal of the "War Room Leak" in naval headquarters - has now resurfaced with CBI itself confirming that the 'War Room Leak' is part of a "much larger conspiracy" impinging on vital aspects of India's national security.

UPA failed to get extradition of Quattrocchi from Argentina, with CBI's credibility taking a severe beating due to its delay in revealing his detention. Apart from this, his account in London was defreeze allowing him to rob the country to the tune of Rs 21 crore yet again.

Government deliberately kept mum on the charges of KGB and CIA pay offs to Congress by Mitrokhin Archive II and former US Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

UPA compromised Constitutional sanctity

The UPA brazenly removed many Governors appointed during NDA regime, because as per UPA "they did not subscribe to the ideology of the new government"

The UPA government has openly opposed the Supreme Court and High Court verdicts on minority reservations.

BJP chargesheet of UPA Government

The UPA resorted to violate the Constitution by dissolving the Bihar assembly on the concocted report of its Governor and manipulated the verdict in Jharkhand and Goa which received flak from the highest court.

Showing utter disregard to the Constitutional sanctity government appointed Navin Chawla as Election Commissioner whose impartiality was in question.

UPA compromised political ethos

There is a perception that the real authority does not rest with the Prime Minister but with unaccountable party chief. It's a government which is pressurised constantly by the Left who are also enjoying power without accountability.

UPA is a crumbling coalition with backing off of JDS, MDMK, TRS. PDP and NCP keep fighting with Congress, Left fights Congress on streets and in government and DMK directly announces appointment of minister a prerogative, one thought belonged to Prime Minister.

UPA government is the government with highest number of tainted ministers against whom charges have been framed for murder, rioting, corruption and other heinous crimes. The central minister Shibu Soren and Member of Parliament Shahbuddin are serving life term in jail and still continue to be Members of Parliament.

Ministers speak in different voices over vital issues such as relevance of the government for masses and issues like reservations, Delhi Master Plan, Asiad Games, inflation, etc.,

UPA compromised national unity for vote bank politics

By continuing to practice the politics of competitive minorityism, the UPA has communalised the polity of the nation. The government, for the sake of politics, has linked action against terrorism as detrimental to minority welfare.

Attempting to provide reservations to Muslims on the basis of religion, an un-constitutional act.

Appointed Sachar committee that attempted a head-count in armed forces. In the name of implementation of its recommendations government decided to divide the geography of the nation on basis of religion by identifying 91 districts as minority dominated.

The UPA ordered 50 per cent reservation for muslims in Aligarh Muslim University.

Made a shameless attempt to denigrate the facts and history of Indian culture in the name of detoxification as part of minority appeasement policies.

The Prime Minister said that Muslims must have first claim on resources.

The finance minister has communalised banking by asking them to earmark a certain portion of loan to minorities.

Government buckled under the pressure of fundamentalists who were opposing singing of "Vande Mataram".

UPA shamelessly used doctored Banerjee Committee report showing Godhra carnage as an accident to influence Bihar electorate.

Minority educational institutes were exempted from SC/ST reservation quotas thereby denying them the justice enshrined in the Constitution.

UPA compromised their own promises

Despite a promise in CMP, the UPA failed to introduce even a draft Bill for women reservation.

UPA failed to keep up its promise of carving out a separate Telangana state though it was promised in CMP.

BJP chargesheet of UPA Government

Published by HT Media Ltd. with permission from Asian News International.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: May 22, 2007

End of Document

Tea with milk Tea facts. Milk facts

The Press (Christchurch, New Zealand)

March 26, 2005, Saturday

Copyright 2005 Fairfax New Zealand

Section: FEATURES; GENERAL;; MAINLANDER; D

Length: 3159 words

Byline: WELHAM Keri

Body

New Zealand's trade relationship with Sri Lanka is a marriage of two iconic tastes. Our largest import from Sri Lanka is tea; our largest export there is milk. KERI WELHAM charts the trade links that bind our countries and produce the classic cuppa.

Thangarel Parameswary works in the bright green tea gardens of Nuwara Eliya, harvesting the tender young shoots from 100-year-old tea bushes.

The mother of three, 52, wearing a black-and-silver sari, is adorned with jewels and drinks from a glass bottle filled with cold amber tea.

This is the starting point of an eight- week journey. Tea will travel from the tips of her swiftly moving fingers, through fans and factories, into packaging and containers. It will be labelled Dilmah. Some of it will travel across the sea to New Zealand, where Canterbury farmers Jan and Charles Whitehead buy 200 tea-bag packets for \$ 4.58 from a Methven supermarket.

Dilmah is Sri Lanka's best-known export brand, and 54 per cent of what New Zealand imports from Sri Lanka is tea.

Meanwhile, another journey is under way, in the opposite direction. The Whiteheads' milk is flowing from their herd of 800 into the Fonterra pot, where some of it is dried and sent to Sri Lanka. In a factory outside Colombo, New Zealand milk sourced from the world's largest dairy factory in Taranaki is tested, repackaged and distributed under the lucrative Anchor brand. About 50 days after it is extracted from the cow, New Zealand milk is on the shelves in the Sri Lankan mountain town of Nuwara Eliya, where Parameswary buys a 400g pack of powdered milk for 150 rupees.

Anchor is New Zealand's best-known export brand, and 90% of New Zealand exports to Sri Lanka are milk.

This is the story of two trade lines, which collide to create the classic cuppa. Ceylon tea, renowned as the finest in the world, and pure milk from the dairying nation of New Zealand. The best of two lush, green, producer nations. White, no sugar, please.

ooo Dilmah founder Merrill J. Fernando descends the dark wooden staircase in a red T-shirt, blue shorts, a copper bracelet, gold ring and bare feet. He is 74 but looks a robust 55. His home is a mansion, with concrete pillars and a coffee-table book about Australian cricket, encased in a heavily guarded estate on the hills above Colombo. It features an indoor fish pond and an expansive verandah leading to a manicured garden. Rain pelts the lawn as he reclines in a low-slung cane chair. It is dusk and there is thunder and lightning.

Tea with milk Tea facts. Milk facts

Fernando's favourite topic is the ruination of tea through "fast-track soul- less tea", otherwise known as the tea bag. "That process was the greatest betrayal of tea -- 5000 years of history and heritage and traditions deserted."

About 25 years ago, he says, pure Ceylon tea started disappearing from the market and was replaced by cheaper tea from China or Papua New Guinea. The brands stayed the same but, Fernando contends, quality fell. By then the self- made son of a shopkeeper had started building his empire with a determination to bring true Ceylon tea back to the market and keep the profits in his Third World homeland. He bought his first plantation in 1962 with a loan from his father. He had 18 staff. He named his tea Dilma after his sons Dilhan and Malik, but a savvy marketer suggested he add an "h" to the brand "for balance". In 1988 he launched the world's first origin- packed export tea in Australia. Within weeks, it was a hit and he now supplies 90 countries. He estimates his market share in New Zealand is worth \$ 30m annually.

The rain eases and mosquitos swarm. Fernando serves tea. Today he has experimented by brewing the tea for five minutes. He says, for this particular leaf, that is too long. Next time he will try 3 1/2>> minutes.

Fernando has established a foundation through which he gives money to charity. He "adopted" a fishing village ravaged by the December 26 tsunami, which killed more than 30,000 Sri Lankans, and has donated \$ 1.5m to victims through homes, nurseries, televisions, fishing boats and nets.

Fernando separated from his wife when his youngest son, Dilhan, was two. He raised his two sons alone and is handing his empire over to them.

Fernando is a Christian who takes food parcels to two local churches and a temple every Tuesday. He has 20,000 hectares of tea and 30,000 staff, but says he lost interest in money about five years ago. Now it's the passion for tea that drives him.

"There are so many amazing things about tea and nobody cares about it."

Fernando drinks seven cups of tea a day. He says tea should be stored in the fridge to preserve the antioxidants. You must always use the correct amount of water, about 200ml per 2g tea bag, and always empty the kettle and boil fresh water. Only warmed dairy milk should be used, and honey to sweeten. If you are using bag tea, brew for three minutes. It seems like a lot of trouble to go to for a cup of tea. "Yes, that's true," he says, and giggles.

He is coy about the brand of thick, white liquid swirling in our mugs, but admits it's not Anchor milk.

He does have some interests beyond tea. He's been watching the Australian- New Zealand cricket series and he believes the Aussies are the worst losers in the world. He listens to opera. He has a collection of artwork. And he even has regions of his palate which can taste something other than tea. His second- favourite drop? A Marlborough sauvignon blanc.

ooo March is the dry season in the mountains of Sri Lanka. In April, the colonial resort town of Nuwara Eliya has its "season", when Colombo's rich retreat from the seering heat of the city.

Eucalypts shade the roads that wind through the hills 1427m above sea level. The hillsides are dotted with brightly attired plucking crews. Every seven to 10 days, the pluckers move back through the same grove of bushes, taking just the new tips.

About 90% of Sri Lankan tea pickers are **female**. Most are Tamil by ethnicity but call themselves Indian to distance themselves from the northern Sri Lankan terrorist group, the **Tamil Tigers**.

Parameswary carries a cane basket, hanging by a stretch of material off her head. Her load weighs 9kg. She earns 265 rupees a day (about \$ NZ3.30), and 4 rupees for every kilo she brings in above her 18kg quota. She works from 7.30am until 4.30pm, with a 90-minute lunchbreak.

Parameswary is a plucker for Dessford Estate. She has worked on this tea plantation for 35 years.

Tea with milk Tea facts. Milk facts

Fernando, whose various tea-related business interests comprise the MJF Group, provides each of his staff with a home in the workers' colony, free medical, free maternity care, free childcare and free education for their children through school and university. Parameswary's staff barracks home has three rooms, the largest 10m by 12m. "I feel it is my obligation. They keep me in business. They are so dedicated and work so hard," Fernando says. "Tea is a poor country's primary crop and when you see what the multinationals do to it, hell will have a special place for them."

MJF Group project manager Lal Basnayake plots the path of the tea from Parameswary's basket to the back of the long-haul trucks. The tea is picked, weighed, then poured into nylon bags for carriage to the nearby factory. Once there, the bags are lifted two storeys on a pulley, and opened onto a large drying trough. Every square foot on the trough contains about 2kg of leaves. They are blown by giant driers, 7.5 horsepower, which take 40% of the moisture out of the leaves. The drying takes 16 hours and results in wilted leaves which are able to be rolled.

The leaves are taken, in another cane basket, to a hole in the ground on the second floor. They are poured down into a shoot which spills leaves into a roller.

Tea comes from the plant *Camellia sinensis*, a relative of the common flowering camellia. Green tea is baked or steamed, oolong tea is partly fermented and black tea is fully fermented.

Black tea is rolled for 20 minutes to rupture the cells of the tea, starting the fermentation process.

Every 100kg of green leaf has become 44kg by the time it comes off the roller. The rolled tea is mulched, then passed over sifting trays. The quality of tea known as dust falls off the trays first. It is a fine powder, which creates a strong tea. The larger pieces of tea fall off the trays later in the sifting and create more delicate brews.

The pieces of tea which are still too big to filter off the tray on the first production line are mulched again, and sent to a second production line. The quality of tea lessens with each mulching.

The different grades of tea are laid out on tables, about 5cm deep, where they continue to ferment for two hours, 40 minutes. The final product is copper in colour. The tea is then fired at 120deg C, and packed. It takes about 20 hours to turn green tea tips into black tea, packaged in large paper sacks and ready for the truck trip to Colombo for the weekly auction.

Dilmah buyers compete alongside all the other buyers to secure MJF Group tea from the auctions. Samples are offered to brokers and the tea is tasted, smelled and viewed for quality. The tea is sucked through the teeth, swilled and spat out.

Bad tea can be rugged, choppy, flaky, grey, flat or thin. Good tea should be even, black, bright, creamy, brisk and have body. Kiwis prefer lighter blends. Middle Eastern tea drinkers, like the estate workers themselves, prefer the darkest blends, the dust.

Currently, good high-country tea is selling for around 238 rupees (\$ 3.34) per kg. Dessford has 4,152,000 bushes and employs 1120 pluckers. The factory processes 10,000kg of tea a day. The estate produced 1449kg per hectare last year.

In the shadow of the tea factory, Parameswary toils in the plantation. She carries the bottle of cold tea, which she refills and drinks throughout the afternoon. In the morning she has milk with her tea; Anchor milk, in fact.

ooo At the Dilmah factory in Colombo, Fernando wears a flowing, white, linen shirt and matching shorts. He seems tired. He works from 5am until 8pm every weekday, but, on top of that, distributors from around the world have been in Sri Lanka for a conference and he has been hosting them.

He was expecting to travel to Nuwara Eliya next week to shoot his new advertisement (slogan: "return to real tea"), but the Australian film crew turned up a week early. He dreams of taking two months off to travel around New Zealand, but for now, he's resigned to another week of exhaustion.

Tea with milk Tea facts. Milk facts

The biggest export market for Dilmah is Russia. Dilmah is the only Sri Lankan tea which is grown, processed, packed and transported by the same parent company. "All the benefits of value addition come back to this country," Fernando says.

The tea bought at auction by Dilmah, from MJF Group estates, goes to the factory in Colombo.

There are two 12-hour shifts daily, each employing 300 people. The bulk tea is dropped into silos, then moved by vacuum around the factory. Even the boxes are printed by an MJF Group company.

Most of the world's tea drinkers prefer string tags on their tea bags, but not us. Dilmah specially packages no-strings bags for Kiwis and the British. One machine produces 2000 tea bags a minute.

Dilmah tea is exported to New Zealand through Australian National Lines and a Japanese carrier. New Zealand is Dilmah's fifth largest market, accounting for 8% of earnings.

Within eight weeks of picking the leaf, Dilmah tea is on the shelves of New Zealand supermarkets.

ooo It's a moody old day in Methven as Jan and Charles Whitehead sit down to breakfast. Charles is drinking Dilmah original, with milk, and Jan is starting the day with the first of several cups of Dilmah Earl Grey. The Whiteheads farm one of the highest dairy farms in New Zealand, about 500m above sea level.

Charles has been a dairy farmer for 15 years. He is the son and grandson of dairy farmers and one of his own children, Christopher, 11, is talking about following the family line.

The Whiteheads have 800 cows and 320ha. Two farm workers and a manager are rostered on each 5am and 3pm milking. Milking takes about 2 1/2 hours.

The Whiteheads' farm produced 330,000kg of milksolids last year. This season farmers will be paid \$ 4.50 a kg by Fonterra. The farm workers earn about \$ 32,000 a year.

At 8.30am, the tanker comes to collect the Whiteheads' milk. The 25,000-litre vat is full. The tanker goes to Clondeboy Dairy Factory in Timaru where the milk is made into powder, some of which is sold to a customer in Sri Lanka.

Kiwi mega-company Fonterra is the world's largest exporter of dairy products. While New Zealand produces just 2% of total world milk production, Kiwis are far bigger traders of milk than many other producers. Fonterra exports more than 95% of its milk.

The New Zealand Dairy Board bought Sri Lankan milk business Maharajah's in 1997 and by December 2000, it was a fully owned subsidiary of new dairy giant Fonterra. It was called New Zealand Milk Lanka. There are 540 employees on the NZML payroll and this year the company's expected turnover is \$ NZ150m. Factory employees earn about \$ NZ135 a month for 45-hour weeks.

NZML sources all of its powdered milk from the world's largest dairy factory, Whareroa, in Hawera.

It takes 30 days for the Mersk Shipping Line vessel carrying the milk powder to travel from New Plymouth to Colombo. Anchor milk powder arrives at the dock in Sri Lanka in 25kg bags. The ships arrive six days every month, collectively bringing 220 containers, each measuring about 18m in length. The freight is transported to the New Zealand Milk Lanka factory, where it is repackaged and enriched with various additives such as calcium.

In Sri Lanka, milk is seen as a health food essential for children, babies and pregnant women. NZML finance director Chetiya Sri-Nammuni says: "Even poor people do ask for Anchor for their children because they believe it is of much higher quality."

Tea with milk Tea facts. Milk facts

Due to a lack of refrigeration facilities, almost all milk sold here is powdered. It is a high-turnaround product; most milk is on the shelf for just 10 days. Small amounts of UHT milk and butter are also exported to Sri Lanka, ready for sale to customers who can afford them.

Anchor holds 50% of the Sri Lankan dairy market, ahead of its two main competitors, Nestle and government-owned Highland. Sri-Nammuni says New Zealand's clean and pure image is key to the success of the Anchor product.

He first saw machine milking when he visited New Zealand in 1999. He took video footage for his friends and was overwhelmed at the size of the farms. The average New Zealand dairy farm has 302 cows. The average Sri Lankan farm has two.

"I couldn't believe it, my God. I'll never forget that day. Incredible."

After the tsunami, NZML gave 80,000 packs of milk powder to devastated regions, offered milk tankers to distribute clean water, provided factory sheets for shelter and the staff each gave two days' wages as a donation. They also brought in clothing and household goods and travelled around in trucks delivering their gifts to the needy.

Indrani De Silva, 40, was one of the 10 staff affected directly by the tragedy. Fonterra gave her a payment of \$ 270 immediate relief and a grant of one year's salary to rebuild her home. For damage beyond that amount, interest-free loans were also offered. All staff were given 28 days leave with pay.

De Silva, a mother of one, travels three hours each way, each day, to get to work. She works in the NZML laboratory, where each pellet of powder is checked for taste and odour. De Silva has been with this company, under its various guises, for 19 years. She says she is lucky to have a job at NZML.

"People leave here only when they are 60," one employee says. Unemployment in Sri Lanka was 8.4% in the latest Central Bank report.

Product is transported in small trucks, emblazoned with the Anchor brand, to 40,000 outlets around Sri Lanka. Every week, one distributor makes the long, slow, winding journey up into the mountains to the plantation town of Nuwara Eliya where a packet of milk powder sits on the shelf in Thangarel Parameswary's staff barracks home. It's a little expensive, she says, but she won't drink her morning cuppa without it.

Keri Welham travelled to Sri Lanka with the assistance of the Asia New Zealand Foundation. This is the final piece in a three-part series.

.

TEA FACTS Dilmah is Sri Lanka's most famous brand internationally

2004 turnover: 6 billion Sri Lanka rupees (\$ 84m)

Dilmah tea annual tonnage: 8.4 MT

Hectares of tea bushes owned by Dilmah: 20,000, with 8620ha of coconuts, rubber and spices.

Staff: 30,000

Percentage of produce exported to New Zealand: 8% (about 700 tonnes)

Dilmah market share in New Zealand as at February 2005: 26.6%

Average wage for a tea plucker: 265 rupees per day (\$ 3.70)

The average tea bush produces 75 teabags a year

Tea with milk Tea facts. Milk facts

Every 4kg of green leaf equals 1kg of black tea, which equals 250 cups of tea

Dilmah's highest retail value product: the t-Series Designer Gourmet Tea VSRTxs First Ceylon Camellia Flower tea. A 100g caddy of this exclusive tea costs US\$ 17.50 (\$ 24.40) minimum at retail

Source: MJF Group, producers of Dilmah Tea

.

MILK FACTS

Anchor is New Zealand's most famous brand internationally

Average New Zealand herd size: 302

Average Sri Lankan herd size: 2

Annual New Zealand milk production: 14.6b litres of milk

Number of cows in New Zealand: 3,850,000

There are 12,000 Fonterra farmers in New Zealand

New Zealand milk production accounts for about 2% of total world production

The average New Zealand cow produces 322kg of milksolids annually

The total dairy market in Sri Lanka is valued at \$ US270m (\$ 376m)

Average dairy-farm worker salary: \$ 32,000

Of Sri Lanka's total dairy consumption, approximately 80% is supplied by imports

In terms of size, New Zealand Milk Lanka (Fonterra subsidiary) is the largest company in Sri Lanka alongside Unilever

Fonterra employs 8500 staff overseas -- 545 of those in Sri Lanka -- and 11,100 in New Zealand

Source: Fonterra, owners of New Zealand Milk Lanka

CAPTION:

Herd comparison: Canterbury farmer Charles Whitehead with one of his 800 cows. In Sri Lanka, the average dairy herd is just two cows. Photo: Kirk Hargreaves
 Suiting all tastes: the Dessford Estate factory in the mountains of Sri Lanka produces various grades of Dilmah tea from the Camellia sinensis plant. Finer grains, pictured on the right, create stronger tea. This factory worker is one of 30,000 employees of the MJF Group, producers of Dilmah tea. Photo: Anuruddha Lokuhapuarachchi

Tea plucker: Thangarel Parameswary has worked as Dessford Estate for 35 years. She carries a glass bottle of cold tea around with her as she plucks the tea tips and buds on 100-year-old bushes. She earns around \$ 3.70 a day for plucking 18kg of green leaf. Photos: Anuruddha Lokuhapuarachchi
 milk Taste test: MJF Group project manager Lal Basnayake tastes the day's best Dilmah produce. Tea tasters suck, swill and spit tea, just like wine tasters. A good tea has body, colour and strength.

Load-Date: March 27, 2005

Tea with milk Tea facts. Milk facts

End of Document

No Headline In Original

IRNA

April 24, 2003 Thursday 2:37 PM EST

Copyright 2003 U.P.I.

All Rights Reserved

ARABIA 2000

Copyright 2003 by Iran News Agency. Distributed By UPI.



Length: 323 words

Byline: Iran News Agency

Dateline: Tehran, April 24

Body

The following headlines appeared in the
major Indian newspapers on Thursday: * THE ASIAN AGE: - Vajpayee to
Pakistan: Take my hand - Mufti wants bureaucrat, not general, as
governor - Pakistan has 48 nuclear weapons - New airports in Mumbai,
Delhi planned - 'Media, lawyers must divulge terror leads' -
Opposition slams Center on internal security issue - Vohra meets
Kashmiri leaders, Shabir Shah stays away - J&K polls a turning
point: Advani * THE HINDU: - Govt agrees to 9 of truckers' demands,
call off strike - 4,000 hurt as storm hits Assam - Govt succumbing
to US pressure: Opposition - Only 8 Indian wheat contracts in UN
list - US can pressure Pak to ease tensions: Govt - India,
Uzbekistan agree on combating terror - PM reiterates conditional
talks offer to Pakistan - Foreign Policy not tailored to suit US:
Sinha - Nationwide industrial strike called for May 21 - Tripartite

No Headline In Original

talks only way: Hurriyat leader - Chilean Foreign Minister to arrive
today - Over 8,000 families rendered homeless in Tripura - Advani
hails Mufti Govt initiatives - India to give \$20m to Iraq -
"Bangladesh keen to resolve border issue with India" - Suspension of
talks only a note of protest: **LTTE** - Rupee ends barely changed
against US dollar - Fed Cup: India beats Pacific Oceania * THE TIMES
OF INDIA: - Suspected SARS triggers panic, confusion in Pune -
Hurriyat to decide on talks on Thursday - Shabir Shah stays away
from Kashmir talks - Advani asks Pak to abandon infiltration for
talks - 'Cycle pumps being used to sterilise women in UP' - **Women**
panels push for Bill on domestic violence * THE INDIAN EXPRESS: -
Cabinet brings down curtains on defection, jumbo ministries - On the
National Highway, ten days of solitude is finally over - Compulsive
US-bashing not good for India: Sinha - PM agenda for Gen: Stop
terror to open doors for J-K talks - Scribes must name their sources
under POTA: Soli - Armitage to begin season of visits ND/RR nd

Load-Date: February 9, 2005

End of Document

Hell to pay when man bites God

The Australian (Australia)

May 2, 2007 Wednesday

Australian Literary Review Edition

Copyright 2007 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; ALR: The Australian Literary Review; Pg. 4

Length: 3858 words

Byline: SIMON CATERSON

Body

MATP

Militant atheists disdain history ... and the hand that feeds them

The Atheist Manifesto: The Case Against Christianity, Judaism and Islam

By Michel Onfray, translated by Jeremy Leggatt

Melbourne University Press, 219pp, \$32.95

God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything

By Christopher Hitchens

Allen & Unwin, 307pp, \$29.95 (Due in June)

Letter to a Christian Nation: A Challenge to Faith

By Sam Harris

Random House, 96pp, \$32.95

The God Delusion

By Richard Dawkins

Bantam Press, 406pp, \$35

CAN the way we hold our ideas be as important as the ideas themselves? It wasn't so long ago that it was thought bad manners to mention sex, politics or religion in polite conversation. Now we seem to talk of little else, though there was commonsense behind that taboo. Endlessly fascinating to us as they are, these are areas of life we take so personally that reason can quickly give way to the irrational part of our being.

Hell to pay when man bites God

Jonathan Swift wrote that we have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another. Most of us will dutifully profess tolerance of others' beliefs, even if what we really feel is profound indifference to anything that doesn't affect us directly, like a hand discreetly covering a yawn.

As the titles of the books under review make clear, militant atheists are hostile to the idea that we should have any religion at all. The word polemic is from the Greek polemikos, of or for war, and each of these books represents a call to arms in response to what is perceived as an imminent threat. Each could be seen as one of the countless ripples still being generated by September 11, though militant Islam is just one of the enemies of peace, justice and reason.

Best-selling British academic Richard Dawkins and his American protege Sam Harris fear what they see as an alarming revival of religious fundamentalism in the US, despite the constitutional guarantee of the separation of church and state.

For Dawkins, essentially there is nothing to choose between "the Afghan Taliban and the American Christian equivalent". "The genie of religious fanaticism is rampant in present-day America," he warns, "and the founding fathers would have been horrified."

Dawkins writes that atheists are not only being persecuted in the US and effectively barred from elected office but, he understands, have even been murdered for their nonbelief. Consciousness raising is thus for him of paramount importance: "The status of atheists in America today is on a par with that of homosexuals 50 years ago."

Harris's Letter, which carries a preface by Dawkins urging us to read this book "if it is the last thing you do", is addressed urgently to the 150 million people its author identifies as members of, or potential recruits for, the Christian Right. He too has difficulty distinguishing between fundamentalists in the US and elsewhere: "Nonbelievers like myself stand beside you, dumbstruck by the Muslim hordes who chant death to whole nations of the living. But we stand dumbstruck by you as well -- by your denial of tangible reality, by the suffering you create in service of your religious myths, and by your attachment to an imaginary God."

In contrast to Dawkins and Harris's preoccupation with evangelical Protestantism in America, Michel Onfray and Christopher Hitchens attack all the main monotheistic faiths jointly and severally.

The arguments presented by these four writers echo one another and indeed all of them except Onfray quote from each other's work. Hitchens recently joined Dawkins as a member of the advisory board of the Secular Coalition of America, which describes itself as "an organisation lobbying for the rights of atheists, humanists, freethinkers, and other nontheists".

As anyone who has studied Philosophy 101 will know, there is a pattern to the atheist case. The existence of God cannot be proved and it is so unlikely that even contemplating the possibility of an omnipotent supernatural being is considered a waste of time. If God is so benevolent and loving, why is there such suffering in the world? If a heavenly reward awaits us, why aren't we glad to die?

Scripture is regarded by countless millions of people as the literal truth, but these writers remind us that the main texts are of uncertain authorship and doubtful provenance and are full of anachronisms, contradictions, anomalies and plain absurdities that may promote some virtuous deeds but also encourage harmful ones. Hitchens ridicules monotheistic religion as "a plagiarism of a plagiarism of a hearsay of a hearsay, of an illusion of an illusion, extending all the way back to a fabrication of a few non-events".

Organised religion, this quartet of atheists argues, holds back scientific progress while it ignites and keeps alive tribal antagonisms that continue to cause untold death and destruction in intractable conflicts throughout the world.

Moreover, the misplaced respect for religious practice allows the subjugation of women and the mutilation and indoctrination of children, which only serves to perpetuate the evil that religion by its nature causes in the first place. Religion does not in itself make people good, though it can and does allow people to do bad.

Hell to pay when man bites God

There is broad unanimity of outlook among these atheists, though a sharp methodological divide, what you could liken to a schism, exists along cultural lines. Dawkins, Hitchens and Harris follow the Anglophone empirical tradition, which argues that creationist thinking, based on the literal interpretation of the Bible, was destroyed forever by the Darwinian theory of evolution.

Onfray, on the other hand, belongs to the tradition of Continental philosophy, which relies more on ideas than on the weight of scientific evidence. "I persist," he affirms, "in preferring philosophers to rabbis, priests, imams, ayatollahs and mullahs."

Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris are committed Darwinists, but Onfray does not draw on the theory of evolution. Instead he deploys postmodernism, declaring that his "book sets out to accomplish three objectives: deconstruction of the three monotheisms, deconstruction of Christianity in particular, and deconstruction of theocracy".

It is easy to imagine Dawkins especially snorting at what he refers to derisively in *The God Delusion* as "haute francophoneyism", but I suspect he would approve of Onfray exposing Michel Foucault's attraction in the 1970s to the Islamist regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, one of many flirtations between left-wing French intellectuals and totalitarian regimes, secular and theocratic.

All these things the atheists allege to be wrong and pernicious about religion are true, but only as far as they go. Anyone but the most dogmatic nonbeliever can see that it is far from being the whole truth about the human condition. Apart from the fact that militant atheism ignores all the (mostly unreported) positives that have flowed from organised religion, not least of which is the establishment of Western civilisation itself, this glass half-empty view also discounts the fact that religious feelings and experiences are a vital part of what makes us human.

Being religious in some sense and to varying degrees is not only common, it is also normal.

This much is recognised by the poet Les Murray in an essay entitled *Some Religious Stuff I Know About Australia*. Murray writes that "something like a religious dimension" exists in all of us. "Some might want to call it a dimension of wonder, of quest, of value, of ultimate significance or the like."

Murray, a Catholic who dedicates his work to the glory of God, notes that some have denied the reality of this dimension, "but I think the weight of human experience and, to beg a few questions perhaps, of perceived human behaviour, is against them".

According to Murray, while religious discussion is helpful there is also something ineffable about faith: "But when I come to meditate on such topics as grace, I don't finally trust myself to write about them in prose. For the important stuff, I need the help of my medium of poetry, which can say more things."

Another poet, T.S. Eliot, wrote, "Human kind cannot bear very much reality." The idea is developed by Anthony Storr in *Feet of Clay: A Study of Gurus* (HarperCollins, 1997) to explain how we attempt to find order in chaos and to maintain a sense that our life has significance.

Storr argues that if the vast majority of the world's population has religious beliefs of some kind then it follows that such beliefs "cannot be defined as abnormal, because world faiths are shared by large numbers of people, whether or not they come from similar social and cultural backgrounds".

Humans are optimistic and pessimistic, objective and subjective, rational and irrational, and we all know that these opposites easily co-exist at the same time in the one individual, for they are ever present in us. It is perfectly possible for someone to believe sincerely in astrology yet still spend their working hours designing buildings that will not fall down.

In clinical terms, religious faith is one kind of necessary delusion that, as Cordelia Fine wittily writes in *A Mind of its Own* (Icon Books, 2005), is essential to our mental health: "There is in fact a category of people who get unusually close to the truth about themselves and the world. Their self-perceptions are more balanced, they assign responsibility for success and failure more even-handedly, and their predictions for the future are more realistic. These people are living testimony to the dangers of self-knowledge. They are the clinically depressed."

Hell to pay when man bites God

Murray's intuition and Storrs' belief that religion is an aspect of our imagination are supported by neurological research, described by Kathleen Taylor in *Brainwashing* (Oxford University Press, 2006). The research indicates that spiritual experience results in general from the level of brain activity situated in the temporal lobe, or what is called labiality, the temporal lobe being the same region that produces artistic creativity.

Indeed, there is a form of epilepsy specific to the temporal lobe that may produce moments of revelation and flashes of artistic inspiration, and perhaps both in the same person. (The same research indicates that those less susceptible to religious experience, and therefore likelier to have an atheist outlook, may have low temporal lobe labiality.)

Religion is so much a part of everyday life that to blame it in isolation for the evils perpetrated in its name or under its protection seems pointless. As Oxford theologian and former scientist Alister McGrath points out in his counter-polemic *The Dawkins Delusion?* (SPCK Publishing, 2007): "The reality of the situation is that human beings are capable of both violence and moral excellence -- and that both these may be provoked by world view, whether religious or otherwise."

Dawkins, Hitchens and Onfray summon the spectre of Adolf Hitler in support of their case against religion. Contrary to popular belief, Hitler was not an atheist and, indeed, writes Dawkins, "never formally renounced his Catholicism, and there are indications throughout his life that he remained religious".

Onfray adds that Hitler also found much to admire in Islamist militarism and anti-Semitism. Hitchens concentrates his attention on the complicity that he alleges between the Vatican and the Nazis and other fascist movements.

But evil is as evil does, and bad things are often done in the name of good ideas. While all this religious stuff may be true of Hitler and fascism in general, it is also worth noting, as none of these writers do, that Nazi ideology also drew inspiration from a corrupted form of evolutionary theory called social Darwinism, which was used to underpin the racial theories that led not only to the Holocaust but also to forced sterilisation and selective breeding programs.

Social Darwinism, which was based on the "science" of eugenics pioneered in the 1880s by Charles Darwin's cousin Francis Galton, was also given the force of law during this period in places such as the US and the Soviet Union. Dawkins merely notes that Galton was "the first to analyse scientifically whether praying for people is efficacious".

All these writers refer to suicide terrorism as a prime example of the evil of religion. Dawkins acknowledges that there is such a thing as secular suicide terrorism, but thinks it an anomaly since "religion is an especially potent silencer of rational calculation, which usually seems to trump all others".

Does it, though? The hard facts about suicide terrorism were investigated by Robert Pape in *Dying to Win* (Scribe, 2005), a study of all suicide attacks between 1980 and 2003. The results seem almost counter-intuitive.

"The data show that there is little connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, or any one of the world's religions," he writes. "In fact, the leading instigators of suicide attacks are the ***Tamil Tigers*** in Sri Lanka, a Marxist-Leninist group whose members are from Hindu families but are adamantly opposed to religion."

If you want to blame religion for terrorism, then you might as well say that without sex there would be no rape, or that if you destroy patriotism war will cease.

Everyday experience tells you that whether someone is a good or bad person is not determined by religious affiliation any more than by their politics or background, though in certain cases these factors may help explain the pathology.

Ironically, blaming religion alone for criminal acts could let the perpetrators of those crimes off the hook, since their faith has carriage of their motives and actions rather than them. On this view, political or racial violence could attract the same false dispensation.

Hell to pay when man bites God

Like all sets of opposing extremists, atheists and religious fundamentalists in a sense end up joining hands, since their antagonism towards each other serves to reinforce their own position.

Of course, we may not like someone from a different background to us simply because of difference such as religion (or race) but that is a function of our innate tribalism. In even the most democratic and egalitarian society, tribalism expresses itself in many ways, not least religious terms, but also on the basis of class, education, sex, politics or sporting affiliation.

Living as a clan is rare now in the West but our circle of family and friends functions as a kind of tribe. Again this can be ascribed to a survival mechanism akin to that which produces religious feelings and secular equivalents.

Research reported recently in New Scientist magazine has shown that humans early in childhood recognise differences, such as racial features, between themselves and others and may react negatively. The thing is not to pretend this prejudice doesn't exist or is due to an external factor, but to overcome it.

Similarly, in relation to religion, atheists might be more usefully engaged in seeking to find points of commonality rather than difference. As Dale Carnegie advises in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, the best way to win an argument is to avoid it.

Atheists not only define themselves in opposition to believers but, like all tribes (including racists and religious bigots), reckon themselves to be superior on that basis. Dawkins, Harris, Hitchens and Onfray all agree that religious belief is infantile. Dawkins and Hitchens report discarding religious beliefs in early childhood, though Hitchens concedes he was later seduced by the secular faith of Marxism.

Dawkins states that he aims to convert religious readers to atheism with *The God Delusion*, though he acknowledges that some readers will not be capable of receiving the message: "Of course, dyed-in-the-wool faith-heads are immune to argument, their resistance built up over years of childhood indoctrination using methods that took centuries to mature (whether by evolution or design)."

This seems a strange attitude in someone who describes himself as a science educator. Dawkins leaves open the question as to whether religious belief is a symptom of a psychiatric disorder but does so in a way that makes his view on the subject clear.

Of real concern to Dawkins, whom McGrath labels an ivory tower atheist, is the deleterious effect that religious views can have on even those who move in the same rarefied academic circles as himself.

He tells the story of one Kurt Wise, a brilliant young scientist who found God and was thus struck down by what Dawkins regards as a debilitating virus of the mind. "I am hostile to religion because of what it did to Kurt Wise. And if it did that to a Harvard-educated geologist, just think what it can do to others less gifted and less well-armed."

The Stanford-educated Harris, meanwhile, is embarrassed by what he thinks the revival of Christian fundamentalism has done to America's image abroad, and duly indulges in a spot of provincial self-loathing: "Among developed nations, America stands alone in these convictions. Indeed, I am painfully aware that my country now appears, as at no other time in her history, like a lumbering, bellicose, dim-witted giant."

Really? Harris, whose previous book *The End of Faith* was a bestseller, seems to be doing all right ensconced, as it were, in the belly of the beast. In Dawkins and Harris I detected a distinct whiff of anti-Americanism, a prejudice absent from the more cosmopolitan Hitchens and Onfray.

Dawkins is an unabashed elitist while Hitchens who, like Dawkins had a church-based, Oxbridge education, can at least anticipate the charge of snobbery: "It is not snobbish to notice the way in which people show their gullibility and their herd instinct, and their wish, or perhaps their need, to be credulous and to be fooled. This is an ancient problem."

This comment reminded me of the way the Mexican bandit chief justifies terrorising the defenceless villagers in *The Magnificent Seven*: "If God didn't want them sheared he wouldn't have made them sheep."

Hell to pay when man bites God

It is perhaps no coincidence that all four authors are affiliated with universities and thus qualify as members of what has been dubbed the secular clerisy. One of the benefits of Western civilisation bequeathed to us by the church is the system of higher education that allows Dawkins, Harris and Onfray in particular to think and write what they like, and will even employ them to do so.

Onfray, in calling for a truly postmodern atheism, recommends destroying all the vestiges of church-based institutions, rituals and observances, even those that have been secularised. Presumably he is not about to give up his post teaching philosophy at the Popular University of Caen.

Harvard University, the place Dawkins credits as producing Wise only for him to lose his reason, is named after an English clergyman, John Harvard, who donated his library of 400 books to the institution he founded in 1636.

Similarly, Oxford University began as a place for the study of divinity. Dawkins describes how the college of which he is a member was founded in 1379 by the bishop of Winchester. Dawkins, a member of the fellowship that runs the college, acknowledges that his academic home exists thanks to a medieval bishop who intended it to serve the Christian faith: "Even I feel a twinge of guilt, as a member of that fellowship, for a trust betrayed." (Interestingly, the motto of New College is "Manners Makyth Man".)

The best antidote to militant atheism is not religion but a sense of history, and with it a patient acceptance that knowledge is cumulative and progress at best gradual and sometimes halting. The atheist who prefers to see the glass as half-full might say that given all the time-honoured and immensely powerful influences that work against it, nonbelief is in fact achieving a remarkable victory.

Paul Strathern notes in *Darwin and Evolution* (Random House, 1998): "Arguably, the idea which Darwin came up with has had more effect on everyday human knowledge than any other in history."

Darwin benefited from the same academic environment that Dawkins inhabits. *The Origin of Species* was an immediate bestseller, and for all the harm he did to religion Darwin was rewarded by being buried in Westminster Abbey.

The status of Darwin's theory as "one of the hubs of transformation in Western thought", in the phrase of biographer Janet Browne, appears secure. In 1996, pope John Paul II wrote in a letter to Catholics to inform them that the result of research carried out independently throughout the world "leads us to recognise in the theory of evolution more than a hypothesis". When you think about it, that is quite a concession.

The God Delusion is the most stimulating of these four books, and it is also the most objectionable. Of the writers, Hitchens is the one most alive to the essential truth of cultural evolution, and consequently, despite the occasional rhetorical irruption, *God is Not Great* is the most companionable, realistic and reasonable case for atheism despite what is suggested by the needlessly rabid subtitle.

Hitchens generously and scrupulously provides much considerable evidence for the proposition that religion does not poison everything. It is perhaps no coincidence that while Hitchens does teach at a university, he is not a professional academic, having made his name as a journalist and contrarian. He is an extraordinarily well-read writer of amazing productivity who is also almost always worth reading on any topic.

The flaws in *God is Not Great* are mostly those shared by other journalists who moralise, and mostly consist of a tone of self-righteousness that occasionally involves Hitchens getting tied up in unnecessary moral ledger-squaring. Hitchens has at least visited the war zones the others talk about and has even been placed at physical risk. He is prepared to debate his adversaries publicly, unlike Dawkins, who says his presence at such events only gives them a profile they don't deserve.

"This book has been about the oldest argument in human history," Hitchens writes, "but almost every week I was engaged in writing it, I was forced to break off and take part in the argument as it was actually continuing."

Hell to pay when man bites God

And continue it will, at least until the process of globalisation is a lot nearer completion. That process has in fact been going on for centuries and has in our time rapidly broken down some of the old tribal and national boundaries and brought a level of pluralism to the world that is unprecedented in human history.

Geoffrey Blainey has prophesied that globalisation will result in the establishment of a single world government, and indeed this does seem a distinct possibility as a matter of practical economic and environmental necessity.

Could it be that there is also the prospect of a single global religion? Maybe not, since it is in the paradoxical nature of pluralism to encompass all views, including those, such as fundamentalism in all its forms, that are anti-pluralist. Perhaps we will only ever agree that there are answers to the questions of human existence while forever disagreeing as to what those answers might be.

Join the discussion at theaustralian.com.au/alr

Load-Date: May 1, 2007

End of Document

UN

Foreign Minister of France to Commission on Human Rights - World is living dramatic events with Iraq crisis; Commission continues to debate right of peoples to self-determination - Part 2 of 2

M2 PRESSWIRE

March 25, 2003

Copyright 2003 M2 Communications Ltd.

Length: 2973 words

Body

BABATUNDE TAIWO, of the International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities, said that Cabinda, Africa's last colony, continued to face the denial of its right to self-determination. The people of Cabinda's denial to the right to self-determination dated back 118 years ago. Today, Cabinda stood alone amongst the former colonies and provinces of Portugal yet to exercise and enjoy its right to self-determination and independence. Sadly, as was the status quo 118 years ago, Cabinda still remained under foreign occupation - the illegal annexation by Angola. Since 1975, the Government of Angola with the unswerving support of Portugal continued to justify the illegal occupation of Cabinda. As a result, a land of great wealth had its people living in perpetual poverty. The Commission was urged to protect the people of Cabinda.

MALIK OeZDEN, of Centre Europe - Tiers Monde, said that the military aggression perpetrated against the people of Iraq by the United States and some other countries constituted not only a flagrant violation of the right of people to self-determination but also a grave threat to international peace and security. How, not with the motive of pre-emptive war or exportation of democracy, but with the aim of taking over the wealth of country, could one undertake a war of aggression? The international community should reply to the following questions to restore its image: what could governments, individually and collectively, do to refuse the practice of fait accompli? What could the members of the UN, which were the only guarantors of the United Nations Charter and its implementation, do against the flagrant violation of international law? What could they do to explicitly condemn the United States? What measures should the international community take against impunity?

ALEJANDRO TEITELBAUM, of the American Association of Jurists, said currently the world was witnessing yet another attempt of colonial war against all the peoples of the world. This time the victims were the Iraqi people. The attack was a typical crime of aggression and the two aggressors - the United States and the United Kingdom - had a 150-year history of colonial wars, war crimes and crimes against humanity in all continents. Some countries were granting military bases to the aggressors and allowing the use of their airspace, thus becoming part of the aggression. The aggression against Iraq had been prepared for months despite the findings of the United Nations inspectors. There were several possible procedures open to the United Nations, including the holding of a Special Session of the General Assembly, which had not been looked into by Member States. The Organization, therefore, called upon Member States to call for a Special Session of the General Assembly and condemn the aggression against Iraq.

SAHIBZADA ISHAQ ZAFAR of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations said that for 50 years the Kashmiri people had been waiting for the implementation of the Security Council resolutions which stated that

UN Foreign Minister of France to Commission on Human Rights - World is living dramatic events with Iraq crisis; Commission continues to debate right of peoples

the question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan would be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite. The Kashmiris had been suppressed and brutalized. Over 85,000 of them had been killed by the Indian occupation army. Thousands of Kashmiri women had been molested and dishonoured. Tens of thousands of Kashmiris were languishing in Indian detention centres and torture cells. The absence of international pressure on India had been instrumental in allowing it to perpetuate its atrocities in Jammu and Kashmir with impunity. The Commission was urged to compel India to provide the right to self-determination to the Kashmiris.

TABBASUM ARMIN, of the World Muslim Congress, said that the irresistible and irreversible process of the right to self-determination was being resisted and every effort was being made to reverse the legitimate struggle of people, in particular those in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, by the territorial hungry countries such as India and Israel. That fundamental human right, which placed a positive legal duty of promoting the right to self-determination on the Member States of the United Nations, was being sacrificed by those very countries whose own existence was a product of the application of that fundamental principal. Despite those clear legal stipulations, the people of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir were yet to realize their fundamental right to self-determination. India, which had promised in the Security Council that the people of Jammu and Kashmir would have the right to decide their own future had now reneged on its promise to the Security Council.

ANISA TAWFIQ, of the General Federation of Iraqi Women, said that in the last few years, Iraq had been facing unprecedented aggression against its hospitals, shelters, museums and military targets by the United States. This had led to a loss of lives, including the lives of women and children. The United States administration gave itself full rights to intervene in another country to further its own national agenda. This was a total violation of the right to self-determination, which was a central human right. The United States had also continued to violate the right of the Iraqi people's sovereignty through its incessant bombardment of the no-fly-zone. It was a threat to international peace and security as well as to international humanitarian law.

The international system had collapsed since the United States and the United Kingdom had disrespected the international community as well as the United Nations Charter. Delegations should adopt a firm stand against this and should press the United States and the United Kingdom to implement their obligations to international instruments and commitments.

PANDITA KASHINATH, of the African Commission of Health and Human Rights Promoters, said that some African States had become victims of private militias. This phenomenon had stimulated illegitimate resource appropriation, trans-national greed and arms proliferation, all impeding the right to self-determination. What was more, the mercenaries had more or less come to believe in their legitimacy and felt free to violate the spirit of the International Convention against the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries.

Another form of mercenary activity was found in parts of South Asia, particularly in the Indian subcontinent, where terrorism was embraced in its various manifestations such as the creation of religious militias with absolutist ideological views.

ELIAS KHOURI, of the Union of Arab Jurists, said that the Iraqi people were suffering from war aggressions by the United States and its allies, including some oil companies. The crimes of the United States and the aggression of the United Kingdom could be dealt with by the international community.

The war against Iraq was a pure transgression of the international norms on which the international community had been established. As a result of the 12 years of aggressions and economic sanctions, many thousand Iraqis had died. The Israeli aggression was also a threat to international peace and security. The international community should take into account the precedence of such an aggression and the imposition of such politics by force. The Union of Arab Jurists supported the holding of a special session of the General Assembly to debate the issue of the aggression against Iraq.

JOSEPH RAJKUMAR, of Pax Romana, said global developments demanded the re-conceptualization of one of the United Nations' founding principles and rights, that of self-determination. While oppressed peoples placed their

UN Foreign Minister of France to Commission on Human Rights - World is living dramatic events with Iraq crisis; Commission continues to debate right of peoples

hopes on the United Nations, the very institutions would lose its credibility and legitimacy if it continued to ignore the challenges linked to self-determination. Kosovo was a tragic illustration of the denial of the right to self-determination resulting in a serious erosion of all human rights. The escalation into a major conflict led to unilateral intervention outside the United Nations mandate. This lesson was particularly relevant in these sad days when the United Nations was impotently witnessing the circumvention of international law. Pax Romana, therefore, recommended the Commission on Human Rights to request the High Commissioner to establish a focal point concerning the implementation of the right to self-determination as a contribution to conflict prevention.

ORETTA BANDETTINI DI POGGIO, of the International League for the Rights and Liberations of Peoples, said it was quite encouraging to see the birth of the Memorandum of Understanding and cease-fire which entered into force in February 2002 and which put an end to 19 years of cruel war in Sri Lanka. The LTTE had entered the negotiating process explicitly seeking a solution for its people and asking for full regional autonomy under the federal system of government within the confines of the existing State. However, there was no certainty as to a successful outcome. Even after one year of ceasefire, more than 100,000 refugees were denied by the security forces the right to return to their lands and to start cultivating again. This was tantamount to denying them the right to shelter and food.

MAJID TRAMBOO, of the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, said the United Nations General Assembly's Declaration of 1960 categorically stated that the subjection of people to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constituted a denial of fundamental human rights which was contrary to the Charter and that it was an impediment to the promotion of peace, cooperation and security. One such vivid example of this was the people of Jammu and Kashmir who had waited now more than 53 years to exercise their right to self-determination. The people of Kashmir were struggling for this right as promised to them by the international community through the Security Council, but India's disobedience of the United Nations resolutions had denied them this right, thus increasing the plight of the Kashmiri people. The Kashmiri people were indigenous and the State of Jammu and Kashmir had never been under the domination of India, until Indian forces entered into the State in October 1947. It was the responsibility of the United Nations to ensure the realization of the Kashmiris' right to self-determination and to devise mechanisms for that end.

SARDAR SHAUKAT ALI KASHMIRI, of the European Union of Public Relations, said that the right to self-determination had been and continued to be flagrantly violated in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, which had remained under the occupation of Pakistan and India for the past 55 years. Since its formation in 1947, the puppet Azad Kashmir Government had remained under the direct control of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs in Islamabad. The de facto rulers who ran the government of Azad Kashmir were the unelected representatives of the Pakistan Government. In successive rigged elections in Azad Kashmir, parties and candidates who refused to sign a declaration acknowledging Azad Kashmir's so-called accession to Pakistan had been denied the right to participate in the elections.

Handpicked nominees of the regime in Islamabad had been imposed as heads of government, disregarding the wishes of the people. Hundreds of political leaders and workers continued to languish in prison and the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment had made Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas a sanctuary for international terrorists.

LAZARO PARY, of Tupaj Amaru, said following the 11 September attacks, the world had changed tragically and it was now witnessing a war. It was now a world where the right to self-determination was denied and human rights were

disrespected. Thursday, 20 March, had been a day of blood and tears and a sad day for all peace-loving peoples. It had been a dark day where bombs had prevailed over the international legal order, in total defiance of the international community and the United Nations Charter. The United States and its allies, without the prior consent of the Security Council, had launched a ferocious attack on the Iraqi people. Tupaj Amaru firmly condemned this aggression of a mutilated country which had once been the cradle of civilization. The military aggression in application of a so-called pre-emptive combat of terrorism lacked all international legitimacy or credibility.

UN Foreign Minister of France to Commission on Human Rights - World is living dramatic events with Iraq crisis; Commission continues to debate right of peoples

Rights of Reply

A representative of the United States, speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to a statement made by Cuba, said that the rule of law was something that the United States knew a great deal about but was something that the Government of Fidel Castro knew virtually nothing about. How laughable - if not sad - that the Cuban Representative should choose to open his salvo by attacking the free and democratic way in which President Bush was elected as fraudulent. This coming from a country whose leader had ruled for 40 years and had never faced an election. How laughable - if not sad - that they should end their oratory by reference to the supposedly politically motivated legal process whereby five Cuban espionage agents were brought to justice by the US courts. Who in the Commission doubted the impartiality of the United States courts compared to the reign of terror of the Cuban Government?

A representative of India, exercising his right of reply in response to a statement made by the representative of Pakistan, said that he had sought to dismiss the massacres that had taken place as the work of the Indian Security Forces. Earlier today some 20 Pakistani terrorists had fired indiscriminately on innocent civilians in Jammu and Kashmir.

This was one more point of evidence of the Pakistani Government's support and nurturing of terrorism. Making a reference to an article in the Economist, he said that the Pakistani leadership had done nothing to root out terrorism in the country despite its promises to do so. The Organization of the Islamic Conference was encouraged not to be manipulated by its spokesperson for the session, Pakistan.

A representative of Azerbaijan, speaking in exercise of the right of reply to a statement made by Armenia concerning self-determination of the Nagorno Karabagh region, said that the question concerned individual rights and not collective rights and therefore did not justify the splitting up of the state.

A representative of Morocco, exercising his right to reply in response to a statement made by the representative of Algeria, said once more the head of the Algerian delegation had tried to draw parallels between two incomparable situations, the Middle East and the Moroccan Sahara. He reminded the Commission that Morocco was in perfect conformity with international law. Furthermore, the people of the Moroccan Sahara wanted to remain in Morocco, and to be able to go to see their parents who were in Algerian prisons. The international community was not leaving the situation unattended. The Security Council had played an important role and the international community was working towards the respect of the territorial integrity of Morocco.

A representative of Cuba, speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to a statement made by the United States, said that the United States representative had harked back to the worst moments of the cold war. Currently, the United States was using force of arms to deny the most fundamental of human rights, the right to life of the Iraqi people. The United States administration was driven by a fascist philosophy and the flouting of international law and norms.

There was no humanity and respects for rules of justice in Washington today. Since 1970, the CIA had been supporting terrorist activities of Cuban criminal groups in Miami against Cuba.

A representative of Pakistan, exercising his right to reply in response to a statement made by the Representative of India, said India had mutilated one of the principle rules of international law and the United Nations Charter - the right to self-determination. The Indian statement was a manifestation of deceit, deception and fraud. There was a morality vacuum and reality vacuum currently underway in New Delhi. India had totally denied United Nations resolutions by letting loose a reign of terror upon innocent civilians in Jammu and Kashmir. There was no border, just a point of control that disallowed the citizens to exercise their right to self-determination. The representative of Pakistan had called for an independent monitoring body for this region.

Pakistan had nothing to hide and if there was any terrorism in the state of Kashmir, it was only Indian state terrorism.

UN Foreign Minister of France to Commission on Human Rights - World is living dramatic events with Iraq crisis; Commission continues to debate right of peoples

A representative of Angola, speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to a statement by the non-governmental organization (NGO) the International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic, and other Minorities, said that the text read by the representative of the NGO was a political statement made by an Angolan terrorist organization. The Representative expressed his surprise that terrorist organizations were allowed to take the floor in the Commission and pointed out that internal domestic problems, such as the question of Cabinda, would be dealt with in the Angolan capital.

((M2 Communications Ltd disclaims all liability for information provided within M2 PressWIRE. Data supplied by named party/parties. Further information on M2 PressWIRE can be obtained at <http://www.presswire.net> on the world wide web. Inquiries to info@m2.com)).

Load-Date: March 25, 2003

End of Document

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

States News Service

September 20, 2007 Thursday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 8518 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

The following information was released by the U.S. Department of State:

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I want to thank Professor Anderson,* to begin with. This is a very important program and I am sure it's a source of a lot of the information that we end up using one way or the other either directly, or some of the graduates who come to work for us. I think the series of lectures is a real contribution to the discussion of South Asia.

The fact that they do invite me back I think is not a reflection on me. It's a reflection on how many things keep happening. I think that's generally our impression every morning at the staff meeting, is something else happened. It's frequently bad -- it's not always bad -- but we've got a lot to deal with. I think coming here to reflect at least once a year if not more often is important to me, and I really look forward to hearing your comments and questions as much as I do just a chance to talk to you about how we see things these days.

Since I was invited to talk about South Asia, I am going to take the liberty of starting off in Kazakhstan. Because a"

[Laughter]

I actually work in a bureau that's now South and Central Asia and those of you that study history know this a lot better than I do, you know the Moguls* came from what's now Uzbekistan, you know the traditional trade routes and exchanges, you know the influences on the view of Islam, the views of society that went back and forth. If you look at it that way, then these last couple of hundred years have been an interruption in what should be a normal interchange in commerce between South and Central Asia.

So what we were looking to do by creating this bureau and by working together is to do that; is to create those, to allow those links to open up again. Now, that didn't happen because the State Department changed its organizational structure, it happened because of a change on the ground which is the change in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, which for hundreds of years had been a barrier and a block between Central and South Asia is now an open place where transit and commerce and ideas and people and energy can pass.

So, one of our goals in trying to work in Afghanistan is to stabilize Afghanistan, so it can become a conduit and a hub between South and Central Asia so that energy can flow to the south. Ideas and goods can flow to the north. People can move back and forth. Intellectual influences can move back and forth. And so that the countries of

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Central Asia are no longer bottled up between two enormous powers of China and Russia, but rather they have outlets to the south as well as to the north and the east and the west.

I think as we look at this region strategically we are trying to change the outlook, the ways of doing business, the opportunities for every country in the region.

Which brings us to the bridge, the bridge that we opened about two, three weeks ago. Secretary Gutierrez* went out and I was able to go with him. We opened a bridge that the U.S. built between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. President Rahmon from Tajikistan was there; President Karzai came up from Afghanistan; and this bridge which admittedly kind of goes from nowhere to nowhere else right now -- [Laughter] -- but it's right in the middle of this whole idea that there can be a connection there.

There are roads still to be built, but the Japanese are going to build a road that connects to the Dushanbe Highway, that connects to the Chinese road that goes to the ADB* road that's being built in Kyrgyzstan that connects to the highway that was already built up to Almaty. With the Ring Road in Afghanistan and the other pieces, within two or three years there's going to be a road from Almaty to Karachi. There's going to be a chance for people to trade.

The day after we opened the bridge, we were down in Kabul and we talked to the Chambers of Commerce and one of the guys who spoke up said, I sell fruit and I sell juices and I am trying to develop the markets in Central Asia, and that's my bridge. I am going to use that bridge to develop commerce in Central Asia from Afghanistan.

So it's really there, it's really a potential. The same potential exists for electric lines. A couple of years from now we should have electricity lines coming down from Tajikistan not only to Afghanistan but all the way down into Pakistan to help Pakistan meet some of its energy needs. And making those connections changes the opportunities for every country in the region.

Now the core of all this is to stabilize Afghanistan and Pakistan -- the parts of Pakistan that are still difficult or ungoverned.

Afghanistan: you can always look at the challenges. We see a lot of reporting, and I'll be frank to admit the narcotics crop is enormous, the insurgency is still raging, bombs are going off, there's corruption, and there are a lot of problems there but we are dealing with them. And when you look back five years to where we started. The first time I went to Afghanistan was in January 2002 with Secretary Powell.* We sat around a table with the new Afghan Cabinet -- President Karzai and his Cabinet. And that was it. That was the Afghan government essentially at that time. These people had no telephones or computers in their ministries, there was no money in the Central Bank vault. There were just a bunch of people who were thinking about how can we do this? How can we build a nation?

Since then we have built some 4,000 kilometers of highways including the Ring Road in Afghanistan which brings the country together in a way that it has not been together in a long, long time. We have been able to extend health care so that 85 or so percent of the Afghans have health care now, at some level. The estimates are -- the infant mortality rates, the mortality rate for children under five have gone down enormously. The estimates are that there are 50,000 babies every year who are alive because of the work we have done over the last five years in the health care system. Fifty thousand babies, that -- that means something to me. That's what we have done. And we have done that in a lot of areas. We have six million kids in school versus about 900,000 in the last years of the Taliban. So there's been a lot of progress.

Everybody in Afghanistan has probably been affected by this progress in one way or the other, but it's not comprehensive and it doesn't really accomplish the fundamental task which is going to be extending governance out to the whole countryside. Providing good government and government services to everybody we can in Afghanistan. That's going to take roads, and we are building more roads. It's going to take giving people electricity so they can develop a new economy. It's going to mean training policemen so that people can have safety, extending the court system so they can have justice; and extending the schools and the education, winning over the population and giving them what they have a right to expect from their government which is safety and justice and opportunity and education and health care. That's a task that continues.

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

I don't think we should be surprised at how difficult it is. In the '50s and the '60s, and the '70s Afghanistan was one of the poorest countries in the world. It was always at the bottom of the list on GDP* and per capita GDP. And then it went downhill for 20-25 years. So the enormity, the development task even absent the insurgency has been difficult, and it's a long term proposition and there is a long term commitment from the United States, not only -- well, for several reasons. One, because we do care about Afghanistan and we always have. The second is because this region has been a source of terrorism and could still be the source of terrorism. Every time a new plot is uncovered there's some connection to Afghanistan and the Pakistan Afghanistan border areas.

Third of all, because there is this sort of strategic opportunity that we see creating a stable region of really moderate Muslim democracies between Southeast Asia and the Middle East. And eventually that region itself will have an impact on the world if it can be stabilized and it can grow the way it should.

Pakistan is going through an interesting moment right now. That's probably true almost any day you talk about Pakistan, but it's a particularly interesting moment right now.

I think there are a lot of questions about how this transition is going to work, but if you look at, again, the big picture on Pakistan over the last several years, I think the big trends in Pakistan, many of them are good. The economy is reformed and growing and you still have a very high rate of economic growth and higher rates of foreign investment going in the education system, the curriculum being reformed and extended by the government. There's been an explosive growth in the media. Whereas there was one government TV channel eight, nine years ago, there are now -- I thought it was 42, and last week we were there and they told us there were 55 channels and more coming up every day.

So there's really a modernizing trend in Pakistani society, and overall the population I think is moving in a direction that's more moderate and more modern. But that said, they still have a lot of problems with the insurgency.

As they go through this democratic transition, this transition from military rule to civilian rule, they are also facing some real serious threats not only in the tribal areas but in other parts of their society as we saw with the Red Mosque, in Islamabad.*

We are trying to help them. We are trying to help them with the immediate threats that they face, and there's a new -- I guess bin Laden video or recording coming out where he threatens Pakistanis directly, including the Pakistani Government. But we are also trying to help them with a bigger picture of helping Pakistan succeed as a prosperous economy, succeed with a good education system, succeed in providing its people with energy in different ways.

We just had -- last week -- strategic dialogue with Pakistan where we did talk about education and energy and agriculture and science and technology and the economic program. The United States is supporting that because we want Pakistan as a nation, as a society to be a success because it's vital to these bigger goals that we have.

The one thread that you all hear from me, whether it's Afghanistan or Pakistan or if we talk about Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, India, is good governance. Building up good government is really one of the keys to stability and growth. In Afghanistan it's the key to in the end beating the insurgency and getting control of the poppy.

In Pakistan this problem with terrorism along the border does have something to do with the fact that there were historical arrangements for governing the tribal areas and those arrangements were broken down over the years from the anti-Soviet effort and a lot of other things that have happened since then. So it's difficult to govern that space. Building good governance and opportunity into those spaces.

Corruption is, unfortunately, endemic in my part of the world, and where you see turmoil, where you see difficulties in many of these places it's because government hasn't performed well and government hasn't delivered. So we put a lot of emphasis on good government: the practices of democracies, the institutions that defend and support democracy like independent judiciaries, anti-corruption commissions, independent election commissions, things like those. And we've put a lot of emphasis on the fundamentals of democracy, building the kind of society that can move forward into the modern world with education, with information, with technology, with the rule of law.

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

There are, despite all the difficulties you face from country to country and region wide, I think there are enormous opportunities in this region. Just about every country has a young population that's better educated and seeking better education. That in itself sets them up for a different kind of future.

There are economic opportunities that are being developed in some places, not in others. Look at little Bhutan up there in the Himalayas. They are just opening their first big dam and got the investment selling the power to India. It's going to triple the GDP of that country, that one dam. They have got four more on the way. They are making a transition to democracy at the same time.

Those kinds of opportunities exist elsewhere in the region, Nepal, for example. Bangladesh, going through a difficult time right now. But looking at cleaning up the system and going back to democratic elections: that in the end is the only long-term path to stability and we are going to help people with those things. We are going to help people make those transitions. We are going to help people build a more solid basis for their societies over the long term, and hopefully we are going to succeed everywhere, at least in more places than not. I think one of the keys to that is going to be getting Afghanistan and Pakistan right. That's why we spend a lot of time on that.

Let me also mention India. India is a bit different than some of the other countries because it is a successful democracy. It's a successful democracy, a successful economy. They have done a lot of economic reform that has been very clearly in the benefit of India and they have other things that they want to do and would like to do and have on the agenda.

But I think as we look at India we see a natural partner for the United States. We see a partner in almost every area, whether it's energy or defense cooperation or education that's already big and could get even bigger. We have more Indian students in the United States now than from any other country. It's about I think 76,000 this year, students. We have issued more visas in our embassy this year than we ever have before. We hit the record sometime in August. Everything from August to December is going to be extra. So it's really an exploding relationship that's based on people. It's based on the students who go back and forth, the graduates, the businesses that they create, the classmates they keep in touch with, the family ties that go back and forth. And it is different. When people used to move from one country to another, particularly as far away from India as the United States. They really gradually lose touch. They visit once every two or three years, then every five years. They send these flimsy little AirGrams home once a month. Now they are writing e-mails all the time, doing video conferences, doing business together, going back and forth. That creates a very active relationship and I have to say in many ways the U.S.-India relationship has been led by the people and the technology that they have used to develop businesses and opportunities. The governments are sort of still in the process of catching up. But we are going to push forward on that.

I think as we look to India we look as a partner. Not only a bilateral partner, a partner in things like UN* and UN peacekeeping; a partner in terms of how we look at regional developments; at least both of us know we need to consult a lot with the other so we know what each other are doing. It's just a natural relationship there.

Those of you who study this U.S.-India relationship know that we have had some euphoric periods in the past with the United States and India and they have been very productive. The first green revolution in the '60s in India was cooperation between the United States and India. That was very productive and had lasting effects, but eventually that feeling was lost, that momentum was lost with the Cold War and other things.

So one of the things that does face us is either figuring out why it's going to be different this time or figuring out how to make it different this time. I keep coming back to the people. I think if we keep the educational cooperation, the citizens, the travel, the businesses together, that's what's going to make it different this time. It's not just governments who say we have a natural affinity, we have a natural need to cooperate, but it's people who are finding opportunities beyond the reach of government that really I think builds a much more solid base and a long-term momentum for us with India.

That's kind of the big view of the region. I am not going to do it country by country, but we can talk about anything you want to talk about. I'd be glad to take questions, particularly from students.

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

MODERATOR: The priority will be for student questions.

QUESTION: Ambassador Boucher, thank you so much for coming today. For those of us who are in the South Asia program, I can't thank you enough for being here today. We very much appreciate your time.

My question is going to focus first on India, if you don't mind, and in particular India's long-established ties with Iran. Can you comment a little bit about that, and also Iran's influence in the region other than India as well, specifically Pakistan and Afghanistan? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I was just trying to review our established press guidance, what we are supposed to say when we are asked the India-Iran question. [Laughter]. You said long-established ties. We actually try to be a little bit intellectual in this and say the ties go back to the Mogul dynasties, which is probably true and certainly the Persian influence over the years of history is seen in a lot of places.

But if we jump quickly to the modern day, I think we understand India is going to have ties with Iran. All the countries in the region or neighborhood are going to have ties with Iran. What we are hoping is that those ties can be sort of normal and not undermine one or the other's policy, not result in consequences that none of us want to see.

Iran's behavior in the region is often a very serious concern to us. We obviously have problems with Iran on the Western side in terms of support for Hezbollah, support for other violent groups that are trying to undermine the peace process. And we have problems with Iran itself developing nuclear weapons which nobody in the neighborhood wants to see, and India actually has made clear its policy on that and is acting on it, when it came down to it. But there's going to be some sort of normal relationship with Iran for all the countries in the region, and that is to be expected.

I think where you see the concerns raised is over the military relationship, and particularly in our Congress as they consider the nuclear deal. This is an issue that's going to be discussed and debated and understood.

I think, frankly, there's often less there than is sometimes announced or complained about. We have seen a certain number of exchanges; we have seen cadet visits and things like that. I wouldn't say we have seen anything that we consider significant in a military sense or in a strategic sense. But the fact is those ties are going to get very close scrutiny. I think all we are saying is on both sides as we talk about this issue, as we try to understand this issue and whether it has any ramifications or not, that we try to do that on a basis of fact.

We are more concerned I think now about Iran's behavior in Afghanistan. Iran was -- has been a supporter of the Bonn process that created the new Afghan government, that led to the elections where record numbers, enormous numbers of Afghans were able to turn out and vote and decide their government. But then we have also seen from Iran trying to build their political influence with particular factions and ties and elements and individuals. It's not what any foreigner should be doing. We should be supporting the system and the development of a new system, and not financing individuals and parties.

We have seen, I think, some attempts to expand their religious influence in certain communities. And we have seen the appearance of Iranian weapons going to the Taliban. People say how can they do all these things at once? How can they support the legitimate government with the Bonn process, support and work with opposition politicians, and send weapons to the Taliban? That's a question for Iran scholars to answer better than me, but it just seems to me they are kind of a kind of hedging their bets and causing trouble. That's not a good thing for any of us. So we are concerned about Iran's behavior in the neighborhood, particularly when it comes to Afghanistan. But balance that with the expectations that most countries in the region are going to have some kind of relationship with Iran and it should be kind of a normal one and not anything that undermines our goals or their own goals in the region.

QUESTION: I have been specifically focusing recently on human rights issues, and in terms of South Asia have been attending to Sri Lanka issues recently. As you are well aware, human rights watchdogs including Human Rights Watch recently issued a 128 page report and it just documented the continual deterioration and escalation of the problems in that country.

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

One of the co-authors to that report writes, In response to this downward spiral foreign governments haven't done much. Sri Lanka has little strategic or economic importance to most countries. Foreign governments mostly limited their criticism to private messages and minor aid cuts. While in private these governments have raised concerns about human rights abuses with President Rajapaksa they have not exerted concerted pressure to make the abuses stop.

My question is how are we addressing it and how more can we address it' Because --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Okay. I do appreciate the question and I have to say that' not what they said about me when I went out there and started criticizing these things and they complained about public pressure more than anything else.

Sri Lanka -- first of all, we do care about Sri Lanka. We've been involved for many, many years in the co-chair process. We've been involved in trying to get a peace process going there. We've had a very good relationship over the years with the government because it is a democratic government. Different governments have come and gone democratically through a political process and we've worked with them. It does matter to us because it's a democratic government that's fighting a terrorist group. That fundamentally is, I think, where we start. But that has implications. The implications for the government are you are a democratic government and you have to demonstrate that you respect and uphold democratic principles including respect for human rights.

There have been a lot of bad things that have happened in Sri Lanka. We have seen, on the side of the Tamil Tigers,* summary justice. We've seen bombings of civilians. We've seen recruitment of child soldiers that has continued. All this is documented as well.

On the government side we've seen abuses by people in the government security services or often people associated with the government security services. What I really put the spotlight on when I was there in May, I think it was, was these paramilitary groups -- the Karuna faction* in the east and some of the people in the north in the Jaffna Peninsula. A lot of the complaints, if you listen carefully to what people are seeing and what's going on, are about the sort of nefarious paramilitary groups believed to be operating with some connivance in the security services. So we've put a lot of effort into pushing on that and trying to get the government to change its behavior.

We have limited our ties with Sri Lanka in some areas, in some of the military things that we wouldn't do with them -- that we don't do with them because of these situations, because of the abuses that have occurred and haven't been properly investigated. We've set up an international monitoring group, a group of eminent persons that's been trying to monitor their Sri Lankan investigation which unfortunately hasn't gone very far, but that's another sort of pressure on the government.

The third thing is that there are consequences to these actions. There are consequences to the situation there. The government, I think, is starting to feel them, frankly, because we have seen tourism drop, we've seen (inaudible), canceled flights. We have suspended a program that was going to be a very big program under the Millennium Challenge program because we felt the situation was changing in a way that made it hard to carry out that program there. So there have been consequences to these actions that the government has taken. Things have been suspended, they've felt some effects.

At moments we get a little bit hopeful to see some change in the situation, and I'd say there has been a little bit of improvement over the last six months, but it's been really marginal. The big problems are still there: killings that haven't been resolved, activities of the paramilitary groups, and just a general climate of excess and abuse when it comes to the operations of a lot of the security forces.

So we're very careful in our relationship. We do have limits on it. They've lost out on some things. And the pressure is going to continue and it's going to continue in a variety of fora from not just us but other people in the international forum. Not because we're against the government, but because we're in favor of the government upholding its democratic principles.

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The only way to really say that you are a democratic government is to uphold those principles. And you have seen the government achieve some military successes, but frankly it doesn't do a whole lot of good unless you can bring the benefits of democratic government to the people in those areas and use these military victories -- you might say politically -- to not only encroach militarily on the terrorist group, on the Tamil Tigers, but to encroach politically on them as well. To do that the government has to uphold human rights.

QUESTION: You had mentioned good governance to bring stability into the region and I was saying that I couldn't agree with you more because I am from Pakistan. We are excited to hear about the October 6th date. But a few months ago you had said that holding free and fair elections in Pakistan is a bigger issue than President General Musharraf's uniform, and that we should have elections sooner than, you know, rather than how soon Musharraf should be a civilian President.

There have been some reports in the Pakistani press of U.S. official meetings, and U.S. meetings in Dubai with Benazir Bhutto and a possible deal with General Musharraf and Bhutto. I was wondering if you could comment on that.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: No.

[Laughter].

Let me answer a little bit; as much as I can.

This transition in Pakistan is really important. We want it to be smooth and we want it to be successful and we want it to result in sort of a continuation of the success that Pakistan is having and has had over the last few years. But it has to result in a more stable and democratic system. I think everybody realizes that it's time for that. So we have tried to encourage that in a lot of ways: supporting the election commission, dealing and meeting with really all the major political groups. I have done that, and I have met with people from all the major political parties and have talked to them about what it's going to take to have a free and fair election, what it's going to take to get a stable political center afterwards. We would like to see a more stable political base for Pakistan to move forward.

So we have had those meetings. What we find out in meeting with politicians from any party -- and frankly you will find this out when you go to Congress here as well -- politicians don't think like diplomats. We can encourage people to sort of move smoothly through the transition, to do everything we can and they can to ensure the elections are open and free and fair, and to sort of strengthen the moderate center. They make their calculations according to their political interests and their political likes. So that's what's going to happen. In the end whether they are going to do that or not, whether they are going to cut deals with each other or form coalitions, make arrangements, is really up to them. They are going to decide. We are observers when it comes to that. We can say wouldn't it be nice, but in the end I think what they are going to do is what they are going to do and they are going to have to figure it out for themselves. But at least we are there with a general idea that it would be nice if they could form, you know, a concerted, more mainstream sort of center in Pakistani politics.

For those who don't follow it as closely as you probably do, the election October 6th is the election of the President by the assemblies in Pakistan. The President is elected indirectly. And then, the expectation is -- well, the necessity is that the assemblies then expire soon afterwards and there would be a general election for the parliaments a couple of months after that. That's where all the political parties will be competing and as we have said, we want to see that transition and we want to see it to be a fair election so in the end it's about the people of Pakistan. It's getting voters' wishes and finding out what they want and respecting the choices they make.

QUESTION: Thank you very much for coming here. I am from Nepal and my question relates to Nepal, of course. How exactly is the United States viewing the recent developments in Nepal given the fact that the November polls look increasingly threatened because of the constant Maoist threats to walk out of government, which they almost did yesterday? Is it true that the United States views its Nepal policy primarily through India's lenses? What is going to be the case if the elections are not held in November? What is the U.S.'s policy towards the Maoists going to be? I mean, because you have sort of supported them coming to government but have not delisted them from the terrorism list. Would you please lay that out more clearly?

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Yeah, thank you.. I mean, it' sort of reflected in the Pakistan question, too. It' funny. Weare in a world of democracies and whether countries are democratic now or not, weare often dealing with political factors and political parties and political actors in these places. I think as you all study diplomacy and agreements and covenants and deals cut in the back room, it' not that way any more. Weare often dealing with very complicated situations where we have some influence but we donat a" we canat -- it' not just diplomacy any more. Weare trying to influence a situation in a more positive and stable direction. That applies to Nepal.

Let' face it, it' a good thing that the Maoists have started to engage in this UN peace process, that many of them have gone in for the resettlement process and theyave given up or put their weapons in lock boxes, and that the Maoists have at least said theyare going to convert from an insurgency to a political party. When theyave done that weall deal with them as a political party, but I donat think theyare quite there yet.

So I donat see any contradiction in this interim phase of sort of saying weare glad theyare cooperating and working within the political system, but no, weare not ready to take them off our various lists of terrorist groups and treat them like an insurgency. They need to give up the gun. They need to give up the extortion. They need to give up the militant youth groups that have sort of extended their power and tried to intimidate people in the countryside. And government, legitimate government needs to get back out throughout the country so that they can have police stations and regular political party activity in all the towns and the villages in parts of Nepal and the Maoists canat be allowed to block that.

But we do -- whether theyare participating in a particular government as a political party is really a matter for the politicians and the political parties to work out, so theyave gotten to this moment in Nepal when the Maoists have said we donat want to be part of this government any more. So that' really something that' going to have to work itself out politically.

The second part of it: do they stay in parliament. Well, I guess participation in the political process, participation in parliament is pretty fundamental to that, so one would hope they would keep that role. But these arrangements that exist now are not the result of an open election where everybody' there because they were voted on and elected. So we do think it' essential, particularly when you get to very fundamental things like rewriting the constitution and deciding the role of the monarchy and things like that.

It is fundamental to consult the people, consult the voters and give them a chance. So weare glad to see the elections scheduled for late November, and we think it' very, very important that everybody respect that and that everybody go through that polling process, that everybody respect the choice of the voters. So trying to crash this election is trying to crash the whole process. It' declaring yourself an opponent to the democratic political process. We canat abide that. So I hope they wonat go that far. At the moment it' sort of a political dispute between the parties and the government and let' hope they work that out, but everybody needs to stick with the plan, whether it' the Maoists or anybody else, to go to the elections, get the opinions of the voters, settle some of the constitutional things, and then there will have to be a new election under the new constitution, so this will go on for a while, we hope continuing in a positive direction.

If you look back a year or two, it has gone in a positive direction. The level of violence is down; the Maoists have come in to the government and put away a lot of their weapons, so the overall trends are positive. We hope they are really maintained through this election period.

QUESTION: Good afternoon. My question also is about Pakistan. I was wondering how can the U.S. encourage Pakistan to liberalize its political structure while curbing the rise of Islamist influence in its state and society'

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Good question. It' pretty fundamental because obviously we consider Pakistan a very important partner in the fight against terrorism. When it comes down to it no country has arrested or eliminated more al-Qaida and other terrorists than Pakistan and no one' done it with greater... you know, no one' lost more people and sacrificed more people in the army and police in doing that. So Pakistan is a very key ally with us in the fight against terror.

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

We want to see continuity in that. We want to see continuity in terms of Pakistan being better able to continue that fight for the long term. Continue it not just in the military dimension but you might say the economic and political and social dimension, meaning that parts of the country that are outside of the economy need to be brought in, so we have programs to develop the tribal areas. We have legislation that's going to go to Congress very soon that will allow border areas of Pakistan to produce things and export duty-free to the United States. We want to see those people brought into the economy and given the opportunity that people elsewhere in the country have.

Part of this I think is just our general judgment, and the judgment I have to say of many in Pakistan, that long term stability in Pakistan requires at this moment a return to democracy and that a democratic government is better able to continue the fight against terrorism, particularly a democratic government that kind of comes together at the center of the political spectrum is better able to continue the fight against terrorism at this moment.

In this whole region, and particularly when I come to my Central Asian countries, we talk a lot about democracy and many people sort of give you the democracy is chaos theory. I have to say, having thought about it and worked on it the only thing I can say is to me democracy is the best course for long term stability and the best platform to modernize a country and deal with these problems of extremism that exist. Therefore I don't see the two as contradictory. I see them as complementary. Making a successful democratic transition will strengthen Pakistan's ability to deal with extremism and terrorism in its society.

QUESTION: My question is the Kashmir issue has remained unsolved for the last six decades, so what is the U.S. official stance on resolving the Kashmir issue? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Our official stance is that it should be resolved. [Laughter]. We will maintain that position no matter what.

I think it's the UN's longest peacekeeping operation. I think everybody would like to see it resolved. We are all aware of the fact that this has been a great source of tension over the years between India and Pakistan, and frankly, it's been the source of confrontation recently, even going back to 2002, the bombing at the Indian parliament and the confrontation that ensued after that when Kashmir was a factor in all this.

So rather than just say it's not an issue right now, we think this would be the best time for them to find a way to resolve this. They have had a very productive process between India and Pakistan over the last few years. The statesmen on both sides, the leaders on both sides frankly have moved this forward and had a lot of discussions, gone into great detail, I think probably moved farther in terms of some of the confidence building measures and the other discussions than they ever have before. So we encourage that now.

That said, we are not directly involved, we are not in the middle, we are not going to jump in with both feet and say hi guys, here we are to help you solve this, partly because they are doing pretty well on their own, and partly because they don't want us to jump in that way.

When I have had discussions with officials both in India and in Pakistan I have said what can we do to help? We are interested in seeing this resolved. What can we do to help? And they both sort of said, you can nudge us. So we have become a nudge, officially. We nudge them and we encourage them and we ask questions and we look into it. But they have been carrying the ball forward. I think it's a credit to leaders on both sides and we hope they keep carrying it until they achieve something together. So we all nudge, but they are doing it, not us.

QUESTION: You have spoken a lot about the desire to see the emergence of a moderate center over the long term in Pakistani politics. I wanted to ask where you thought the religious parties in Pakistan fit into that framework. Over the long term, what do you see as being America's concerns about their participation in politics, and are there any positive aspects you see to their participation in politics when it comes to Pakistan's future?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: We certainly think religious parties have a place in the political spectrum in all countries, including in Pakistan. You see them -- frankly you see them dotted around Europe as well as around different parts of South Asia -- parties that are trying to build a modern society, a democratic system, trying to give people prosperity and justice and basic government services deserve to participate. People who are violently

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

opposed to the constitutional system of a country donat necessarily belong in the political system as well. You have to deal with them differently. But in the end, you know, to have moderate political parties that are based on people of faith should be no surprise and should be welcomed in every system.

The Islamic parties in Pakistan have formed a group, the MMA.* Theyare an alliance. There' a lot of speculation about what might happen to that alliance under different political scenarios because they do have different views among different parties. But yeah, we do think that Islamist parties have a role to play in these political systems and theyall get the votes that they get. What their role is in future governments, what their political power is in future governments will be based on what the voters decide.

If the voters want them in power, as long as theyare upholding the constitution and non-violence, I think wead be glad to see that and are glad to work with them. But it' up to the voters to decide and I have to say that some of the polling indicates they might not have as many seats in future parliaments as they have now. But that', again, that' not a matter of polls, that' a matter of voting. It will be the voters who decide.

QUESTION: Hi, Ambassador, thanks again for coming today. My question is about the U.S.-India alliance, or emerging alliance. I want to focus eastward. Iam curious what role the United States sees for India in managing the rise of China and perhaps dealing with other democracies in East Asia'

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Iave spent a lot of my time working on China in my career. I mean, I really started out in Taiwan and China in the late '70s so Iave been immersed in China stuff longer than Iave been immersed in India. This question is always the one that kind of perplexes me, more on the economic side about how theyave done differently and better in some areas than others on the economic side.

When you talk about managing the rise of China, I donat think that' necessarily something that -- I mean, India' obviously a factor because India' emerging at the same time that China is emerging. And you have to deal with both of them. I kind of see this as almost a marketing question. You donat ignore a billion customers. In foreign policy you donat ignore a billion people. So we donat pick. We can have a good relationship with China, a good relationship with India, and India can have a good relationship with China and China with India. So, I think it' really trying to work with both of them in the areas where they really have capability, contributions, interests, and making sure that we do that in as smooth a manner as possible.

There are some natural areas of economic competition between the two. There' not really that much geographic competition between the two. I think they manage to resolve a lot of their foreign policy issues, border issues, fairly successfully themselves.

So as I see it, it' maintaining the best possible relationship with both billions. And when you do look at India and India'... I think... contribution to the global economy, contribution to global peacekeeping, really contribution by way of example and perhaps even expertise to the growth of democracy around the world, I think the Indian relationship has an enormous importance to us and India has an enormous amount to contribute. Because the systems of government, the societies, the economic systems, the people, the educational backgrounds between the U.S. and India are very, very compatible, I think we have an enormous potential in that area.

So I guess my job is to develop everything we can with India, see how far we can go, how far we can get to. Iave worked before on developing what we can with China as well. But in the long run we need to have good relations with both. We need to have solid relationships with both, and we need each country -- frankly, whether it' Bhutan or India or China -- to make its own contribution to the international system and to the stability of these regions, and in the end to the prosperity of its people.

QUESTION: There has been a lot of work that' gone into the nuclear deal with India, and a lot of concessions have been made by the U.S., but yet I think it' still in danger of not going through on the India side. I jus wondered if you could handicap what may happen and also what will happen if it doesnat go through because of all the work that' gone in on our part'

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: If I could handicap what will happen I could probably make a lot more money in betting parlors than I would as a diplomat. [Laughter].

I don't think I am going to take that part of the question, but let's talk about the status of the India agreement. A lot of work has been done. A lot of work has been done on both sides and we've gone through some tough moments and some difficult negotiations and we solved a lot of very difficult problems. We did that when we got the first breakthrough to say we were going to do this. We did that when we got the second breakthrough, when the President went to India in March of 2006. We were able to talk to the Indians about how they were going to separate their military programs from their civilian programs so that we would have a clearly identified civilian sector that we could work with. And we did that over the course of the last year or so in negotiating the bilateral agreement between the U.S. and India, and there were a lot of tough things done there. I think both sides tried to reach agreement.

We had to meet and we did meet all the standards of U.S. law for bilateral nuclear agreements. We recognized in the agreement that we wanted to have the broadest possible full nuclear cooperation with India in the civilian sector. So we were able to craft an agreement that met their needs for politically and economically for energy along with meeting our needs for strengthening non-proliferation with this agreement or bringing India into the international non-proliferation effort, and also our legal requirements. So we think we got a good agreement for both of us.

Back to the question, before. India is a democracy. In many ways, there's a lot of similarities. One of the things we've got to understand -- we have to understand is that democracies have debates and they have discussions and they have political systems, and just as we've gone through a lot of debate and discussion with our Congress and we'll have to do some more before this is finally done, they have to do it with their parliament as well, and they are going through a political discussion right now on the pros and cons to India of this agreement. They are going to have to work through that. We hope it happens sooner rather than later. We do think the whole timetable of moving this forward: the faster we can do it the better. Three or four major steps left, but we've come a long way; put a lot of work into it because fundamentally this is a good deal. This is a good deal for India, it's a good deal for India's economic growth, it's a good deal for India's environment, it's a good deal for the non-proliferation regime around the world bringing India closer into alignment, and it's a good deal for the United States and for India.

So I think as they go through their debate they will reach that conclusion and proceed down this road, just as we have gone through our debates. We reached that conclusion and got, frankly, overwhelming support, very strong support from both houses of Congress for the deal. Okay'

QUESTION: First, thank you for making your remarks today. I wanted to ask you a little bit more about U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation and the future of the 123 Agreement* which I think has already been addressed a little bit. And two related questions. First, if you could just comment a little bit on the domestic debate in India, and particularly the position of the left parties and the significance of that; and secondly, a question related more to the future of the 123 Agreement. If you could say a little bit about how you expect the implementation of IAEA* safeguards at Indian facilities, how that will go and any challenges involved.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: You are really trying to get me in trouble, aren't you'

[Laughter]

The debate within the Indian parliament, between the Indian political parties, is one that probably proceeds best without the involvement of outsiders and without comment from the American Assistant Secretary of State.

The deal, the deal. It's pretty clear we've been very public and transparent about how this was done, about the understandings that have been reached. The text of the agreement is out in public and each of us is consulting and discussing with our parliament, but I think they are going to have to work through the politics of this in India. That probably doesn't benefit from any kind of assistance I could consider giving or any comment I might make. I think we are just going to see how it plays out.

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

But we have that fundamental confidence that this is in the interest of India and in the interest of the United States and it's been carefully negotiated to meet our needs and their needs. We have to believe, and I think -- I will predict that they all work their way through this and continue towards implementation.

There are a lot of different pieces that make this whole arrangement. There were the U.S.-India pieces, there's the piece that India has to negotiate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, there's the approval of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the group of countries around the world that try to support the Non-Proliferation Treaty and regulate the trade of nuclear materials and equipment. And so we have to go through each of those hurdles. Then we ourselves have to go back to the U.S. Congress.

So there are a few more hurdles down the road and one of the key ones is India negotiating with the International Atomic Energy Agency to get a safeguards agreement that would apply to their power plants because we will only supply materials to safeguarded facilities. That's true of all the suppliers.

But I think it's important to remember India already has safeguards arrangements with the International Atomic Energy Agency on a number of its civilian/nuclear facilities. So there are examples and models there. As we look to see how they negotiate I am sure those examples and models will be important.

So we don't think it's an enormously difficult negotiation for them, but they are going to have to work that out with the International Atomic Energy Agency. But that's just one of the several steps left as we go forward. Eventually, remember, the whole goal here is so that Indian kids can turn on the lights so they can do their homework. We are still a ways away from that and the sooner we move down this road and get there, the sooner they are going to be able to turn on the lights and do their homework.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. I think we've kept you a" actually, beyond the hour.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Thank you all. Thanks for coming.

[Applause]

#

*Walter Anderson serves as the Associate Director for South Asian Studies at the school.

*The Mogul Dynasty existed in northern India from 1526-1858.

* U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos Guterrez

* Asian Development Bank

* Colin Powell served as U.S. Secretary of State from 2001-2005.

* Gross Domestic Product

* The Red Mosque, or Lal Masjid, in Islamabad, which has a religious school for women and men attached to it, was the site of a July 2007 stand off between violent extremists and the Government of Pakistan.

* United Nations

* Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

* The Karuna faction led by Vinayagamoorthis Muralitharan, better known by his alias, Colonel Karuna formed in 2004.

* Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal

* The U.S.-India Civilian Nuclear Agreement, often referred to as the 123 agreement

REMARKS TO PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

* International Atomic Energy Agency

Load-Date: October 29, 2007

End of Document

WAVE OF HUMANITY; TSUNAMI

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

January 8, 2005 Saturday

First Edition

Copyright 2005 John Fairfax Publications Pty Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Pg. 19

Length: 4302 words

Byline: Hamish McDonald in Chennai, India, with Matthew Moore in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, Neil McMahon in Phuket, Thailand, and Farah Farouque in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Body

The world has responded to the crisis with unprecedented co-operation. But can it last?

After the tsunami, a wave of compassion. The question now: how to sustain the unprecedented worldwide concern for the victims, and channel the promised aid.

Except in the Indonesian province of Aceh - where hundreds of thousands still live on precarious aid supplies and whatever packaged food they can salvage from the mud - the task is turning from rescue and survival towards restoration of homes and livelihoods.

But the devastation is stunning. In Aceh if a thousand bulldozers had lined up blade to blade and driven around the coastline, through the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, and a string of other big towns, they could not have done more damage than the tsunami, which killed 100,000 or more. The tsunami wiped out vast numbers of houses, shops and other buildings, wells were filled with salt water, farmland was poisoned and irrigation, water and sanitation systems were swept away. From the air you can see roads disappearing into the sea. They will have to be rebuilt on maps showing a new coastline.

In Sri Lanka a million people out of a population of 20 million have been made homeless, and perhaps 60,000 killed. Along India's southern coast, where almost 10,000 were drowned, fishing villages have been devastated and thousands of trawlers lie smashed and piled up on land. In the remote Andaman and Nicobar islands, where perhaps 5000 died, the impact on isolated tribes is still largely unknown.

Thailand's important tourism industry, contributing 6 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product, has taken a massive blow after 5000 people - half of them foreign tourists - were lost. The tourism industry in the Maldives, a collection of low-lying coral atolls, is even more critical to that tiny nation's future.

The heart-rending images and stories of Western and East Asian tourists caught in the torrent of December 26 might have contributed to the sense of sympathy through rich countries that has opened so many pockets - to the point where Medecins sans Frontieres last week called a halt to contributions.

That European man in his bathers, clinging to a palm frond as the sea poured over a resort's lawn like water tipped from a giant bath, or the families fighting their way out of flooded hotel rooms and cabanas, could have been any of us.

WAVE OF HUMANITY TSUNAMI

But the same sympathy has galvanised people in poorer societies, from street traders in Beijing offering small sums of yuan, to a beggar in Chennai who joined a queue at a bank this week to pay a few coins into the Indian Prime Minister's relief fund.

A stream of trucks, buses, cars and even scooter-rickshaws stream down the Tamil Nadu coast road to Nagapattinam, the worst-hit district on the Indian mainland, laden with boxes of supplies. The banners on the vehicles reflect the pluralism of India coming together in crisis: Hindu temples, mosques, churches, private companies, village councils, student groups and individuals. Even one from the A-1 Typewriting Institute.

In Thailand, cleaning and building teams set to work clearing the battered beaches of Phuket, and thousands of volunteers pitched in as part of a wider effort dealing with everything from housing orphans to reopening schools.

In a graceful colonial-era building that was part of Sri Lanka's old parliament house in Colombo, a hundred volunteers collate data on the disaster, from the roads, bridges, jetties, and rail lines damaged to the numbers of orphans in relief camps. "If we Sri Lankans don't help our country when there is a national calamity, who will?" asks one of the volunteers, Ivan Attanyake, a retired navy commodore and engineer.

In Sri Lanka, racked for decades by conflict on political, ethnic and religious lines, civil society has emerged too. There are stories of Buddhist priests offering succour in their temples to homeless Muslims; the Sinalese businessman who offered a helping hand to a poor Tamil family. "What has been magnificent has been this response," says P. Saravanmuttu, a political analyst with the Centre for Policy Alternatives in Colombo.

Governments are getting more mixed accolades. The canny, sure-footed response of the Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, may have salvaged some longer-term benefit from the calamity for his country as a regional power, and some political advantage for his government.

Shinawatra positioned himself early and well. He toured devastated areas, met survivors and the grieving, and made sure Thailand was front and centre when the Americans came calling with money to spend and in need of reliable allies to help them spend it. Shinawatra asserted Thai independence, declaring that the country did not need foreign aid to help it recover, but offered to let the country be the regional hub for aid and relief.

The US Secretary of State, Colin Powell - whose first stop on his tour of the region was Bangkok - lavished praise on the Thai leadership in a time of global crisis. In doing so, Powell brought the sheen back to Shinawatra's political authority, which had lost its lustre through a difficult year - marked by a separatist insurgency in the south, the outbreak of bird flu and controversy over his business dealings.

Though never in serious electoral danger, the boost will be welcome: an opinion poll this week found 54 per cent of Thais had a better impression of Shinawatra now than before the tsunami. Which is why calls to postpone elections scheduled for February 6 have been resisted. "Life goes on, no matter how grim it's going to be," said Sranand Vejajiva, a spokesman for the ruling Thai Rak Thai party.

India's government responded quickly, given the tsunami swept 100 people off the shores of one of its four big metropolitan cities, Chennai.

Further down the coast, it was more local citizens - from churchmen like Brother James Peter of the Sandals for Jesus group in Nagapattinam, to the disciples of Sri Aurobindo in their commune near Pondicherry - who started collecting bodies and guiding survivors to shelter.

But the same day, Indian Air Force Antonov-32 transports laden with supplies had taken off for the battered Andamans, while navy ships and aircraft headed for Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Drawing on experience learnt from the Gujarat earthquake three years earlier, official and private relief teams swung into action, with the Government able to announce that India too could cope with its own problems, and that outside aid was better directed to Aceh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Indeed, New Delhi quickly announced its own aid donations for its stricken neighbours, with \$US25 million (\$33 million) allocated for Sri Lanka alone. An army field hospital was flown into Colombo, and a hospital ship was

WAVE OF HUMANITY TSUNAMI

stationed off the south coast. On Tuesday, Indian Navy teams reopened Galle harbour after clearing wreckage, then moved on to the damaged ports of Colombo and Trincomalee. In the Maldives warship crews restored power and water supplies. Off the Aceh town of Meulaboh, another Indian Navy flotilla, including a hospital ship, arrived.

In India's own offshore territory the Andaman islands local officialdom came under heavy criticism. The islands' lieutenant-governor, Ram Pakse, an appointee of the previous Hindu nationalist Government, kept desperately needed aid teams sent by the North India Church sitting idle in the capital, Port Blair. Within a few days, New Delhi sidelined him and put relief operations under the local military commander.

Sri Lanka's President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, has been given a low score, too. "I'd rate her a B+ so far, and that's because I had low expectations," says one senior foreign diplomat in Colombo. Kumaratunga was visiting London when the tsunami hit. On her return, one of her first moves was to demand that her Prime Minister, Mahinda Rajapakse, stop grabbing the limelight by touring affected areas. Her brother, Anura Bandaranaike, responsible for tourism - a sector devastated by the tsunami - remains overseas, and his duties have been temporarily reassigned.

Kumaratunga has established no fewer than three committees to co-ordinate recovery and rehabilitation planning. Their precise responsibilities seem to overlap. Colombo's response took several days to evolve after the disaster, with its operations centre only becoming fully operational four days after the tsunami. "I wish, even now, there would be less meetings, fewer task forces and more action," says Jezimma Ismail, the chancellor of a university in one of the hardest hit areas, Batticaloa.

Camps set up in schools, mosques, temples and churches are now providing the very basics: food, medicine and shelter. But delivery of aid has been patchy. Doctors in Colombo complained this week that at least 80 air shipments of medicine were stuck at the airport because of a shortage of pharmacists to categorise the drugs.

On the darker side, too, there has been widespread looting and complaints of women and children being sexually assaulted in the camps. Thugs affiliated to mainstream political parties and criminal gangs have been active on the scene, confiscating aid food to sell commercially.

"There has definitely been a deterioration in the law-and-order situation," says the former army chief General Jerry de Silva, an adviser to the President. In one bizarre incident, an attempt to avoid paying sales taxes under the guise of aid was foiled by Sri Lankan Customs: more than 4 million items of women's underwear were found concealed during a search of an aid convoy.

Indonesia's response was also confused and belated. In the wake of the tsunami, the President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, described the calamity as "the greatest challenge of my presidency so far". For a man who has been in office less than three months it was a singularly inopportune remark - but also a sign of how difficult it has been for the Government to understand and respond to the magnitude of what has happened in Aceh.

In the first hours after the tsunami, countries such as Sri Lanka and Bangladesh at least issued immediate appeals for international aid. But in Indonesia no request for aid came, even though the tsunami had struck at 8.25am and many of the 40,000 soldiers and police in the province were in affected areas and had communications systems giving them direct access to Jakarta.

It was not until Tuesday that the Vice-President, Jusuf Kalla, finally met a group of ambassadors, after which he said he would welcome foreign aid, although he refrained from issuing a call for help.

By that time any of those who had been critically wounded on Sunday were dead.

But even if a call for help had been made immediately, there was little prospect of saving them because of the isolation of Aceh, stuck out on the far western tip of Sumatra.

Physical isolation was only part of the problem. In the 28-year-long separatist war foreigners had all but been banned from the province. The idea of suddenly allowing them in en masse required a huge change of thinking by the Government as well as the army, which in effect runs Aceh.

WAVE OF HUMANITY TSUNAMI

The Indonesian and foreign aid effort has been slow, but with the arrival of nine ships from the US Navy, including the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, and ships from India food and other supplies have finally been delivered to the west-coast towns isolated because the roads have gone.

However, co-ordination has been plagued with problems, including Indonesian air-traffic controllers in Banda Aceh being unable to handle the volume of aid traffic but unwilling to accept outside help. Government advisers acknowledge this and other bottlenecks. A new air co-ordination committee should fix this problem.

The media has criticised the US Government for the lack of co-ordination and its financial response. A Jakarta Post editorial labelled emergency spending in Indonesia's third-poorest province as stingy.

Even so, there is no evidence Yudhoyono is in political trouble because of his Government's belated response, and the presence of numerous foreign leaders at his summit on Thursday is likely to restore his standing as a decisive leader.

Moreover, this crisis will mainly affect poor coastal farmers and fishermen, not Indonesia's wealthy elite, a fact that will diminish the impact of any criticism of the Government's failures in tackling the crisis.

The difficulty ahead will be rebuilding the shattered province, where about 100,000 have been killed. Plans are underway to build permanent refugee camps for at least a quarter of a million people of those who lost houses in the floods.

In terms of the region's economies, the effects will be minor. ExxonMobil's big liquified-natural-gas plant at Lhokseumawe, Aceh, was undamaged, as was the Kalpakam nuclear reactor near Chennai, which engineers shut down safely after the tsunami damaged pumps circulating seawater as coolant. Sri Lanka's main export earners, the tea and rubber plantations and the garment factories, are located inland. Tourism provides only 2 per cent of gross domestic product and fisheries are minor in the big picture, despite providing subsistence for over half a million people. Many newly unemployed hotel workers and fishermen will no doubt try to join the hordes of Sri Lankans already overseas in the Middle East and elsewhere working as domestic helpers, cleaners, shop assistants and labourers.

Even before the tsunami, Sri Lanka's economy faced challenges. The trade balance was already in record deficit because of high oil prices, and the removal of global textile quotas on January 1 threatened to transfer jobs away from its factories to China and India.

The central bank governor, Sunil Mendis, reported this week that 4000 of Sri Lanka's 14,000 hotel rooms had been damaged or destroyed, of which 3000 could be repaired in three to six months. About 70 per cent of Sri Lanka's 142,000 fishermen have lost boats and nets. Overall, repairs to infrastructure and other relief would cost about \$1.7 billion this year.

Indonesia is still to match the growing promises of aid, including Australia's offer of \$1 billion over five years, against the needs of Aceh. However, half a million people will need to be housed in four massive temporary camps, dependent on food and medical aid for months.

The tiny tourism businesses offering surfing and diving around the west coast and Nias islands have been wiped out for now, but they may be one of the areas to benefit as aid workers moving into Aceh begin looking for recreation on their days off.

Indeed, the aid effort is producing its own local economic effect. With so many aid workers now arriving, many of the poor face a new problem as the price of goods quickly escalates thanks to a flood of aid money. Already some aid workers are talking about the "East Timorisation" of Aceh as media and aid groups pay five times the usual rate to rent cars and houses.

In Sri Lanka the currency is getting an unwelcome lift already from the relatively small amounts of relief donations flowing into government and private accounts. Mendis, the central bank governor, said the rupee could rise further.

WAVE OF HUMANITY TSUNAMI

In Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra is insisting growth will not be affected.

"There are certainly damages, but these are just for the short term," he says. "I can assure you we will recover quickly and faster than one may think." The Tourism Minister, Sontaya Konplome, says Thailand will meet its target of 13 million visitors this year, compared with 10 million last year).

Others are less sanguine. About 12,000 hotel rooms have been knocked out in coastal resorts. Phuket alone received 2.75 million visitors last year and pulled in \$2.6 billion - about a quarter of national tourism earnings. Some resorts, such as Phi Phi island, of The Beach fame, will not be restored. This suggests that one or two percentage points could be knocked off economic growth.

In the northern hemisphere tourist markets such as Sweden, hundreds of whose nationals were killed, confidence will take time to return, particularly if an Indian Ocean tsunami warning system is not established.

Still, Thai tourist officials will visit Sweden and other affected countries in coming months to express condolences, and a number of promotions are planned, including, of all things, an underwater wedding ceremony on Valentine's Day.

How the tsunami changes the geopolitics and civil conflicts of this ocean corner is yet to be seen. The initial impact on Aceh's fight between the Indonesian Army and the separatist Free Aceh Movement is discussed in a separate article (see page 28). In Sri Lanka the simmering tensions between the Colombo government and the separatist **Tamil Tigers** was manifest in jostling over aid flows.

Complaints came from Sri Lanka's north and east - where Tamil and Muslim minorities have been hard-hit - that the Sinhala-dominated south had been favoured over them. Into the void stepped private charities and community-based groups, such as the Muslim Foundation for Culture and Development and the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation, which has close links to the rebel Tiger cadres. The United Nations and a host of non- government organisations, including Oxfam, Red Cross and World Vision, are also in the field.

To Kumaratunga's credit, she did invite the Tigers, with whom the Government has had an uneasy truce for four years, to join multi-party talks in the aftermath of the tsunami. The Tigers' leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, refused, and demanded that relief be channelled through the Tigers to the patchwork of territories.

Perhaps with a mind to appease the international donors, who have pledged hundreds of millions, Kumaratunga eventually called on the military to take control of the whole distribution network.

On the ground, relations are better than this posturing suggests. Tiger fighters and army troops have been coming together in unprecedented ways. In Jaffna they have dug side by side for corpses and worked together to help refugees clustered in camps. Tiger cadres, meanwhile, have suffered heavy losses - up to 4000 dead, according to some reports. What this signifies for Norwegian-brokered peace talks, stalled for nearly two years, is unclear. One pessimistic line of thinking is that the Tigers will not be rushing to talk, because they will not be in a position of strength to press their claim for statehood.

As in India, political parties are jostling to claim credit too. A key Government coalition partner in Sri Lanka, the Marxist-leaning People's Liberation Front (or Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) has party members who have donned conspicuous political badges to serve food in the camps in the south. Other JVP members are said to have waylaid aid convoys to affix badges claiming the goods came from their party.

The sworn enemies Kumaratunga and the opposition leader, Ranil Wickremasinghe, have made conciliatory noises but show no sign of forming a government of national unity to meet the crisis. The parliament, in which no party has a majority in its own right, remains fractured.

In Tamil Nadu, a horn-blaring convoy conveying the state's opposition leader, M. Karunanidhi, and his son Stalin caused a halt to relief operations this week, as did a massive team of central-government politicians and officials from New Delhi making an on-the-spot inspection. Neither group has any time for the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister,

WAVE OF HUMANITY TSUNAMI

Selvi J. Jayalalithaa, who even without the tsunami was expected to leave office at the next election, given the Tamil habit of expelling incumbents.

For foreign leaders competing to be the top donors, the involvement could be sobering. The aid Australia promised Bali after the September 2002 bombing has still only partly been delivered, with work on a new eye hospital still to begin.

In Aceh, foreign agencies involved in rebuilding will face swirling passions, from the Indonesian Army seeing itself pushed aside in what has been its own secret war theatre, from fanatical elements like the Islamic Defenders Front, whose members are being shipped into the province by the military, and perhaps from the fiercely independent Acehnese themselves.

Loud expressions of hope by Colin Powell that helping Aceh will put the US in a better light in the Muslim world may invite groups intent on stirring up misunderstanding and confrontation. He and John Howard have already met a put-down this week - when Indonesia, India and other nations involved in the Jakarta crisis meeting scuttled the US plan to form a leading group of nations to manage relief and rehabilitation, insisting instead that the United Nations take the lead.

Meanwhile, the crisis has subtly rejigged the emerging power relationship in Asia. China, which had recently been putting itself forward as the region's natural leader and declaring itself a major market economy, suddenly reverted to being a developing country with limited resources, pledging only \$81 million in aid immediately and unable to field much in the way of military assets.

India, by contrast, quietly asserted itself as the leading country in the north-east Indian Ocean, where Chennai and Kolkata had once been the dominant centres. But it was not in the suspicious way of the Cold War, when the dispatch of the carrier USS Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 Bangladesh war raised lasting resentment in New Delhi.

India's Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, went out of his way to shoot down rumours that India saw the US naval presence around Aceh and Sri Lanka as an intrusion. If the US believed they could contribute, they were most welcome, Saran said. India's declining aid from foreign governments was not a dogmatic position, India's top diplomat also said, and could be reviewed if particular benefits were seen.

Only belatedly getting attention, meanwhile, has been the mental suffering of the millions of survivors. Behind the deceptive smiles of survivors, once they are getting fed and looked after, can be a devastating sense of loss - of children, parents or partners, homes, livelihoods and communities.

Already in southern India local liquor shops are experiencing sales three times higher than normal as idle fishermen drown their sorrows. In one incident a fisherman who lost his wife and two children entered a temple in a drunken state and was crushed underfoot by a sacred elephant. He had fallen at the animal's feet in a confused prayer for help. Most people eventually recover, says Helen Herrman, a University of Melbourne psychiatrist who heads a regional mental health centre for the World Health Organisation. But for one in 10 or 20 there may be long-term psychological problems.

As well as bereavement, there is loss of community and normal social activities. Children need to be getting back to school and jobs restored. The critical thing for mental health is that kind of rebuilding, which will not be easy. In Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India and Thailand there will be a need for grief counselling not necessarily by psychiatrists but by trained listeners, especially for parents who have had children ripped out of their arms.

PITCHING IN:

Australia \$1 billion

Total 900 military personnel.

WAVE OF HUMANITY TSUNAMI

Troop supply ship HMAS Kanimbla going to Aceh, with an army engineering team of 150. Seven large military aircraft, four Iroquois helicopters. Military field hospital in

Aceh. Water purification plant in Banda Aceh. Australian Federal Police 25-member forensic identification team to Phuket and an AFP officer coordinating 200-strong team of international forensic experts. The five-year aid package also includes:

small-scale reconstruction of infrastructure; scholarships program for engineering, health and public administration trainees; \$500 million in interest-free loans.

Germany \$895.24m

Medical evacuation plane on third mission evacuating Germans from Thailand.

Mobile hospital in Aceh.

Supply ship with 150 crew heading to region with 45 beds and an operating theatre, plus two helicopters.

United States \$460.65m

1,300 military personnel on the ground, mainly in Thailand, and another 12,000 aboard 17 Navy ships in the region, along with 50 helicopters and 40 cargo,

reconnaissance and refueling airplanes. 195,000 kilograms of supplies to the region so far.

India \$29.59m

16,000 personnel to Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia in the biggest relief operation in its history. 32 navy ships including frigates, destroyers and survey ships, most equipped with helicopters; 5,000 airmen and 41 aircraft; more than 5,500 soldiers; medical teams to Sri Lanka.

Japan \$658.07m

Deployment expected to involve 800 personnel, which would be Japan's largest postwar dispatch for overseas disaster relief. Includes army medical and airlift teams, navy vessels, and air force transport aircraft. Military transport plane

with 40 military personnel to Thailand.

China \$79.52m

500 tonnes of food, water, milk powder, blankets, tents, clothing, generators,

telecommunication equipment and medicine. Army involved in relief operations throughout the region. No figures, but government says it is the country's largest peacetime overseas humanitarian mission.

ITALY \$125.03m

Six to eight para-military police forensics specialists to Thailand.

Spain \$89.52

Sending troops, helicopters, hercules planes, ships, field hospitals and a unit of engineers.

Bangladesh

157 soldiers to Sri Lanka and Maldives; Two Bell-212 helicopters; two C-130 aircraft to Sri Lanka.

WAVE OF HUMANITY TSUNAMI

Pakistan

500 military personnel in medical and engineering teams to establish field hospitals in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

Britain \$126.35m

Two ships; RAF cargo plane; two helicopters heading for Indonesia.

France \$84.98m

1000 troops in the region.

Helicopter carrier and frigate to the region with five tonnes of medicines, 80,000 litres of water, around 6,000 food rations. Five Puma helicopters and another

frigate next week to Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Graphic

TWO PHOTOS: A tsunami victim nurses her son in a camp in the Sri Lankan eastern coastal town of Kalkudah. Photo: AP/Petros Karadjias US naval air crewmen assigned to the "Golden Falcons" of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Two, carry a seriously injured Indonesian woman to a waiting helicopter, for transportation to a medical facility, at Banda Aceh in Sumatra, Indonesia on January 3, 2005. REUTERS/US Navy/Gabriel

Load-Date: July 17, 2007

End of Document

**Fight terror with ideas, not just armies;
Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what communism was to the
20th - a global ideological battle that needs to be fought both off and on the
battlefield. This is why absolute, unsentimental clarity is needed, not
political correctness that fudges the seriousness of the threat, says Prime
Minister GOH CHOK TONG**

The Straits Times (Singapore)

May 7, 2004 Friday

Copyright 2004 Singapore Press Holdings Limited

Section: Commentary

Length: 4465 words

Body

THE terrorist attacks in Madrid in March this year could become a turning point in the war against terrorism. Unless we make the right moves, I fear the turn could be for the worse.

The choice of the target and the timing of the attack were strategic. The Spanish Socialist Party had made the withdrawal of troops from Iraq part of its election platform. Attacking Madrid just before the election was obviously calculated to achieve a strategic effect, as indeed it did when the new government so quickly confirmed its intention to pull out of the United States-led coalition in Iraq.

This will only encourage the terrorists to exploit political differences within countries, and divisions between the US and Europe. We must not let them succeed.

Any lingering doubts about the terrorists' strategic intentions should have been put to rest by a statement attributed to Osama bin Laden in April wherein he offered a 'truce' to Europe if it stopped 'attacking Muslims or interfering in their affairs including participating in the American conspiracy'.

And, notwithstanding what some critics of the war in Iraq have alleged, this statement also demonstrates that Osama bin Laden himself sees the war in Iraq as part of the larger struggle against terrorism. He pointedly said 'the killing of Europeans came after their invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan'.

The war against terrorism could shape the 21st century in the same way as the Cold War defined the world before the fall of the Berlin Wall. To win, we must first clearly understand what we are up against.

Terrorism is a generic term. Terrorist organisations such as the ***Tamil Tigers*** in Sri Lanka or the Basque separatists in Spain are only of local concern. The virulent strain of Islamic terrorism is another matter altogether. It is driven by religion. Its ideological vision is global. The communists fought to live, whereas the jihadi terrorists fight to die, and live in the next world.

My perspective is formed by our own experiences in South-east Asia, which post-9/11 has emerged as a major theatre for terrorist operations. In December 2001, Singapore arrested 15 people belonging to a radical Islamic

Fight terror with ideas, not just armies; Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what communism was to the 20th - a global ideological battle that ne....

group called the Jemaah Islamiah (JI). They were plotting even before 9/11 to attack American and other Western interests in Singapore. In August 2002, we arrested another 21 members of this group. Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand have also made many arrests of terrorists.

The JI regional leadership spanned Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and the southern Philippines. Its tentacles even probed into Australia. JI's objective was to create a Daulah Islamiah, an Islamic state in South-east Asia. This was to be centred in Indonesia but would include Malaysia, southern Thailand, southern Philippines, and, inevitably, Singapore and Brunei.

But the most crucial conclusion our investigations revealed was this: the existence of a trans-regional terrorist brotherhood of disparate South-east Asian groups linked by a militant Islamic ideology to each other and to Al-Qaeda. Whatever their specific goals, these groups were committed to mutual help in the pursuit of their common ideology: They helped each other with funds and support services, in training and in joint operations.

In 1999, JI formed a secret caucus called the Rabitatul Mujahideen, meaning Mujahideen Coalition, to bring together various militant South-east Asian Islamic groups. Between 1999 and 2000, Rabitatul Mujahideen met three times in Kuala Lumpur. It was responsible for the bombing attack against the Philippine ambassador to Indonesia in Jakarta in August 2000. The brain behind the attack was Hambali, the link man between South-east Asian terrorism and Al-Qaeda. Fortunately, he is now under arrest.

But the threat remains. It stems from a religious ideology infused with an implacable hostility to all secular governments, especially the West, and in particular the US. Their followers want to recreate the Islam of seventh century Arabia, which they regard as the golden age. Their ultimate goal is to bring about a Caliphate linking all Muslim communities. Their means is jihad, which they narrowly define as a holy war against all non-Muslims whom they call 'infidels'.

The Arabs call this religious ideology Salafi. Our experience in South-east Asia is not without wider relevance because of what the Salafis themselves believe. This is what one of them, an Algerian named Abu Ibrahim Mustafa, has said: 'The war in Palestine, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Algeria, in Chechnya and in the Philippines is one war. This is a war between the camp of Islam and the camp of the Cross, to which the Americans, the Zionists, Jews, their apostate allies and others belong. The goal of this war, which they falsely called a War on Terror, is to prevent the Muslims from establishing an Islamic state...'

Likewise, JI's ultimate goal is a Caliphate, by definition not confined to South-east Asia. The dream of a Caliphate may seem absurd to the secular mind. But it will be a serious mistake to dismiss its appeal to many in the Islamic world, though the majority do not believe in killing and dying for it.

But there are radicals and militants who do. The terrorist brotherhood in South-east Asia and its links to Al-Qaeda were first forged through the struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Ibrahim Maidin, the leader of the Singapore JI cell, underwent military training in Afghanistan in the early 1990s. His encounters with the Mujahideen deeply impressed him. Ibrahim wrote several letters to the Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and to Osama bin Laden. He asked whether Mullah Omar was to be regarded as the Caliph of the Islamic world. After returning to Singapore, Ibrahim arranged for JI members to visit Afghanistan and to undergo training there.

When one of those convicted of the October 2002 Bali bombings was sentenced to death, he thanked the prosecutors and said that this would bring him closer to God and 'the death penalty would mean nothing except strengthening my faith'.

Islamic militancy is not new to South-east Asia. But what is new is this type of fanatical global ideology (including the phenomenon of suicide bombers) that has been able to unite different groups and lead South-east Asian groups to subordinate local interests to the broader struggle.

Fight terror with ideas, not just armies; Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what communism was to the 20th - a global ideological battle that ne....

Ibrahim has confessed to a senior Singapore intelligence officer that in retrospect, he made the mistake of moving too quickly and should have waited for Malaysia, Indonesia, the southern Philippines and Singapore to become an Islamic state before acting against US interests. But he still believes that his side would ultimately win. He also said that as long as the US was 'doing things against the Muslims', the JI would continue to attack the US.

From our experience in South-east Asia, I draw three principal conclusions that I believe have a wider relevance.

NO COMPROMISE

FIRST, the goals of these terrorists make the struggle a zero sum game for them. There is no room for compromise except as a tactical expedient. America may be the main enemy but it is not the only one. What Osama bin Laden offered Europe was only a 'truce', not a lasting peace.

The war against terrorism today is a war against a specific strain of militant Islamic terrorism that wants, in effect, a 'clash of civilisations' or, in the words of the Algerian I earlier quoted, 'a war between the camp of Islam and the camp of the Cross'.

The JI has tried to create the conditions for Christians and Muslims in South-east Asia to set against one another. In December 2000, it attacked churches in Indonesia, including one church on an Indonesian island off Singapore. It has sent its members to fight and stir up trouble in Ambon against Christians.

At the trial of those responsible for the Bali bombings of October 2002, one of the defendants, Amrozi, dubbed by the media as the 'smiling terrorist', said that he was not sorry for the Westerners killed in the Bali attacks. He said: 'How can I feel sorry? I am very happy, because they attack Muslims and are inhuman.' In fact, he wished 'there were more American casualties'. What was most chilling is that this hatred is impersonal.

One of those we detained in Singapore was a service engineer with an American company. He confessed that he actually liked his American friends and bosses. He was nevertheless involved in targeting American interests. We have a sense that he had struggled with this. He eventually decided to testify against the spiritual leader of JI, Abu Bakar Bashir, but only because he felt betrayed by Bashir's denial of the very existence of the JI organisation which Bashir headed and to whom he and other members had sworn allegiance.

The favourite tactic of terrorists of all stripes has always been to try to provoke a backlash to serve their cause. When news of the JI arrests broke, my immediate concern was to maintain social cohesion in Singapore. Singapore is a multiracial society with a 15 per cent Muslim population. They are well integrated in our schools, housing estates and the workplace. Nevertheless, misunderstandings could easily arise. We met Muslim leaders in a number of closed-door sessions to share details of the investigations and to explain that the arrests were not targeted against the Singapore Muslim community or Islam.

I also held dialogues with several thousand grassroots leaders of all ethnic groups and religions to make clear that I viewed the Muslim community in Singapore as peace-loving and to stress that the JI arrests should not cause fault lines to develop in inter-racial and inter-religious relations. We formed inter-racial confidence circles in schools and workplaces to promote better inter-racial and inter-religious understanding between the different communities.

But on a global plane, I sense that the beginnings of a backlash may already be upon us. Antagonism against Muslims has risen in Europe and the US since 9/11. A number of senior European politicians have spoken against admitting Muslim Turkey into the European Union. The municipal government of Rotterdam wants to change the city's racial profile and an all-party report to the Dutch parliament recently concluded that 30 years of multicultural policy had failed; yet Holland is one of the most liberal and tolerant of European countries. In Britain, the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality has dismissed multiculturalism as out of date and no longer useful.

Muslims are feeling this unease with them. Perhaps as a response, many of the younger generation of Muslims everywhere are increasingly adopting the symbols of religiosity.

Fight terror with ideas, not just armies; Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what communism was to the 20th - a global ideological battle that ne....

My second conclusion is that it is only through absolute and unsentimental clarity about the threat we face that we can define, differentiate and therefore isolate militant Islamic terrorism from mainstream Islam. It is not sufficient to repeat, mantra-like, that the majority of Muslims are peaceful and do not believe in violence. Unfortunately, we too often sacrifice clarity to be politically correct.

Last month, the Muslim Council of Britain, a government-linked organisation, provoked a storm of protests when it asked the authorities of some 1,000 mosques to preach peaceful Islamic doctrines, be vigilant against Islamists and cooperate fully with the police. Baroness Uddin, a Labour peer of Bangladeshi origin, condemned it as 'entirely unacceptable that 1,000 mosques were written to as if they were all harbouring terrorists' and accused the council of supporting a witch hunt. But who would be better than the Muslims themselves to make the necessary distinctions? If we pretend in the name of political correctness that distinctions ought not be made, it is inevitable that all Muslims be viewed with suspicion.

This brings me to my third and perhaps most important conclusion. Just as the Cold War was an ideological as well as a geopolitical struggle, the war against terrorism must be fought with ideas as well as with armies, with religious and community leaders as well as police forces and intelligence services.

GLOBAL MENACE

THIS ideological struggle is already upon us. The terrorist threat has moved beyond any individual or group. It has become a global menace. Unless we win the battle of ideas, there will be no dearth of willing foot soldiers ready to martyr themselves.

This ideological struggle is far more complex than the struggle against communism because it engages not just reason but religious faith. Non-Muslims have no locus standi to engage in this struggle for the soul of Islam. It is a matter for Muslims to settle among themselves.

In Singapore, one of those we arrested admitted that he and others had been programmed and manipulated to have a 'tunnel vision' of the concept of jihad. Another detainee told our security authorities that he hoped an ustaz or religious teacher could come to the detention centre to help him 'purge' his wrong ideas about Islam and teach him 'true Islam'. In other words, although he recognised that his religious teachings were wrong, he would acknowledge only a religious authority to change his ideas.

We were fortunate that in Singapore the Muslim community and Islamic leaders trusted the Government sufficiently to be willing to offer their help. They understood that unless they acted, all Muslims could have been tarred by a few. A number of Islamic religious teachers have volunteered their services to our security authorities to undertake religious counselling and rehabilitation of our JI detainees.

We welcome their help. But as a secular government, we cannot and do not tell religious teachers what they must preach. As long as they do not espouse violence, we must be prepared to risk a certain amount of criticism. Religious leaders regarded as too pro-government may not be credible to their ground. Participation in the rehabilitation of JI detainees by Islamic scholars and counsellors gave the Muslim community in Singapore a stake in combating extremist Islamic terrorism. It facilitated the evolution of self-policing by the Muslim community and helped inoculate it against radical elements.

This may seem an obvious point. A Rand report released in March categorised Muslims into fundamentalists, traditionalists, modernists and secularists. The report recommended that the West support the modernists first; support the traditionalists against the fundamentalists; confront and oppose the fundamentalists; and selectively support the secularists. Such an approach is a start. But I believe that it oversimplifies the problem by failing to recognise what all Muslims share in common. It overstates the differences within the global Muslim community.

THE UMMAH IS REAL

Fight terror with ideas, not just armies; Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what communism was to the 20th - a global ideological battle that ne....

IT IS a fact that there is a living, vibrant Islamic ummah or global Islamic community, perhaps more so today than in any time in modern world history. The ummah is not monolithic. But the identification that all Muslims feel for events affecting other Muslims has become real and visibly stronger and more widespread since global communications have facilitated the dahwa or missionary activities of the Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia preaching and spreading Wahhabism with its oil wealth. Denying that there is such a globalised Muslim political and religious consciousness, or trying to argue that a universal ummah is a danger or somehow undesirable, only mobilises all Muslims to dig in as they feel their religion is under siege.

What we are confronted with is a dynamic spectrum and not static categories within the ummah. When we ask why is it that moderates in such a spectrum do not raise their voices to challenge extremists, we must acknowledge that one reason is that on many issues they share much common ground even when they disagree on particulars.

Do you seek to change the world by prayer and faith? Do you work with an imperfect reality and strive towards its perfection? Do you not reject all that is not Islamic and seek to destroy it by force so as to re-establish the perfect Caliphate? These are all questions that vibrate and resonate around a single axis of faith.

We know that we should work with the moderates and isolate the extremists. But as we seek to separate the wheat from the chaff, we need to recognise that both come from the same plant. How we seek to engage and encourage the Muslim world to fight the ideological battle against the extremists must reflect this sensitivity and awareness.

This is complicated but not impossible. In Malaysia, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi fought the Islamic party, PAS, on the issue of the kind of Islamic state that Malaysia should be. He won a resounding victory in the general election. He checked PAS' advance towards an austere Muslim state with syariah laws with his vision of an Islamic state that is Islam Hadhari or 'Progressive Islam'. He has joined issue not on whether Malaysia should be an Islamic state but on the nature of such a state; and the struggle to define Malaysia's Islamic state will continue for a long time.

In Indonesia, Islamic-based parties generally did not do as well as parties that do not campaign under the banner of Islam in the recent parliamentary elections. But the Islamic parties will remain a crucial swing factor in the presidential elections later this year.

I recently travelled to Egypt, Jordan and Bahrain and also met a number of other Middle Eastern leaders in Singapore. I found them determined to fight the ideology that feeds the Islamic terrorists through educational reform and other means. They understand the problem. I am encouraged by these signs and am trying to initiate a dialogue between Asia and the Middle East to share experiences and forge understanding. India and South-east Asia together have more Muslims than in the Middle East. It is possible Asian Muslims can make a contribution to the ideological fight.

ROLE OF THE U.S.

ONLY the US has the capacity to lead the geopolitical battle against the Islamic terrorists. Iraq has become the key battleground. Before he was killed in Saudi Arabia, Yousef Al Ayyeri, author of the Al-Qaeda blueprint for fighting in Iraq, said: 'If democracy succeeds in Iraq, that would be the death of Islam.' That is why Osama bin Laden and others have put so much effort to try and break the coalition and America's resolve to stay the course to build a modern Iraq that Muslims will be proud of. Those who do not understand this, play into their hands. The key issue is no longer weapons of mass destruction or even the role of the United Nations. The central issue is America's credibility and will to prevail. If that is destroyed, Islamic extremists everywhere will be emboldened. We will all be at greater risk.

But the US cannot lead the ideological battle. The Rand report also fails to sufficiently acknowledge the deep distrust Muslims across the spectrum feel for the West and for the US in particular. It overstates the ability of any external force to influence one Muslim group against another. Recently, a Malaysian Muslim academic told one of my officials that while moderate Muslims did not condone what the extremists were doing, they were reluctant to

Fight terror with ideas, not just armies; Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what communism was to the 20th - a global ideological battle that ne....

speak up because they felt that this was a Western agenda and did not want to play into the hands of the US and its allies. They were distrustful that the US would manipulate Muslim voices for its own agenda.

The sources of Muslim anger and distrust of the US are complex. At one level, it is perhaps no different from the discomfort many, including US friends and allies, feel about US pre-eminent supremacy. At another level, it reflects the anguish of societies unable to cope with US-led globalisation and its occasional unilateralism. But I can think of no Muslim society anywhere in the world where the Palestinian issue does not provoke a basic, common emotional response, no matter how it may be expressed or intellectually articulated.

I am familiar with and indeed fully agree with the argument that even if the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were to be resolved, terrorism would not end. This is only logical, given the ideologically driven motivations of Islamist terrorists of the Al-Qaeda strain. But while most Muslims do not approve of suicide bombings, they all do empathise with the plight of Palestinian Muslims. They are angered and disappointed by what they perceive as America's acquiescence in Israel's disproportionate use of force against the Palestinians and, most recently, its policy of 'targeted assassinations'. They are critical of what they regard as America's double standards, citing, for example, the US determination in taking action against Iraq but not Israel for non-compliance with UN Security Council resolutions. These are views expressed consistently by leaders of Muslim nations whom I have met, including those most strongly supportive of America.

The end of the Palestinian conflict will not end terrorism. But moderating the perception that Muslims have of America's role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would certainly go a long way to moderating their view of the US. And this is essential if the ideological battle is to be won.

I am aware of the various measures that the US has taken to try to win the Muslim mind, such as setting up radio and television stations to broadcast alternative views of US policies to the Middle East. But the real issue is political policies, not public relations.

Like it or not, the Palestinian issue has become the lens through which Muslims around the world view the war against terror and actions against Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, among others. That is why when, for example, one of the convicted Bali bombers, Imam Samudra, justified his actions by claiming that 'the war against America and its allies is a war against evil, against tyranny and a war against terrorism and this is jihad in the path of Allah', it strikes a disconcerting resonance in the Muslim community.

And that is why when the likes of Abu Bakar Bashir claim that the CIA engineered the Bali bombings 'to discredit Islam', even rational, educated Muslims do not speak out to dismiss what they know to be preposterous.

I know that these are sensitive issues. I do not want to be misunderstood. Singapore is a friend of Israel. Israel helped Singapore build up its armed forces and to survive at a time when no other country in the world, not even the US or Britain, was confident enough in us to take the risk of doing so. We will always be grateful. Singapore's relationship with Israel is one of the best in Asia.

But like most people in the world, we watch the escalating cycle of violence with deep anguish - 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. We know there are no simple solutions. Still, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the cycle of violence fuel the global ideological struggle in which we are now all engaged. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict can no longer be seen only as a regional conflict or a matter of the self-defence of one country. The Palestinians know this. They know that Israel's reactions win sympathy for their cause from Muslims all around the world and help the Islamic terrorists.

We are unfortunately now in a situation where Muslim friends of the US feel uncomfortable about speaking out in America's defence and where mainstream Muslims hesitate to condemn extremists lest they be regarded as supporting the West. Beyond the Palestinian issue, I found many Middle Eastern leaders uncomfortable with the pace at which the US is urging reforms for the region. They are concerned that their interests and fears are not taken seriously enough by the US. Unless the US gains the confidence of the mainstream Muslims, they will not engage the extremists vigorously. If they do not, I fear the ideological battle will be lost.

Fight terror with ideas, not just armies; Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what communism was to the 20th - a global ideological battle that ne....

Education and opportunities for further studies abroad, especially for Muslim women, are crucial to winning the ideological fight. This is an area in which the West can play an important role. There is nothing wrong with the right type of religious education. But if mental horizons are shaped only by a religious education of even the most mainstream type, it means a limitation of opportunities for jobs and career development. And if opportunities are limited, sooner or later any religion will turn inwards on itself. This will make it easier for deviant ideologies to take root. In Singapore, we have insisted that the madrasahs or religious schools include a secular curriculum that will enable its graduates to make a living.

Genuine post-9/11 security concerns should not lead the West to shut off or shun the Muslim world. To do so will be self-defeating. But with grants, scholarships, fellowships and investments, the West should seek to create maximum exposure, engagement and opportunities. Once Muslims have been exposed to the modern world as in Malaysia or Indonesia, and have benefited from it without compromising their faith, it will be much more difficult for the Islamic ideological strain that only harks backwards to the seventh century to take root.

I found the Middle Eastern countries I recently visited, in particular Bahrain and Jordan, eager to build modern economies. We are close to concluding a free-trade agreement with Jordan and have agreed to start negotiations on an FTA with Bahrain. We are also pursuing similar initiatives with Egypt and Qatar. Viewed in the context of the broader ideological struggle, FTAs are strategic as well as economic choices by these governments.

Other Arab countries should be encouraged to plug themselves into the 21st century economy. Education, development, opportunities for employment and career development are not only what most Muslims themselves want. They are also less sensitive areas than democracy, human rights or equality for women and can be pushed more vigorously with less prospect of resistance. Education, including education for women and better employment opportunities which bring about a higher standard of living are areas in which mainstream Muslims and the West have clear common interests. With education will come greater access to news and information and knowledge beyond their own borders.

Social and political changes will take time but progress will be unstoppable. A gradual approach is more likely to succeed and take root than a 'big bang' strategy which could have unpredictable and unwelcome results.

If we are to win the war against terrorism, we must, as Sun Tze in The Art Of War says, understand the enemy. And we must, all of us, Muslims and non-Muslims, Americans, Europeans, Arabs and Asians, unite against it. But we must create the conditions that will make this essential unity possible.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong delivered this speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington's premier think-tank, last night.

Load-Date: May 6, 2004

**THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL;
MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN
JAPAN OR**

The Independent (London)

January 4, 2003, Saturday

Copyright 2003 Independent Print Ltd

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 8,9

Length: 4048 words

Byline: SIMON CALDER

Body

000 GREENWICH, LONDON SE10, ENGLAND (PICTURE NO 1)

GET YOUR BEARINGS

For centuries, the river Thames flowed with the blood of power. Henry VIII and Elizabeth I were born in a palace where the Royal Naval College now stands. England's first and greatest royal park was created here between the river and nearby Blackheath. Royalty chose Greenwich not for its natural elegance but because of its defensive situation: a hillside with commanding views over the Thames Estuary. At the brow of that slope stands the Royal Observatory, the key to world domination. Charles II commissioned Christopher Wren to build the Observatory to master time and space and extend England's grip on the world, a role sealed much later when it became the planet's Prime Meridian. These days mariners rely on satellite-based Global Positioning Systems to know they are on the Thames rather than the Tiber or the Tigris. But Greenwich remains the world's starting point. And that blot on the northern horizon, grazed by the zero-degree line? The Millennium Dome.

The observatory (020-8858 4422; www.rog.nmm.ac.uk) opens 10am-5pm daily, admission free.

010E HAMBURG, GERMANY

DON'T FEAR THE REEPERBAHN

The 10-degree line rips through Germany's most fascinating city. It bisects the Reeperbahn, the sleazy throughfare between brash central Hamburg and posh Altona, where the 20th century's greatest musical force took shape. The Beatles cut their teeth and grew their hair in Hamburg. But few traces remain of the not-yet-famous five (Paul McCartney, John Lennon, George Harrison, plus drummer Pete Best and the ill-fated bassist Stu Sutcliffe), who in 1960 arrived in a city still scarred by war. Visit their old drinking haunt, the Gretel & Alphonse bar at number 29 Grosse Freiheit, now selling Lennon posters and McCartney T-shirts (sorry, Sir Paul: that should be McCartney T-shirts and Lennon posters).

Fly to Hamburg on Air Berlin (0870 73 88880; www.airberlin.com) from Stansted; British Airways (0845 77 333 77; www.ba.com) from Birmingham and Heathrow; and Lufthansa (08457 737 747; www.lufthansa.co.uk) from Heathrow, London City and Manchester.

THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE
DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR

020E CORFU, GREECE

SHORES OF GLORY

Thus Byron eulogised Corfu. A holiday brochure describes the resorts of Benitses and Perama, just south of Corfu Town, differently: "If peace and quiet are your requirement, you had better go elsewhere!" But continue down the island's east coast and you reach the tranquil village of Boukari, on the 20-degree east line of longitude. Pause, explore the hinterland and dine on fresh seafood, to become convinced that Corfu still possesses at least one shore of glory.

From May to October, plenty of tour operators offer inclusive holidays and charter flights to Corfu; out of season, fly with Alitalia (08705 448 259; www.alitalia.co.uk) via Milan or Rome to Brindisi, and take a ferry to Corfu.

030E PULKOVO AIRPORT, ST PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

LED ASTRAY

LED is the official airport code for Russia's second city. Why not STP? Already taken by Holman Field, a minor airport in St Paul, Minnesota. So St Petersburg keeps the code acquired when it went by the name of Leningrad. That is not the only sign of the founder of the Soviet Union at Pulkovo airport. The arrivals hall is an exquisite piece of mid-20th century transport architecture, all marble wrapped in triumphal columns. Inside, a stirring mural shows Vladimir Illyich Lenin reviewing a display of paratroopers tumbling out of military aircraft (some of which were not built until long after his death in 1924). But the mural may not survive the current capitalist makeover of LED for the city's 300th anniversary. Incidentally, the story that the runway straddles the 30-degree line to make it easier for Soviet pilots to find is pure invention.

Aeroflot (020-7355 2233; www.aeroflot.co.uk) and BA (0845 77 333 77; www.ba.com) fly from LHR.

040E WATAMU, KENYA

OCEAN COLOUR SCENE

Unlike many of its neighbours on the Kenyan coast, Watamu has retained some fishing village charm. Despite the encroaching resorts, the place can still offer dazzling white beaches, superb coral reefs, coastal forest teeming with wildlife and a laid-back atmosphere. If you dive, go between October and March when visibility is at its best in the stunning Watamu Marine National Park. Alternatively, hire a glass-bottomed boat to take you to the Mida Creek caves and the mangrove forests, teeming with birdlife. Fly to Mombasa on a charter from Gatwick or Manchester. From Mombasa, buses bound for Malindi will drop you in Watamu. For diving, contact Ocean Sports (00 254 122 32008).

AL

050E DHAHRAN, SAUDI ARABIA

OILING THE WHEELS

Female? Under 40? You may visit this Western enclave (which was the US HQ in the Gulf War) only with your husband or a male relation.

060E ARAL SEA KAZAKHSTAN/UZBEKISTAN

THE TIDE IS LOW

The Aral Sea isn't tidal, so properly qualifies as a lake - and was once the fourth-largest lake in the world with fishing fleets landing 160 tons daily. Nowadays it boasts the forlorn fame of an ex-USSR ecological disaster- zone.

THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR

A disastrous 1960s Kremlin scheme to grow cotton in Kazak deserts drained the Aral for irrigation. Plans to divert Siberian rivers to make up the shortfall came to nothing. Desert storms now pelt the area with the newly-exposed toxic salts, ruining crops and killing fish. It's not quite the Med.

Fly Uzbekistan Airlines to Tashkent; connect with a flight to the forlorn former port of Kziljar on what was once the lake's southern shore.

NMcG

070E KERGUELEN ISLAND

WOULD YOU ADAM AND YVES IT?

Forget Bermuda: the Kerguelen Triangle, where the Indian Ocean meets the Antarctic Polar Front, is even scarier. While Captain Cook was claiming Australia for England, the unfortunate Yves Joseph de Kerguelen-Tremarac was securing "La France Australe". After waxing lyrical to Louis XV about the lost continent he had found, he was sent back with 700 men to colonise the lonely, windswept island a little smaller than Corsica. His mutinous men brought him home, where he was sentenced to 20 years for fibbing (later reduced to six years). On Christmas Eve 1776, Captain Cook called in and named the territory "Isles of Desolation".

Vindication of a sort for the French explorer came in 1999, when a team from the University of Texas found that Kerguelen was, at least three times in the past 80 million years, a land mass several times the size of Texas. But not when Yves arrived. Today, it still bears his name - and a small French research station.

080E SRI LANKA

PEACE AT LAST?

Sixty-four thousand deaths later, the civil war that has wracked Sri Lanka for two decades may at last be at an end. If peace prevails in the new year, and the ceasefire between the ***Tamil Tigers*** and the government holds, travellers will at last be able to visit Jaffna, and the grand fort in this Tamil stronghold. Sri Lanka's ferry connection with India has been restored, and it is back on the backpack trail. Bentota Beach south of Colombo, is another alternative on the 80-degree line; swim alongside the fish that will later constitute your evening meal, then drift asleep to the hypnotic lapping of the Indian Ocean.

The only airline with direct flights from the UK is SriLankan (020-8538 2000; www.srilankan.lk)

090E BANGLADESH OR BHUTAN (NO 2)

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

One-quarter of the way around the globe from Greenwich, you could see what Holland was like 1,000 years ago by visiting the Mouths of the Ganges in Bangladesh - a web of waterways similar to the Rhine Delta in Holland a millennium ago, before the sea was harnessed. Or, if you are rich enough, head for the hills of Bhutan; this Himalayan kingdom is choosy about tourists, maintaining that Gross National Happiness is more important than GNP.

Himalayan Kingdoms (01453 844400; www.himalayankingdoms.com) runs a family trek in April; pounds 3,250 for adults; under-12s pay pounds 1,995.

100E KOH SAMUI, THAILAND

BEACHY HEDONISM

THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR

About the only form of entertainment not (yet) practised on Thailand's most perfect treasure island is hopping across the 100-east line of longitude. The Beach was set on a mythical island a couple of hops away, but for many travellers Koh Samui is as close to Shangri-La as makes no difference: warm water washing beaches where every grain of sand seems manufactured to a perfect specification. Inland the countryside is clad in aggressively verdant vegetation, which comes to life as day fades into night. Koh Samui has the added advantages of pizzas, massages and internet access (not recommended all at once), allowing you to irritate pals at home by e-mailing them about your indulgences.

A dozen airlines can fly you to Bangkok, for pounds 500 return or less. Bangkok Airways (01293 596 626; www.bangkokair.com) flies on to Koh Samui.

110E THREE GORGES, YANGTZE RIVER, CHINA (NO 3)

GORGE YOURSELF

China's longest river is in full flow on its route to the sea, just north of Shanghai, when it reaches the 110-degree line of longitude - the middle of the dramatic 120-mile long Three Gorges, where cliffs rise to 1,000ft on either side. But get there in the next few months; the site is being flooded as part of a dam-building programme.

China Travel Service (020-7836 9911) has room on its Yangtze tours in May for pounds 1,795-pounds 1,995.

AL

120E RAVENSTHORPE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WOBBLY LINE

Just west of this town, population 400, is a longitude marker. But top billing is given to WA Standard Time rather than celebrating the location one-third of the way around the globe from the Prime Meridian. Worse, it has "a rubbish bin in front of it, which rather ruins the romance of time", says the Lonely Planet guide.

Fly to Perth on BA, Emirates, Malaysia Airlines, Qantas, Royal Brunei or Singapore Airlines; the present fares war means you can get there and back for less than pounds 600.

130E BATHURST ISLAND, NT, AUSTRALIA

ABORIGINAL THINKING

Dramatic carved and painted pukumani burial poles are the artistic symbols of the Tiwi Islands - two large, low-lying islands about 50 miles north of Darwin in the Northern Territory. The 130-east line of longitude brushes past Bathurst, the smaller and more westerly of the two. The islanders' burial poles, bark carvings, pottery and batik are familiar works in galleries of Aboriginal art throughout Australia. In the 20th century the islands were also a centre for pearl diving. Today you can stay on Melville Island at the Munupi Wilderness Lodge, which boasts Australia's most northerly golf course, near the ruins of Fort Dundas - a British settlement established in 1824 and abandoned 18 months later.

Fly to Darwin on Qantas or Garuda. Tiwi Tours (00 61 88 924 1115) runs day trips from Darwin for about pounds 100 including flights, lunch and, most important, the permits that are necessary to visit these restricted Aboriginal lands.

TW

140E TOKYO BAY, JAPAN

WILL THE EARTH MOVE FOR YOU?

THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR

Tokyo Disneyland, 20 years old in 2003, stands on the north shore of Tokyo Bay, exactly 140 degrees east of Greenwich. Few visitors, such as those in the raft clanking up the terraces of Splash Mountain for "the steepest, highest, wettest drop ever" will detect the odd tremor. But someone standing on one of the rare stretches of open shore along the bay may well feel the earth move. Just 12 miles beyond the mouth of Tokyo Bay, the Eurasian, Pacific and Philippines plates violently converge, occasionally sending a ripple of shock waves towards Mickey's Asian abode. Travel out to the end of the Izu or Boso peninsula, guarding Tokyo Bay, and you find stepped cliffs resembling the terraces of Splash Mountain. Each step signifies a big earthquake. Back at Disneyland, a runaway train hurtles down Big Thunder Mountain...

Nippon Airways, British Airways, Japan Airlines and Virgin Atlantic all fly daily between London Heathrow and Narita airport. Buses connect the airport with Tokyo Disneyland.

150E GREEN CAPE, NSW, AUSTRALIA

A WHALE OF A TIME

Green Cape marks the eastern end of Ben Boyd National Park in the Australian state of New South Wales, just north of the border with Victoria - and Disaster Bay. An 1883 lighthouse, the tallest in the state, stands at the end of the peninsula and the lighthouse keepers' cottages can be rented out. The park takes its name from Ben Boyd, a London stockbroker turned Pacific adventurer who suffered disastrous business dealings in the 1840s before disappearing without trace precisely 10 degrees east of Green Cape - off Guadalcanal in the Solomons (see below).

The northern boundary of the park is formed by Twofold Bay. Until 1930 a whaling station operated here. Remarkably, the whalers formed an unholy pact with a pack of killer whales, which herded their larger brethren in to the bay to be slaughtered by the whalers. They were paid off with the lips and tongues of the whales they had helped kill. The Killer Whale Museum in nearby Eden preserves the skeleton of Old Tom, the leader of this band of opportunistic orcas.

Fly to Melbourne and drive east to Green Cape.

TW

160E GUADALCANAL, SOLOMON ISLANDS

THE PACIFIC FRONTLINE

Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, stands on Guadalcanal, the most important island in the group. Just north of here, straddling the 160-degree line, is Iron Bottom Sound. The name is simple and descriptive. A huge number of Allied and Japanese warships and aircraft carpet the bottom of the sound, marking the site where Japan's Pacific advance ground to a bloody halt during the Second World War. The Japanese commander Admiral Tanaka summed up the defeat: "On that insignificant shore, inhabited only by islanders, Japan's doom was sealed."

Clear water, exotic marine life and the huge variety of sunken vessels and aircraft make this one of the Pacific's prime scuba-diving sites. Unfortunately the unrest that has wracked the Solomons for the past several years has comprehensively down-sized the island's tourist business, and the cyclone that swept through the islands this week will have wrought more harm.

Fly to Honiara on Air Pacific (via Los Angeles).

TW

170E FOX GLACIER, SOUTH ISLAND, NEW ZEALAND

MINT CONDITION

THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR

On the west coast of New Zealand's South Island, the Fox Glacier stretches down to within a few miles of the sea. Nowhere else in the world can you find ice tumbling into a sub-tropical forest running down to the coast. Tourism around the glacier has been popular for long enough to reveal how, a century ago, the glacier got much closer to the water. The steady retreat of the ice, was interrupted only for a 10-year interlude from 1985 when it advanced again by almost a mile. Like almost everywhere else in New Zealand the glacier offers a vast array of possible activities - walking, sky diving, glacier hiking, ice climbing. Best of all, for about pounds 80 take a helicopter up to land on the glacier and take a stroll across the ice. The walk around Lake Matheson is a more leisurely, and cheaper, alternative, with reflections of Mount Tasman and Mount Cook on the lake's often mirror-smooth surface.

Fly on Air New Zealand via Auckland

TW

180 TAVEUNI, FIJI (NO 4)

DATELINE: THE DATE LINE

Much frantic shifting of time zones took place in the build-up to the new millennium as Pacific nations vied with each other to claim to be the first place to welcome the new century. But Taveuni is the place to straddle the 180-degree line, which marks the International Date Line, and put one foot 24 hours away from the other. The smallest and easternmost of Fiji's three major islands, Taveuni is relatively unspoilt. In an island nation where the diving is pretty spectacular wherever you go, it is one of the very best locations; Rainbow Reef is aptly named. Birdwatching is another attraction; the mongoose (which arrived with Fiji's Indian immigrants) and devastated local bird populations did not make it to Taveuni. The island's biggest town, Waiyevo, is close to the date line; there's a Meridian sign near the Wairiki Catholic Mission.

Fly on Air New Zealand via Los Angeles.

TW

170W UELEN, RUSSIA

NO THROUGH ROAD

The world's biggest country began almost a hemisphere ago, at the Gulf of Danzig (19 degrees east). Russia reaches out to the 170-degree west line before collapsing into the Bering Strait. The land bridge that once existed here allowed the Americas to be populated. Nothing so exciting has happened in the bleak city of Uelen for about 40,000 years.

160W ROSS ICE SHELF, ANTARCTICA

ON THE ROCKS

Like France, the shelf discovered in 1841 by James Clark Ross has an area of 200,000 square miles; unlike France, it comprises a half-mile thick slab of ice, the largest ice shelf in the world. Ross's ship was the Erebus, a name assigned to the world's southernmost volcano, close to the ice shelf; an Air New Zealand jet crashed into it in 1979, in that country's worst disaster.

150W ANCHORAGE, ALASKA (NO 5)

WHAT SHOCKED MICHELLE?

On Good Friday, 1964, Alaska's largest city suffered the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in North America. Two things will draw this to your attention: the spiritless modern architecture that characterises Anchorage, and the presence - north of the airport, beyond Northern Lights Boulevard - of Earthquake Park. Here

THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR

you discover just how seismically unreliable is the southern coast of Alaska, in a series of sombre relics from the Richter 9.2 event when not everything was anchored down in Anchorage.

Getting there: with no more direct UK-Alaska flights, the best access points from Britain are Chicago, Minneapolis and Seattle.

140W THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS, FRENCH POLYNESIA

SOUTH PACIFIC

The most remote archipelago on earth? Possibly this scattering of French Polynesia, just south of the equator. Come here for lush, flower-filled forest, brooding volcanoes and solitude; only six of the 12 are inhabited.

Air Tahiti flies to Nuku Hiva, the capital.

AL

130W PRINCE RUPERT, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

CITY OF RAINBOWS

"See what it's like in Prince Rupert today", invites the civic website, but the webcam appears to have been disabled on the grounds of meteorological tedium. This ramshackle port likes to call itself "the city of rainbows"; I saw only rain. There are two good reasons to come to Canada's end of the line; neither is this damp and dismal outpost. They are the ferries heading south to Vancouver Island and north to Alaska, each a dazzling voyage of discovery.

Fly to Prince Rupert via Vancouver.

120W LAKE TAHOE, CALIFORNIA/NEVADA, US

PURE WATER

Long before the eastern shore of this tear-shaped lake was spoilt by gambling, the southern waterside - one-third of the way west from Greenwich - was the Californian's retreat of choice when the coast overheated. Remnants of the grand old summer houses still survive. You can waft between them on a network of footpaths and cycle tracks, study the touristic archaeology, then check into a cheap motel on the Nevada strip.

Fly from the UK to Chicago, San Francisco or Los Angeles, and take a domestic flight to Reno.

110W ALBERTA-SASKATCHEWAN PROVINCIAL FRONTIER, CANADA

GEOMETRY, NOT GEOGRAPHY

In most of the world, borders are chosen by natural selection, such as the presence of rivers or mountain ridges. But in North America geometry, not geography, often carves up the land. Still, the boundary sign gives you something to look at as you rumble past on the Trans-Canada Highway (the world's longest road in a single country), 200 miles short of Calgary - and scenery.

100W PAN-AMERICAN HIGHWAY, MEXICO

MADE-UP ROAD

The world's longest road is the Pan-American Highway, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego - though it is an artificial construct consisting of existing roads, with the Darien Gap turning it into a couple of culs-de-sac. Still, the stretch between the Texas border at Laredo and Mexico's capital shadows the 100-degree line, and includes superb scenery punctuated by drowsy towns.

THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR

090W MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE (NO 6)

RIVER OF TEARS

The mighty Mississippi sticks affectionately close to the 90-degree line of longitude, from the "gateway to the West" at St Louis to the Mississippi Delta at New Orleans. The quadrant cuts through the world's unchallenged musical meridian in Tennessee: where the blues began, on Beale Street, and Elvis ended, at Graceland.

Travel to Memphis via the soul city of Detroit.

080W TRINIDAD, CUBA

CHE HELLO, WAVE GOODBYE

At the end of his wanderings, and 30 years after his death in Bolivia, Che Guevara was finally interred on the 80-degree line in the "hero city" of Santa Clara, where he fought the decisive victory in Cuba's revolution. Forty-four years later, much more attention is paid to the exquisite town of Trinidad, 30 miles due south across the mountains. The Spanish sugar barons built grand villas and mansions; Cuba's communists now reap the benefits from the tourist trade.

Fly to Havana from Gatwick on Cubana or from Heathrow on Air Jamaica.

070W PUNO, LAKE TITICACA (NO 7)

BLEAKEST PERU

Few places in the world are so bleakly beautiful as Titicaca, the planet's highest navigable lake. Puno, on the Peruvian side of the lake, is Titicaca's main port - hardly a full-time role given the paucity of shipping, but a good base for exploring the scattering of populated islands and the Altiplano. And you can pick up a lovely alpaca jumper here.

Fly via Rio or Sao Paulo to La Paz, and catch a bus across the border to Puno.

060W CAPE BRETON ISLAND, CANADA

NO HARBOUR, NO BRIDGE

North America stretches across exactly half the northern hemisphere, from the Aleutian Islands to north-east Greenland. One of its easternmost fragments is this chunk of Canada. Nobody had heard of Cape Breton Island until 2002, when the Internet Two turned up; this unfortunate pair of students thought they had booked online flights to Sydney Australia, only to find they were in the city's namesake in Nova Scotia.

Fly on Air Canada from Heathrow via Halifax.

050W ILHA DE MARAJ, AMAZON, BRAZIL

SWISS ROLE

This shifting archipelago is the size of Switzerland. One reason no one has been there is that it sits in northern Brazil, at the mouth of the Amazon. But the island combines forest, mangroves, beautiful beaches and arid plains. Boats leave from the city of Belem early each morning.

AL

040W ESPIRITU SANTO, NORTH-EAST BRAZIL

HIGH SPIRITS

THE TRAVELLER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO: 360 DEGREES; OF TRAVEL; MAKE A DATE WITH THE DATE LINE OR FEEL THE EARTH MOVE IN JAPAN OR

Some of South America's finest and most unspoilt beaches are in this small province, through which the 40-degree line cuts. However, the interior is most rewarding: steep hills and lush valleys have made it difficult for development, so leaving large unspoiled tracts of Atlantic forest.

Fly to the state capital Vitoria for pounds 608, with South American Experience (020-7976 5511).

030W SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS

SLICE OF LIFE

Looking for that exclusive island getaway? Try the South Sandwich Islands, where access is by application only. These rocky outcrops lie 400 miles south-east of South Georgia (see page 1 of this section), which means a cold, wet climate plus penguins, seabirds and lichen.

To apply for access call 00 500 27433 or visit www.sgssi.com. For information on Antarctic cruises call Noble Caledonia on 020-7752 0000.

020W ICELAND

LAND OF ICE

Langjokull, Iceland's second-largest ice cap, is a Surrey-sized glacier in the country's western wilderness, best visited as part of a snowmobile tour (00 354 435 1550). Go on a clear day for the spectacular views - and then ski back down.

Icelandair (08457 581 111; www.icelandair.co.uk) flies from Heathrow and Glasgow to Reykjavik.

010W ACHILL ISLAND, CO MAYO, IRELAND

KNOCK THREE TIMES

If you must go down to the sea again, head for Achill Island in County Mayo for windswept beaches and deserted villages. For first-class seafood, pay a visit in July when the Achill Seafood Festival is in full swing. For the first time this year, the closest airport to Achill, Knock, will be served by three different airlines.

Knock is served from Stansted by Ryanair (0871 246 0000; www.ryanair.com), from Birmingham on MyTravelLite (08701 564 564; www.mytravellite.com) and from Manchester by British Airways (0845 77 333 77; www.ba.com).

000 CLEETHORPES

THE LAST RESORT

This circumnavigation includes contributions from Lieutenant Alice Lascelles (AL), Captain Neil McGowan (NMCG) and Commander Tony Wheeler of the Pacific Fleet (TW). Alternative locations on the lines of longitude are welcomed; please e-mail travel@independent.co.uk

Load-Date: January 6, 2003

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

US Fed News

January 5, 2005 Wednesday 11:25 PM EST

Copyright 2005 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 6650 words

Byline: US Fed News

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

The U.S. Department of State issued the following transcript of the daily press briefing:

Adam Ereli, Deputy Spokesman

1:00 p.m. EST

MR. ERELI: Good afternoon, everybody. We'd like to begin today with an update on the State Department's response to the thousands of calls we have received from people who are concerned about loved ones and acquaintances they believe may have been in areas affected by the - by last week's tsunami and earthquakes.

We are continuing to grind down the number of requests and inquiries we have received. We're making good progress in that effort. As you know, since the disaster occurred we have received 26,000 inquiries at our call center and task force. At the beginning of this week we had responded to and I think satisfactorily closed about 14 - actually 18,000 of those cases, leaving us with 6,000 inquiries that we were actively working on.

Today, we have almost halved that number to about 3,500 inquiries about the welfare and whereabouts of American citizens. We have done that by either identifying where people were, people getting in touch with their loved ones, eliminating as much duplication as we can from those lists. So right now we are working with about 3,500 welfare and whereabouts inquiries that we still have not been able to resolve.

One of the important points to note here is that we are now actually eliminating more inquiries than we are getting so that the balance is moving in favor of a more constant and consistent downward trend in terms of the numbers of cases we are working on.

For those 3,500 whereabouts and welfare inquiries that we are doing, that we are working on, we're moving on them in a number of ways. We are, first of all, calling back those who initially inquired, often to try to get more detailed information about the individual, where they were, where they were traveling, contact information for the individuals concerned.

We are checking passport records for personal contact information so we can perhaps track them down. We are checking the phone numbers and e-mails of the people in question that have been provided by people who have called in. We are, as I said earlier, we are working with Thai and Sri Lankan immigration officials to try and determine - on some individuals in question - whether they, in fact, entered or exited the country.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

We are working with travel and tourism service providers, hotels, travel agencies, tour organizers, airlines, to try to determine whether people in question were actually in the areas that people might be concerned about. We are in contact with other embassies and missions in the areas affected to see if they have information about people that we're concerned with. And we are also working with local government, nongovernmental organizations and other individuals on the ground to collate what information they have.

That is what we are doing to narrow down or whittle down that 3,500 number. As a result of these efforts, as I said yesterday, we have been able to confirm 16 Americans that died tragically in this natural disaster.

We have also been able to - based on information we've gotten from eyewitnesses and other people on the scene - come to the conclusion that there are another 20 American citizens who we now are classifying as presumed dead. Of these 20 Americans, 19 were in Thailand and 1 was in Sri Lanka. In each of these cases, there is a specific reason to believe that the individual was in harm's way at the time of the tsunamis. In some cases, as I said, family members have found photos on the Thai Government website. In all of these cases, the family members or companions are working with embassy officials on the ground and here in Washington to find additional corroborating evidence.

I should add that in all the cases - in the cases of both the confirmed dead and presumed dead, every individual gets or is assigned - a family is assigned a case officer from the Bureau of Consular Affairs who works with the family to help resolve and deal with the tragedy of what occurred.

Obviously, this is a process that's going to continue over the next days and weeks. We, at the State Department, will spare no effort and leave no stone unturned to answer the questions that we are receiving from Americans about the welfare and whereabouts of their loved ones and friends. It is an arduous task to find the facts and present to you, present to the American public, with certainty, answers about where people may be and the condition they may be in. And we are committed to doing that; and, when we have the facts, to reporting the facts. That's where we are today. We are working on about 3,500 cases, or 3,500 inquiries, and we know that there are 16 Americans that have died and we have reason to presume that 20 additional Americans are dead.

QUESTION: Adam, if you can't provide names, can you provide any sort of - if there is a way - a description; the categories, for instance? Many of these, presumably, in Thailand, were vacationers. Can you do anything in the way of identifying the victims and the presumed dead a little more distinctly?

MR. ERELI: Out of deference to the families, that is the kind of information and the type of information that should remain, at this point, private and held with those concerned.

QUESTION: One other question, then. Are any of these known dead, presumed dead, U.S. officials?

MR. ERELI: No.

QUESTION: Can I ask you a question about your initial figures? You said 26,000 inquiries, and you closed 18,000 of them. Is that right?

MR. ERELI: I might have done the math wrong. I was doing - as I said, as of the beginning of this week, we had closed 18,000, to bring us to 6,000. Does that add up?

QUESTION: No. (Laughter.)

MR. ERELI: What is 24,000 -

QUESTION: That would be eight.

QUESTION: Eighteen from twenty-six is eight, so I'm just wondering.

MR. ERELI: Eighteen from twenty-four is six. Did I say -

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

QUESTION: Twenty-six.

QUESTION: You said 26,000.

MR. ERELI: I apologize. We had 24,000 inquiries.

QUESTION: Twenty-four?

MR. ERELI: Yes. Since December 26th.

QUESTION: Okay. Thanks.

QUESTION: Are they all vacationers that you know of?

MR. ERELI: No, no, that would - again, as we have tried to make clear, Americans move around a lot and they are a very independent-minded bunch. So these include dual-nationals; they include people who have been resident abroad; they include people who have been out of touch with their families for quite a long time. These include, obviously, vacationers. These include people who were in the region. It's as diverse a group as America is a population.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Elizabeth Beck with The New York Times.

I know that yesterday you said that the United States is at the same place as other countries - the Nordics - in having difficulty discovering who is missing, et cetera. But it seems, looking at the other governments, they have been able to provide these data much earlier than you are now, today.

Is there anything specific that you're missing that, say, the Norwegians or the Swedes or the Finns have in order to track this?

MR. ERELI: I don't know if I suggested we are at the same place. What I was trying to communicate is that, as far as I understand the situation, nobody has 100 percent degree of clarity on exactly where all of their citizens are, including these other countries. Now, they might have a clearer picture than we do, but there are still doubts, there are still gray areas, there are still unanswered questions.

I would add, however, that different countries - and, again, this is something we mentioned earlier - different countries have different procedures for accounting for and tracking their citizens. For example, some countries, citizens of that country have to - are registered upon - or accounted for when leaving the country so that you know whether a national - the national authorities of that country know whether one of their own has left the country, and they know whether the national of that country has returned. We don't have similar tracking of Americans.

In other cases, people traveling to the areas, as a general rule, go in packaged tours. And so, working with the travel industry, it is much easier to account for a much larger percentage of the citizens in question. So you've got, I think, relatively more to work with than we do, or you have - again, as I've said - people who go out on their own for a long time and never touch base. And then all of a sudden, somebody asks about them and you've got to work to track them down.

So I think it's really a function of, number one, national immigration or exit and entry requirements, as well as travel patterns and traveling and how the travel industry works.

QUESTION: On the aid side, how long do you expect the core group to be coordinating aid? And is there a point at which you're going to hand things back to the United Nations?

MR. ERELI: There is a point at which that step will probably be reached. I would note that there is - as you well know, there is a meeting tomorrow in Jakarta where ASEAN members will be looking at next steps in terms of

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

coordination and cooperation in meeting the needs of the affected populations; and I expect that that will be an issue for discussion.

QUESTION: And you know enough to know that were no U.S. officials among the presumed victims?

MR. ERELI: I should say not that I'm aware of.

QUESTION: Not that you're aware of, right.

MR. ERELI: I have not been told about U.S. officials. The only officials I was aware of were some DOD officials and State Department officials that we've accounted for.

QUESTION: Right.

MR. ERELI: Among the 3,500, there aren't any officials that I'm aware of.

QUESTION: Well, among those who are believed to be dead, do you know whether a certain percentage could be categorized as vacationers? Were they people who lived abroad? Can you narrow it down at all?

MR. ERELI: As I said, out of deference to the members of the family -

QUESTION: You're not identifying anybody. You're just giving categories.

MR. ERELI: It's personal information that, frankly, I'm just not comfortable putting out.

QUESTION: On the issue of trafficking in children, have you yet - has the State Department yet found any evidence to support the reports that this is happening there?

MR. ERELI: I have something on it, if I can just - we have seen, as have you, reports of rape, sexual abuse, kidnapping and trafficking in persons in the countries devastated by the tsunami. We are appalled by these reports and are horrified that thousands of children orphaned by this disaster are vulnerable to exploitation by criminal elements who seek to profit from their misery.

I would note and commend actions taken by governments in the tsunami-affected countries to alert the public about the danger of human trafficking and to work with police and community officials to detect and deter trafficking cases and to protect the victims. In particular, we are thankful to the Government of Indonesia for moving swiftly to halt international adoptions in the face of potential abuse.

For our part, we are coordinating with U.S. Government-funded NGOs in the region to assist in the return and repatriation of children. We are also engaging organizations with expertise in family reunification. We have also sent out an alert to all of our NGO partners that are in South and Southeast Asia, warning of the potential for human trafficking and asking them to spread the word among relief workers in Asia. And we are offering guidelines to officials and volunteers in the region designed to minimize the risk of human trafficking in and around camps where displaced and homeless are gathering.

Some of those guidelines include: Registering people who come to camps and ensuring security during their stays; ensuring proper security for the residents of the camp, especially women and children; and increasing the general awareness of camp workers about the potential and dangers of human trafficking and making them aware that the conditions that we're in now make trafficking a particular concern.

QUESTION: Are there - I'm sorry. Can I just follow up? Are there actual confirmed cases of this happening now?

MR. ERELI: I don't have a specific number to share with you. I think that there are enough sufficient, credible reports for us to conclude that this is a real danger and that decisive action must be taken now to prevent abuse. And I would also note that - well, I'll leave it at that.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

QUESTION: Adam, are you pursuing this more vigorously with certain governments versus others; for instance, Thailand? It has in the past - or there are reports that it has, in the past, looked the other way, on, you know, the profession of child prostitution and so on and on. And part of a decisive action, shouldn't there be some sort of a conference, an emergency conference, to make sure that they do abide by certain regulations on this thing? Are you suggesting anything like this?

MR. ERELI: I'm suggesting that we see a danger and we believe that it is important to - that everyone in a position to stop this, act quickly to take the necessary action.

With regard to the situation of trafficking in persons in the countries affected before this disaster, as I said yesterday, this is a regular and important subject in our bilateral dialogue. As you know, we, every year, prepare a Trafficking in Persons Report that reviews what the situation is in the country and what - more importantly - what steps the country is taking to address these horrors. And I refer you to the individual country reports for our assessment of the specific countries you might be interested in.

Yes, Saul.

QUESTION: Just on the issue of any more countries stopping the international adoptions, can you explain why you think that's a good idea? Because, on the one hand, you might think this is the time to be speeding up international adoptions because there are going to be more people who - more children who need that kind of help.

MR. ERELI: Yes, I -

QUESTION: Is it that you need to put something - a system in place to stop the criminals coming -

MR. ERELI: Well, the concern is that, at this particular moment, in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, when there is a lot of confusion that it is important to put in place measures that prevent potential abuse and potential exploitation of a confused and relatively unregulated situation. I'm not speaking for, as a general policy or for further in the future, but right now it's - we are concerned that circumstances lend themselves to abuse, and proper action should be taken to prevent that.

Yes, Christophe.

QUESTION: I have a specific question about Sri Lanka. What is your policy concerning the possible or potential cooperation with the rebels of the LTTE to provide relief to - on the areas under their control?

MR. ERELI: We have addressed this - I think the party has addressed that in the field, where there is a humanitarian disaster that we are all trying to solve and that we are trying to respond to a need - we are trying to respond to people in need, and it is incumbent upon all parties to provide the access and cooperation necessary to provide humanitarian relief; and, that perhaps in that process there are opportunities to - that will present themselves for resolving longer-term conflicts.

QUESTION: But would you - I mean, would you agree? I mean, is the U.S. ready to cooperate with the rebels in the specific case of the LTTE?

MR. ERELI: We are working with the Government of Sri Lanka.

QUESTION: Can I change the subject?

QUESTION: Can I have just one more?

QUESTION: Go ahead.

QUESTION: When you talk about opportunities - there may be opportunities - are you talking about - are you actually encouraging the government to work with the rebels, and here it shows that they can work together so they can also, in the future, work closer on looking for peace?

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

MR. ERELI: We are - it's not a question of us encouraging anybody. The fact is, the Government of Sri Lanka is seized with this issue because they care about and have responsibility that they recognize and are acquitting themselves well of to take care of people in need. And we are providing every possible assistance we can - to include the provision of heavy lift and other engineering support in affected areas by our military, provision of needs assessments and humanitarian relief supplies - to people, regardless of political affiliation. If people are in need, we're going to help them; and we're going to work with the Government of Sri Lanka to do that.

QUESTION: Do you have any concern that the disaster in South Asia may ease the terrorism over there?

MR. ERELI: I'm sorry. I don't see how it follows.

QUESTION: Do you have any concerns that the disaster might ease terrorism in the area?

MR. ERELI: I think our focus is, as I've said before, twofold: One is providing immediate relief to those in need; second, to work to develop a plan and work in the medium and long term on rehabilitation and reconstruction and recovery. That process is going to take a long time.

I think the Secretary answered the question well when he said we're doing this not just because we are a country that cares and wants to help - which is, I think, our primary motivation and why you see the Secretary out there with Governor Bush at the request of the President - but also because it is in our interest to do it in the sense that you want to provide people with a future, with a livelihood, with hope, with opportunity, so that they don't experience the kind of the frustration, privation and anger that leads them to uncivil acts.

QUESTION: Just one quickly. I'm wondering, has there been a change in the U.S. arms restrictions on Indonesia to help them out at this time, such as - I think I saw something about military sales or parts to go in there to help them out. And a second one, not totally related, but is there any reaction to these groups that have been saying that the U.S. didn't come through with all the aid it promised in the Iranian earthquake, and they cite the MCA, too, and kind of question whether the U.S. can be counted on to come up with the full amounts it's pledging now, in light of the past history?

MR. ERELI: I'm sorry. What was the second question?

QUESTION: Well, it was did the U.S. come up with the aid it promised in Iran for the earthquake? And if not, why not? And will - does that in any way reflect on what we can expect to happen here?

MR. ERELI: In terms of the second question, the United States fulfilled all of its - the United States responded quickly and meaningfully in response to the humanitarian crisis precipitated by the Bam earthquake about this time last year, and that the conclusion that should be drawn from that case, as well as the present case, is that America is there first. America is there fast. And America is there with what is needed. And that's certainly the case in Iran. It certainly is the case here.

In terms of the reports you've seen about provision of equipment to Indonesia, we have received a list of requested spare parts for a C-130 transport aircraft from the Government of Indonesia, and we are working to facilitate the commercial sale of those parts to Indonesia.

QUESTION: Is that - wouldn't that be a sale that's currently banned? Would that be currently restricted?

MR. ERELI: No, that is not affected by - the commercial sale of C-130 parts is not affected by that. And I would also note that the President issued a provision for emergency disaster relief assistance to the 12 countries affected by the Asian tsunami, including drawdown under section -under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, yesterday. And I'd refer you to that in terms of authority for other assistance that's being provided.

QUESTION: Just one on Sri Lanka. Can you update on the immigration records that you are trying to get, and arrival versus departure records? And I spoke with someone at the airport in Colombo last night and he said they had all the departure records in their computers and in paper form. So I don't really - I didn't understand yesterday why you and other people are saying that the departure records may not be available.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

MR. ERELI: My understanding is that there were certain departure records that were not available. I wouldn't want to speak for the Government of Sri Lanka on this matter. As a broad answer to your question, we have asked Thailand and Sri Lanka for immigration records for Americans who entered those countries prior to the tsunamis. The Thai authorities have already provided us records for American citizens known to have entered Thailand during the 90-day period prior to December 26, 200[4], and we expect Sri Lankan authorities to provide the information they have available as soon as they are able. So what we're taking about as information about Americans who entered the country in the 90-day period prior to December 26th.

QUESTION: Do you know why they haven't done so yet in Sri Lanka?

MR. ERELI: I don't.

QUESTION: Thanks.

MR. ERELI: Yes.

QUESTION: Can I change the subject now? Can you talk about reports that the U.S. is now considering further sanctions on Syria in - primarily out of the Treasury Department - for its lack of action on the border, primarily, and on insurgents?

MR. ERELI: Well, obviously, the Syria Accountability Act provides for - provides authority to impose sanctions in response to Syrian inaction or - in a number of areas. That authority remains. It's always an option on the table.

The Deputy Secretary of State was in Damascus and met with Syrian President Bashar Assad on January 2nd. The purpose of his trip was to review the full range of issues, the bilateral issues that we have with Syria, including its support for terror, including the importance of withdrawing all foreign forces from Lebanon, and the importance of working to support a stable and secure Iraq and to help ensure as broad a participation in the upcoming elections as possible.

The Deputy Secretary made clear a number of things: Number one, that while Syria has taken some action to control its border with Iraq that more needed to be done; and, number two, that action with respect to stopping activity by former regime elements in Syria had so far been inadequate, and that this remained a very critical concern of ours and it was something that we were looking to Syria for action on. And that's where we are.

QUESTION: That's all old guidance, Adam.

MR. ERELI: I know, but there's no - there's nothing new to report.

QUESTION: So that - so that's the answer, that there is - the Treasury Department is not considering new financial - new sanctions on Syria?

MR. ERELI: I'm not going to speak for the Treasury Department.

QUESTION: Well, it's normally done in conjunction with the State Department on recommendations from here.

MR. ERELI: I'm not going to speak for the Treasury Department.

QUESTION: Okay. Speak for State.

MR. ERELI: What I would tell you is that today, as yesterday, sanctions as provided for under the Syrian Accountability Act remain an option -

QUESTION: I know, I know, I know.

MR. ERELI: - remain an option on the table, remain a policy tool at our disposal. But I don't have anything new to report in terms of plans to use that tool.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

QUESTION: A follow-up. Is there anything specific that you are - that you can tell us about that you are asking the Syrians to do? For instance, certain names like Izzat Ibrahim, the second man, you know, under Saddam, or in dollars? I mean, very specific things. And on the issue of the central bank, I mean, obviously, it's been - all the accusation of allegations that they are getting involved in money laundering. Could you tell us a little more about that?

MR. ERELI: I don't have much for you on the question of money laundering. What I can tell you about the former regime element issue is this, two points: One is, I think we are very clear with the Syrians about what we think they can do and where we think they need to go on this.

But we also make a second point, which is that Syria knows the lay of its land a lot better than we do. They have capabilities and knowledge and assets to control what goes on in their territory and that they are in the best position to detect what is going on and to act on what is going on. And we look for them to be aggressive and proactive and if - in moving against these elements that we have every indication are on their territory and that we have every indication that are active on their territory, and if you say you're supporting Iraq, and if you say you're supporting an independent and free and stable Iraq, then it is inconsistent with such a pledge of support to sit back and do nothing while there are - in the face of very good indications - that stuff is going on in your country that is contrary to what you have said your own interests and desires are.

QUESTION: Today in its editorial, the Washington Times was suggesting that Deputy Secretary Armitage and his boss, Secretary Powell, may be appeasing the Syrians.

MR. ERELI: Appeasing the Syrians?

QUESTION: I mean, that's the suggestion.

MR. ERELI: That's - I'm just trying to think of how - how, most emphatically, to rebut such a charge.

Secretary Powell and Deputy Secretary Armitage reflect the policy and carry out the policy of the President and the policy of this Administration, which is: Number one, to help support and bring about a free and democratic and prosperous Iraq; and, number two, which is to work with countries throughout the world, and especially in the region, to enlist their help and their support in achieving that goal.

And the visit to Syria was firmly a part of that effort and, I think, very directly and very emphatically and very strongly addressed the issue of the presence of former regime elements in Syria, the activities of former regime elements in Syria and the need for Syria to take aggressive and proactive action against those elements to stop those activities consistent with their stated pledge to support Iraq, Iraqi sovereignty, to support Iraqi stability and to support Iraqi security.

QUESTION: Can I do a follow-up? Very quickly, would you say the relationship with Syria today is better than before the visit or worse?

MR. ERELI: Today? Which visit?

QUESTION: I mean, this last visit. Mr. Armitage's visit.

MR. ERELI: I wouldn't measure it in those terms. I wouldn't measure it in those terms. I would say that our relationship with Syria is directly affected by actions that the Government of Syria chooses to take or not to take. And that - that was a clear message from Mr. Armitage.

QUESTION: A follow-up to that, please? When you said that you were very clear with the Syrians as to what we think they can do, I'm unclear as to what our government is telling the Syrians. Being proactive doesn't tell me very much. What, specifically, do we want the Syrians to do?

MR. ERELI: Take action to prevent former regime elements from using Syrian territory to

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

support the insurgency in Iraq.

QUESTION: What kind of action?

MR. ERELI: We're not being prescriptive in this area. I don't have a laundry list to give you. And, again, it's not up to us - frankly, it's not up to us to tell the Syrians - to spell out for the Syrians what they have to do. If the Syrians, as I said before, are in a position - having dealt with subversives to - if they, in our view, if they want to crack down on these guys, they are fully capable of doing so. And that's the message that we'd send to them.

QUESTION: Well, as one more follow-up to this. When we have the lives of American military on the line, why shouldn't the United States be prescriptive when it comes to saying what we want, what we don't want?

MR. ERELI: We want them to stop their activity. I think the best way to put it is we have indications, we have information, we don't have the full picture. We have pieces of the picture. The point we are making to the Syrians is, you, Government of Syria, are in a position to help fill out and give a fuller understanding, not only to what's going on, but also about how to get at it. And that's your responsibility. That's - to do so would be consistent with your public pledges for - of support for Iraq. And as a start, you can be more proactive. You can be more aggressive. And you can be more determined in addressing this problem, as opposed to just sitting back and asking us to give you specific information and to give you specific requirements that you choose or choose not to fulfill.

That's not the issue, you see. The issue is, this is something that you need to take care of. And - because it's not a question of, oh, Syria, doing what the United States - you know, the United States telling Syria do, a, b, c and d on Monday, Wednesday, and Tuesday. It is the United States saying, Syria, you've got - we all have a problem, and the problem is in your territory. And you can either be part of the problem or you can part of the solution. And you said you wanted to be part of the solution, so take actions that demonstrate fidelity to that statement and that commitment.

QUESTION: Adam, just to follow up on this. I believe we're going around too much. But you've put the onus on them, clearly, or you've tried to put the onus on them, but are you telling us that the Deputy Secretary did not ask them to take any specific actions?

MR. ERELI: The Deputy Secretary made clear our concern that foreign regime activity continues to be a problem in Syria and that they need to move against it. And, you know, we made the point that there are certain individuals you can move against and whose activity you can stop, but that that's not the whole story - that there's more to it than that, number one; and, number two, that just taking those actions is not the end of the - does not close the chapter on this problem.

But yes, we have been discussing, you know, various - some specific cases, some specific steps that I'm not in a position to go into. But the point I want to get across is that that's not the be all and end all of this issue, that it goes beyond that and that what we're looking for and what we believe Syria needs to do is not just, you know, resolve Case X or Case Y, but to act systematically with all the capabilities at its disposal - which are considerable - and to respond to this destabilization that is emanating from territory under its control, and which, to date, they have not done.

QUESTION: Change in subject?

MR. ERELI: No, I don't think so.

QUESTION: On Iraq.

MR. ERELI: Oh, same subject?

QUESTION: Did the Deputy Secretary give them a "what if," a carrot or stick or what he'll do if not?

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

MR. ERELI: Again, there are a whole range of policy options. There are a whole range of options that we have at our disposal. I won't begin to handicap for you at this point what, you know, what we may or may not do. The Deputy Secretary was just there. He just delivered a firm, blunt message and I'll leave it at that.

QUESTION: Is it the Administration's contention that Syria is giving hospitality to these people or officially facilitating their presence?

MR. ERELI: It is the State Department's contention that these elements are operating under - are operating on Syrian territory in ways that are harmful to Iraq and inconsistent with Syria's stated policy, and that Syria has the capability and responsibility to act to stop this activity.

QUESTION: Adam, one more if you don't mind. Now, if you don't give them anything specific, a measuring stick, so to speak, how could they prove that they are coming clean on this thing or that they are cooperating according to what you want them to do?

MR. ERELI: I think we all know what commitment to fight supporters of insurgency looks like. I think you're asking a theoretical question that, while maybe rhetorically interesting is practically irrelevant.

QUESTION: On Iraq, Adam, as we discussed on Monday, I think, and then yesterday, the White House confirmed that, indeed, the Election Commission in Iraq has the authority and only it has the authority to postpone the election.

MR. ERELI: Who confirmed that?

QUESTION: I think it came up at the briefing in the White House yesterday.

MR. ERELI: My understanding is that the law does not provide for the postponement of the election, and so that that - since there is no provision for the postponement in the law that discussion of how it might be postponed is purely hypothetical.

QUESTION: Because we need a legislature to actually change the law, and there isn't one until the election?

MR. ERELI: There is a law governing the election, which is the Transitional Administrative Law. That law provides for elections by January 30th or 31st and does not provide provisions for or authority for postponing that election. So questions about, well, if there was going to be a postponement, who would be responsible, are hypothetical.

QUESTION: And the law couldn't be changed?

MR. ERELI: I'm not aware of any way that the TAL can be changed.

QUESTION: Adam, on the Palestinian election. Do you have any update on the practical or financial assistance that the U.S. said it will be ready to provide for this effort?

MR. ERELI: Well, we've - as you know, Assistant Secretary Burns announced a program of American assistance in Oslo on December 8th that amounts to - you'll want to check the transcript of what he said, but I think it was \$2 million for facilitative assistance and \$1 million to support international monitors of the election.

As far as preparations now for the elections go, you'll note we put out a statement yesterday saying that we are sending an official delegation, an official U.S. observer delegation, to the presidential election. That delegation will be led by Senators John Sununu of New Hampshire and Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware, both on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It will also include four congressional staff members, prominent Palestinian-Americans, and our Consul General in Jerusalem, Mr. David Pearce, will join the delegation when it arrives. That delegation will meet with senior Israeli and Palestinian officials. It will visit polling sites; and prior to departing, it will make an assessment of the election process.

QUESTION: There are two Palestinian-Americans listed there without any identification. Do you happen to have it?

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

MR. ERELI: Yes, George Salem and Ziad Asali.

QUESTION: What do they do?

MR. ERELI: I'll see if I can get you more background.

QUESTION: No, I just meant I couldn't use their names because I have no idea who they are.

MR. ERELI: I'll see if I can get you more information on them.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. ERELI: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: You asked the question yesterday about Abu Mazen, referring to "the Zionist enemy," and then you said you couldn't answer it. Could you react to that?

MR. ERELI: I didn't say I couldn't answer it. I said I hadn't seen the report.

QUESTION: You hadn't seen it.

MR. ERELI: Since then I have seen the report.

QUESTION: Well, what kind of response do you have?

MR. ERELI: And my reaction would be that the United States Government obviously finds such language disturbing, and it is our view that such rhetoric has no place in the process of resuming dialogue and rebuilding trust and confidence between Israelis and Palestinians.

QUESTION: Do you find what Abu Mazen said to be consistent with your report on global anti-Semitism? Would what he said be considered anti-Semitic in any way?

MR. ERELI: I won't go beyond the way I've characterized it. It's disturbing. It's certainly not helpful, and it's, I think, inappropriate when working to improve relations with - between Palestinians and Israelis.

As far as the question of the anti-Semitism report that you raised, as you all know, we're having a briefing later this afternoon by the authors of that report. And I'll leave it to them to comment on what they are - what their findings are.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Thank you. On China. The Minister of Taiwan Affairs Office of China's State Council would meet with Deputy Secretary Armitage later this afternoon. Can you just tell us in general what concerns or topics the U.S. may raise in the meeting?

MR. ERELI: Yes, Minister Chen Yunlin will meet with Deputy Secretary Armitage today at 2. Their discussion will cover a variety of Cross-Straits issues, including the People's Republic of China's proposed anti-secession law. We will obviously make clear our long-held and well-known view that the People's Republic of China and Taiwan should engage in dialogue to peacefully resolve their differences, and we will urge both sides to avoid doing anything that unilaterally changes the status quo or complicates management of this sensitive issue.

QUESTION: And beside this - sorry. Beside this official, China also send its Vice Foreign Minister to Washington last month to exchange views with the U.S. on the sensitive Taiwan issue.

MR. ERELI: Yes.

QUESTION: Are those gesture or initial efforts of the Chinese Government welcome or appreciated by the United States?

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING JAN. 5

MR. ERELI: What gestures are you talking about?

QUESTION: You mean - I mean, they send their high-level diplomats here to bring up the topics the U.S. concerned.

MR. ERELI: I would put it this way. We have very - we have a regular exchange of views and a regular exchange of high-level diplomats between Chinese coming here and Americans going there. So this is part of a regular dialogue, an ongoing process, and with one goal in mind, and that is to resolve Cross-straits differences peacefully. And it's obviously important, and useful, and helpful and welcome when high-level Chinese officials come to the United States to exchange their views directly with their U.S. counterparts. Likewise, it's important and something we believe strongly in is engaging directly with our Chinese friends in China as part of that process.

QUESTION: Sorry. The last question on North Korea. Congressman Weldon lead a delegation to North Korea and the neighboring countries next week and he said he will be reinforcing the position of this Administration. So I'm just wondering if they have brief you about their plan or if you would characterize their efforts as helpful.

MR. ERELI: Congressman Weldon has been in contact with the Administration on his plans to lead a congressional delegation to North Korea. I think it is important to point out here that Congressman Weldon and the members of his delegation are traveling as - are in their capacities as members of Congress and they are not traveling as representatives of the Administration or acting on behalf of the Administration.

QUESTION: In relation to that, on what ground does your government allow them to be in North Korea after a long period of consideration or giving - not giving them any permission for the visit?

MR. ERELI: We're not in the position of giving permission for members of Congress to travel. So that's, I guess the congressmen are free to travel as they wish. So it's, again, it's not a question of us giving permission or not giving permission.

QUESTION: Changing the subject, sir. Is there any conference today in Dubai, an initiative (inaudible) and participation of U.S. officials regarding U.S.-Iran relation?

MR. ERELI: I'm not aware of that initiative.

QUESTION: The news comes by an Iranian news agency.

MR. ERELI: I haven't seen that report.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you.

MR. ERELI: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:52 p.m.)

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: January 25, 2005

QUIZ OF THE YEAR; Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mourinho's controversial Yorkshire terrier?... Here are 170 questions to find out how much you really remember about the year that was

Independent Extra

December 24, 2007 Monday

First Edition

Copyright 2007 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: EXTRA; Pg. 2

Length: 3227 words

Body

ART & DESIGN

1. What sizeable sum did Damien Hirst's For the Love of God reportedly fetch in August?
2. A sculpture by which Turner prize-winning artist ended up in a skip after being mistaken for rubbish?
3. Bear suit-wearing Trigger Happy TV star Dom Joly accused which artist of stealing his idea?
4. Which poet helped to lead a campaign to save St Pancras station in London from demolition in 1967 and is commemorated by a statue in the new Eurostar terminal?
5. What did the former director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Sir Roy Strong, describe as "tacky, glitzy and brash. It would be all right in one of the darker streets of Soho"?
6. The first centenary of which Mexican artist's birthday was marked on 6 July?
7. Which 18th-century English man of letters was attacked with a hammer in the National Portrait Gallery?
8. Which painting featured on the bestselling postcard at the Tate galleries this year?
9. Crosby beach in Liverpool became the permanent home of which art installation?
10. What did 77-year-old pensioner Jean Preston discover in her spare room that was eventually sold for £1.7m?
11. How did the exhibition State Britain break the law?

BUSINESS

1. In May, which two airlines admitted that they had breached regulations by colluding to fix surcharge prices?

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

2. With which former chief executive did Jeff Chevalier have a not-so-secret affair?
3. Which high-street chain became Zavvi in September?
4. As of December, how many Premier League clubs were foreign-owned?
5. Under what name did Tesco launch its chain of US stores?
6. Name the chief executive who accepted an estimated pay-off of £77m after a year in which his employer lost £4bn.
7. What did Singapore Airlines ban on the new Airbus superjumbo?
8. What was the name of Yahoo!'s social network site, which was forced to close due to lack of interest?
9. In June the Government announced measures to lower inheritance tax. Who in 1924 said it was "a corrective against the development of a race of idle rich"?
10. Which company bought a 75 per cent stake in travel publisher Lonely Planet in October?
11. Kongo Gumi of Japan, which began trading in 578AD, was reportedly the world's oldest company until it went bust in 2007. What service did it provide?

COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

1. Which two countries will join the euro on 1 January?
2. The Facebook page of Rudy Giuliani's daughter Caroline revealed her support for which US presidential candidate?
3. Which country celebrated the start of the third millennium in September?
4. Which country topped an African league table of good governance in September?
5. Who became the first **female** speaker of the House of Representatives in the US?
6. What did Slovenian Martin Strel swim in 66 days?
7. In which countries are the following rebel groups currently active?
 - a) Farc
 - b) **LTTE**
 - c) Ulfa
8. Who, at 27, is the world's youngest serving state leader?
9. Once a week Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez broadcasts to the nation for five hours at a time. What is the name of his talk-show?
10. Which political leader accepted his 26th pay rise in 10 years?

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

EDUCATION

1. Which university stripped Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe of his honorary degree for services to education in Africa?
2. What was missing from Britain's most expensive state school, the £46m Thomas Deacon Academy in Peterborough, when it opened in September?
3. What misdemeanour linked students Lydia Playfoot and Sarika Singh?
4. How did Gordon Brown carve up the Department for Education?
5. Axeman-cum-astrophysicist Brian May became chancellor of which university in November?
6. According to a study by the Higher Education Policy Institute in September, how many hours does the average UK university student spend studying per week?
7. Which college was the first to announce its closure in Oxford University's 800-year history?
8. What unusual educational facility was added to Hylton Red House School in Sunderland?

ENVIRONMENT

AND SCIENCE

1. What did Environment Secretary Hilary Benn announce would be phased out by 2011?
2. Which country overtook the US to become the world's largest producer of carbon dioxide?
3. Why did Australian performance artist Stelios Arcadiou make the news this year?
4. Which London institution cancelled a speech from DNA pioneer Dr James Watson after he claimed black Africans were of inferior intelligence?
5. Which of the following animals requires a licence to be kept as a pet? Squirrel monkey, emu, mangrove snake, ostrich, capybara
6. In his exhibition The Myth of the North on which side of the north-south divide did professor of human geography Danny Dorling place the following?
 - a) Gloucester
 - b) Leicester
 - c) Nottingham
7. What is the thickness of graphene, the world's thinnest material, first manufactured this year?
8. Flooding in July cancelled all home cricket fixtures at which county ground?
9. How many years did it take Dr Jonathan Schaeffer to complete the first computer programme unbeatable at draughts?
10. UK radiologist Brian Witcombe won the spoof Ig Nobel prize in October. What did he study?

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

11. Which city was named as the UK's booziest, based on its residents' lifetime spend on alcohol?
12. A two-year-old girl who was successfully separated from her unparasitic parasitic twin was named after which Hindu goddess?

LITERATURE

1. Whose novel Crystal was revealed to be outselling the entire Booker shortlist in September?
2. Who was praised for the depiction of Canada in her debut novel, despite never having visited the country?
3. Whose offspring were revealed to be James, Albus and Lily?
4. Whose essay on radical Islam did literary critic Terry Eagleton liken to "the ramblings of a British National Party thug"?
5. Which award-winning author was forced to return stones stolen from a protected Dorset beach?
6. Lloyd Jones's Booker-nominated novel Mister Pip took its inspiration from which 19th-century novel?
7. From whose poetry debut are the following lines taken - "Every child's a human being/Not a piece of Plasticine/Loving parents, learn from me/If your children crave TV/Tell them, OK, what the hell/You can watch it for a spell/If you read a book as well."
8. Of the 18 publishers contacted, how many recognised David Lassman's plagiarised manuscript as the work of Jane Austen?
9. Which author and reporter was outed by a Polish magazine as a former communist spy after his death in January?
10. Why was Krystian Bala's novel Amok proven to be rather too autobiographical?
11. Complete the sequence: Robert Markham, John Gardner, Raymond Benson, _____
12. Whose latest (and final) book was described by The New Republic as containing "the silliest passage I have read in the literature of spiritual autobiography, which is a literature of considerable silliness"?

PARLIAMENT

1. Which male and **female** MPs came top of a Radio Five Live poll to find the sexiest parliamentarians?
2. Which MP requested that "Honourable Members should leave any cheeky business completely to me"?
3. Gordon Brown's gift to George Bush on his visit to Camp David in July was a book about Winston Churchill. What did he receive in return?
4. Which very liberal Lib Dem councillor was revealed to be moonlighting as an adult entertainer?
5. What parliamentary privilege was overturned this year?

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

6. How many of the following cabinet members issued a statement admitting to having used cannabis: Ruth Kelly, Hazel Blears, Andy Burnham, Alistair Darling, Harriet Harman, Jacqui Smith, John Hutton?
7. Who bounced back from a scandal in January to become David Cameron's chief spin-doctor in June?
8. Who won politician of the year at The Spectator's parliamentary awards in November?
9. Who said in July: "Being lectured by the current House of Commons on the question of the funding of political campaigns is like being accused of having bad taste by Donald Trump, like being accused of slouching by the Hunchback of Notre Dame"?
10. Who became Labour's youngest ever parliamentary candidate?
11. When asked in an interview to judge Tony Blair's premiership how many out of 10 did Ming Campbell rate him?

PRIZEWINNERS

Name the 2007 winner(s) of:

1. Samuel Johnson prize for non-fiction
2. Stirling prize
3. Carnegie of Carnegies
4. Golden Bear
5. Mercury Music prize
6. GQ Woman of the Year
7. Crufts Best in Show
8. Rear of the Year
9. Foot in Mouth Award
10. England Village of the Year

QUOTES

Who said the following during 2007?

1. "For 50 years or more, Elizabeth Windsor has maintained her dignity, her sense of duty - and her hairstyle."
2. "I've won all the prizes in Europe, every bloody one, so I'm delighted to win them all. It's a royal flush."
3. "I snorted my father. He was cremated and I couldn't resist grinding him up with a bit of blow."
4. "Women aren't cats, we aren't pets, we are just people trying to cross the freaking street to get an ice-cream."
5. "What we have done in the last five weeks is the equivalent of
Gretna taking on Real Madrid in
the Bernabeu and beating them

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

on penalties."

6. "Working for the BBC has always been a bit like living in Stalin's

Russia, with one five-year plan... after another."

7. "Everybody's got a black sheep in the family. A crazy uncle in the attic."

8. "I love her anyway, even if she's a ginge."

9. "I have expressed a degree of regret that can be equated with

an apology."

10. "Statistically, I am due to be fired again."

11. "I'm in big trouble, aren't I?"

SPORT

1. Before Jamie Murray's 2007 victory, who was the last British man to win the mixed doubles at the Wimbledon Championships?

2. Jonny Wilkinson was one of four England players to start both the 2003 and 2007 Rugby World Cup finals. Name the other three.

3. Where did Lewis Hamilton record his first Formula One victory?

4. In a Mori poll conducted in June, what percentage of participants disapproved of the London 2012 Olympic logo?

a) 28 per cent

b) 48 per cent

c) 68 per cent

5. Who became the first cricketer to take four wickets in consecutive deliveries in a one-day international?

6. What record was set during the morning of fourth day of the second Test between England and the

West Indies?

7. Who became the first Indian golfer to compete at the Masters?

8. What was the name of Jose Mourinho's Yorkshire terrier who became embroiled in a quarantine row?

9. Which two men outgunned Asafa Powell to win gold and silver in the men's 100m final at the World Athletics Championships in September?

10. What was the last men's singles grand slam final not to feature Roger Federer, and who won it?

THE STAGE

1. Who played the role of Iain Duncan Smith in TONY! The Blair Musical?

2. Who complained that contemporary drama criticism was dominated by "dead white men"?

3. Which actor played the Shakespearean characters Macbeth, Malvolio and Prospero during 2007?

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

4. Director Matthew Warchus visited which author's grave to apologise for adapting one of his works for the stage?
5. What links Danny Bayne, Susan McFadden and Lee Mead?
6. Which pop star's younger brother replaced Daniel Radcliffe in Equus?
7. Whose songs formed the soundtrack to the musical Never Forget?
8. Which fashion designer lent her flamboyance to Verdi's Aida?

Whitaker's Almanack 2008 is usually priced at £40. To buy a copy for £36, free p&p, call Independent Books Direct on 08700 798 897 or visit www.independentbooksdirect.co.uk

FILM

1. Who received the eighth nomination of his career for best actor at the 2007 Oscars but is yet to win?
2. Who is missing from this list: Ben Whishaw, Cate Blanchett, Marcus Carl Franklin, Richard Gere, Christian Bale and _____?
3. In September, which film series became the highest grossing franchise of all time?
4. Quentin Tarantino directed Death Proof, one half of the Grindhouse double-bill. Who directed the second half, Planet Terror?
5. What nationality is director Cristian Mungiu, whose film 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days won the Palme d'Or at Cannes?
6. According to a Forbes magazine report, for every \$1 Matt Damon is paid, his films gross \$29. Match up the following stars to their gross potential:
 - 1) Russell Crowe
 - 2) Jennifer Aniston
 - 3) Brad Pitta) \$17 b) \$5 c) \$24
7. Who links the actors Steve Coogan and Craig Parkinson?
8. Which risible sequel won Worst Film at the 2007 Golden Raspberry Awards?
9. The false nose worn by Matt Damon in Ocean's Thirteen was named after which actor?
10. According to Sicko, from whom did Jim Kenefick, the webmaster of an anti-Michael Moore site, receive an anonymous payment for \$12,000 to cover his wife's medical bills?
11. What is the real name of Superbad's McLovin?
12. What according to the American Film Institute's once-in-a-decade poll, is the greatest US film of all time?

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

BROADCASTING

1. Which universally panned 2007 show featured Michael Portillo, Ingrid Tarrant and Jacqueline Gold amongst its celebrity participants?
2. What should Socks, the new Blue Peter cat, have been named according to a viewers' poll?
3. Which tight-trousered BBC broadcaster was warned for repeatedly promoting his autobiography on air?
4. Which television show was savaged by newspaper critics as both "...terrible. Witless. Insubstantial. Saggy. Navel-gazing" and "ending with a resolution so tritely benevolent that it effectively gave you permission to dismiss everything that had gone before as mere theatrics"?
5. About whom did Victoria Coren write: "In Sex and the City she is predatory Samantha, proper Charlotte and ambitious Miranda. In Desperate Housewives she is hapless Susan, hardline Bree, multi-tasking Lynette and money-hungry Gaby"?
6. Who did The Sunday Times columnist Paul Donovan describe as "a coarse buffoon" upon learning of his nomination as one of the 25 greatest broadcasters of all time?
7. Who links the 2007 dramas Northanger Abbey, A Room With a View and Fanny Hill?
8. Which soap character was described by The Guardian's Grace Dent as "the sum total of all of our tabloid fears about the terrifying youth of today"?
9. How many (human) characters died in the entire run of The Sopranos?
10. For what did US reporter Joshua Wolf, now running for mayor of San Francisco, spend 266 days in jail?

CRIMES AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

1. How did 17-year-old home-wrecker Rachael Bell make the news?
2. Which of the following news stories from the past year are true?
 - a) An 81-year-old woman was issued with an Asbo for threatening behaviour.
 - b) A 12-year-old boy was charged with assault for throwing a cocktail sausage.
 - c) A driver of an ice-cream van was charged with disturbing the peace by playing his jingle too frequently.
3. Which former police minister was fined £100 under legislation he helped to draw up?
4. A British crime survey found that, as a result of the new 24-hour licensing law, crime between the hours of 3am and 6am had:
 - a) decreased by 6 per cent
 - b) increased by 12 per cent
 - c) increased by 22 per cent
5. On which of the following counts was former media tycoon Conrad Black found guilty?
 - a) mail fraud
 - b) wire fraud

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

c) racketeering

d) obstruction of justice

6. Whose "worm's eye view" of prison is to be used for advice on Conservatives' penal reform policy?

7. In its latest recruitment drive, how has MI6 chosen to reach its audience?

SOCIETY

1. Match the celebrity to the length of prison sentence:

1. Paris Hilton

2. Nicole Richie

3. Lindsay Lohan

a) 82 minutes

b) 23 days

c) 84 minutes

2. Angelina Jolie's adopted children are from which three countries?

3. For which fashion chain did Kate Middleton work as a buyer in 2007?

4. What \$100,000 Hollywood tradition was scrapped this year following an intervention from the taxman?

5. Match the Spice mums to their babies:

1) Geri; 2) Emma; 3) Mel B

a) Beau Lee; b) Angel Iris;c) Bluebell Madonna

6. For the following WAGs, provide her footballing other half: (a) Toni Poole (b) Noemie Lenoir (c) Charlotte Meares

7. Which celebrity rag regular was christened "Chipshop" by satirical email newsletter Popbitch?

8. What links John Turnbull, Markus Kempen, Lance Gerrard-Wright and Brian Monet?

9. How is Mario Armando Lavandeira Jnr better known?

10. Why was Room 609 of the Hard Rock Hotel in Hollywood in the news this year?

MUSIC

1. Rhianna's ubiquitous summer hit "Umbrella" lasted 10 weeks at number one. What was the previous song to reach this milestone?

2. How did Jammie Thomas of Minnesota achieve notoriety?

3. What was 2007's highest-

grossing tour?

4. Which band were criticised by Al Gore for leaving Live Earth by private jet?

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

5. Who broke up in January blaming "musical similarities"?
6. Which British institution linked Bryan Ferry, Take That and The Feeling's Dan Gillespie Sells?
7. Who won Popjustice's £20 Music Prize for the best pop single of the year?
8. According to one critic, whose first album for 28 years provided "a thousand unintentional laughs as it takes awfulness to new heights"?
9. Who returned with a new album in 2007, five years after announcing she hoped the music industry "all goes down the crapper"?
10. "He liked to dress me up as a little schoolgirl and he would be the naughty priest, or we would trade sexes and he would put on my clothes and I would put on his." Who does rock groupie Pamela Des Barres rate as her "freakiest" lover?
11. Each of these rappers released an album in 2007, but what does their birth certificate say?
 1. Dizzee Rascal
 2. Shaggy
 3. 50 Cent
 4. Jay-Z

OBITUARIES

1. The former Daily Telegraph editor Bill Deedes, who died in August, inspired which literary character?
2. Who was the Sage of Cricklewood?
3. How did Boris Yeltsin, who died in April, lose his left thumb and index finger?
4. Which fashion designer, who died in June, built the first female-founded company to make the Fortune 500?
5. Which French postmodernist thinker, who died in March, described the United States as "the last primitive society"?
6. Which influential film director, who died in July, thought that Orson Welles was "just a hoax" and that Antonioni had directed two masterpieces - "you don't have to bother with the rest"?
7. Who did the recently deceased Isabella Blow describe as "a blow-up doll with brains"?
8. What was unusual about the rampaging horde whose attack led to the death of SS Bajwa, the former deputy mayor of Delhi?
9. Which writer who died in April once argued that giraffes, hippopotami and the clap were evidence that evolution was controlled by a divine power?

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

10. Who died suddenly in September at the age of 31 with the last words "You'll be in tomorrow?"
11. In which television drama did Mike Reid make his final screen appearance?
12. Which writer, who died in October aged 102, had a mother, father, sister and husband who were each the recipient of a Nobel prize?

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

Each of the following numbers was significant in 2007. Match up the number with the reason why.

0.0682

2.90

9.74

114

123

172

2,618

177,265

7,700,000

151,116,516

- a) Duration in days of Alan Johnston's kidnapping
- b) The number of toilets at the new Wembley Stadium
- c) The percentage of Britney Spears' monthly income donated to charity
- d) Time in seconds of Asafa Powell's new 100m world record
- e) The speed in mph Tim Brady was recorded as reaching in a 70mph zone
- f) The average price in pounds paid for Radiohead's In Rainbows album sold through a pay-what-you-like scheme
- g) The record-breaking box-office gross in dollars of Spider-Man 3 in its first weekend in the US
- h) The record number of visitors to the four Tate galleries in 2006-07
- i) The time in minutes the inaugural high-speed Eurostar service took to run from Paris to London in September
- j) The area in hectares destroyed by forest fires in Greece during the summer

QUIZ OF THE YEAR Whose jail sentence lasted 82 minutes? Which actor did Matt Damon name his false nose after in Ocean's Thirteen? What was the name of Jose Mour....

Load-Date: December 24, 2007

End of Document

No Headline In Original

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

April 15, 2005 Friday

SOONER EDITION

Copyright 2005 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT,; for the record

Length: 946 words

Body

Rock

GARBAGE

'Bleed Like Me' (Geffen)

THREE STARS

It's not easy being a '90s rock band in the 21st century. Unless you were affiliated with Nirvana or you're playing music derivative of Pearl Jam, it seems like no one wants to listen to you these days.

In the '90s, Garbage was one of a few fiery **female**-fronted rock groups. They were a little less cool than Elastica and a little less popular than No Doubt, but they had their fans and their hits nonetheless.

Now lead singer Shirley Manson and her group are back after a near breakup with "Bleed Like Me." The group is still relying on heavy guitars and heavy production to drive its sound.

The album finds Garbage as radio friendly as ever: big hooks, big guitars and short songs. Manson sings mostly about relationships. "I got a fever come check it and see/ there's something burning and rolling in me/ it may not last but we'll have fun to the end," she sings seductively on the album opener "Bad Boyfriend," which borrows generously from Foreigner's "Hot Blooded."

The first single "Why Do You Love Me?" could have come from the group's self-titled debut. Manson's manic singing makes this track a hit, but it's the album's only track likely to make a splash.

Unfortunately, "Bleed Like Me" offers nothing new and exciting from Garbage. It's an album that could have been released in 1995 just as easily as it was released today.

-- Dan Liebermann

WILL SMITH

'Lost and Found' (Interscope)

THREE STARS

No Headline In Original

Your instincts tell you it's not too cool to be driving down the street cranking the new Will Smith record. And you're right. So, roll the windows up, but do check out at least parts of "Lost and Found," the Fresh Prince's first record in three years and a playful and sometimes serious display of his mike skills.

The rapper, actually the first to win a Grammy back in the day, gets plenty of mileage out of his squeaky-clean Hollywood image and woeful lack of street cred. "Mr. Niceguy" is a hilarious piece about Will being the black guy a white guy would let his daughter date, while also touching on a mini beef with rap's great white hope: "dissed by Eminem/ but didn't bother him?/ yeah, he classy/ Big Will just did another 20 mil/ walked right past him."

"Lost and Found" gets off to a lame start with a Will-as-Superhero theme taken from "Spider-Man," and then picks up with the lite crunk of "Party Starter" and the clickety-clack dance single "Switch."

The chewy center of the record finds him scoffing at religious zealots on "Ms. Holy Roller," contemplating the evils of the world, a la Jadakiss, with a series of questions on "Tell Me Why," and dissing the current scene on the title track ("why should I try to sound like y'all sound?/ that's what wrong with the rap game right now ... man, it's like the circus with a bunch of clowns").

On "I Wish I Made That," he ponders what crimes he can commit to come off as "black enough" for radio, while regretting all the classic rap hooks he didn't write.

"Lost and Found" is indeed soft in places and you can hear him borrowing from some of those clowns, even the white one. It's bound to be dissed because he's a movie star, but take the name off the label and it just sounds like lively hip-hop record with a reasonably skilled MC, rooted in the old school.

-- Scott Mervis

M.I.A.

'Arular' (XL/ Beggars US)

FOUR AND HALF STARS

"London quiet down I need to make a sound/ New York quiet down I need to make a sound/ Kingston quiet down I need to make a sound," sings M.I.A. on her debut album, "Arular."

The newest sensation from England has a little something for everyone. Arular is a dance album padded with blasts of noise: bass, horns, and the stylish singer's primal shrieks.

The artist spent her youth moving between London and Sri Lanka, where her father, known as Arular, was involved with the **Tamil Tigers**.

The album's sound is unclassifiable. An original blend of reggae, hip-hop, electro and world music. It's genreless. Genreless? Doesn't that usually mean experimental and inaccessible? Not when the music is this fun.

M.I.A. makes music for people who like pop.

"Bucky Done Gun" is a frantic track with blaring horn samples and a machine gun beat via drum machine. Things are a little more peaceful on "Sunshowers," where M.I.A. raps over sparse sounds in her thick accent.

There are allusions to war and terrorism on the album, references to bombs and guns, but the music is so bombastic that it just sounds like small talk. Still, there's a message for anyone who's willing to listen.

-- Dan Liebermann

Jazz

3RD FORCE

No Headline In Original

'Driving Force (Higher Octave)

THREE STARS

3rd Force started out as a studio project with the trio of William Aura, Craig Dobbin and Alain Eskanasi playing "ambient" or "new age" music. However, as it has since found a home in the smooth jazz world and is known for its guest stars, such as Brian Hughes, Peter White, Paul Taylor and Rick Braun, the guys have pretty much cast their former sound aside.

This particular disc harks back to the Motown sound, albeit a little more laid-back, and there's nothing on it that I simply can't stand.

The disc opens with the explosive acid jazz plus techno-pop of "Believe In Me," with former Tower of Power trumpeter Greg Adams on flugelhorn and guitarist Hughes weaving in and out. "Get With It," with overdubbed saxophones courtesy of Tom Scott and organ from John Nau, recalls TOP.

The dark "Into the Rhythm," which recalls labelmate Four80East, seems to be the only tune that approaches "new age," with flute from Reuben Shrestha. Saxophonist Eric Darius is featured on "Ask Me Why" and "An Open Heart," and Marc Antoine adds ringing acoustic guitar on "You Got It."

-- Rick Nowlin

Notes

WEEKEND MAG Records are rated on a scale of one (poor) to five (excellent) stars:

Load-Date: April 23, 2005

UN

Commission concludes general debate on promotion and protection of human rights; Issues concerning capital punishment, anti-terrorist laws, human rights defenders, and human rights and sexual orientation raised.

Page 2 of 2.

M2 PRESSWIRE

April 20, 2004

Copyright 2004 M2 Communications Ltd.

Length: 4870 words

Body

MINLI DALLH, of Dominicans for Justice and Peace, speaking on behalf of several NGOs (Joint statement on behalf of: Dominicans for Justice and Peace; Dominican Leadership Conference; International Presentation Association Sisters of the Presentation; Congregations of St. Joseph; International Federation of ACAT (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture); Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur; Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic and Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic), said the death penalty perpetuated a cycle of violence and promoted a sense of vengeance in world culture. To continue to enact the penalty was to teach that violence and killing were acceptable ways of dealing with violence and killing. Restoration of society and the healing of victims, as well as reform and rehabilitation of the offenders should be the goals of a criminal justice system. In calling for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide, there was also concern for its unjust and unequal application, as it was often applied in a racist manner to minorities and the under classes in general. All Governments should abolish the death penalty.

RINEETA NAIK, of South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, said that five years after the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and three years after the establishment of the office of the Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders, many questions arose as to the purpose of the Declaration. Among the most pressing issues were: to what degree, if any, did the Declaration improve upon existing human rights protections that were afforded to all persons and prescribed by international law? Could its provisions realistically be applied, or was it no more than a rhetorical expression of goodwill, to be filed away amongst the growing pile of other non-binding international instruments?

MARIA LUISA TOLEDO, of Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees, said that it was important to note that the Association - as a group of human rights defenders - had tried to exercise the legitimate right to defend their disappeared relatives. Serious concern was expressed over the violence afflicted upon human rights defenders, particularly in Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Mexico. The spiral of violence extended through corruption and crime due to the impunity extended to perpetrators by Governments. There was also much concern that the harassment campaigns had been extended to the criminalization of social protests and that the media criticized individuals unjustly.

RAFAELLA DE LA TORRE, of Federacion de Asociaciones de Defensa y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos, said that her organization continued to condemn acts of terrorism. She shared the pains inflicted against the Spanish people by the recent terrorist acts that had killed and wounded many innocent civilians. The fire lit by terrorism could not however be extinguished by petrol. The war of aggression against Iraq had so far killed 10,000

UN Commission concludes general debate on promotion and protection of human rights; Issues concerning capital punishment, anti-terrorist laws, human rights defe....

civilians besides military casualties. The war had also made great damage to properties, which did not contribute to the combat against terrorism. The war of aggression against Iraq did not in any way diminish the acts of terrorism. It was rather an aggression that defied all international norms and international humanitarian law.

YVETTE LADORE, of Earthjustice, called upon all States to ensure that the constructive efforts envisaged at the World Summit on Sustainable Development with regard to environmental problems were followed-up and implemented. The issue should not be held hostage to the sterile political debate. The Commission should continue to fulfil its mission for the protection and promotion of human rights related to environmental questions. The poorest and most vulnerable populations, including women and children, paid the heaviest toll from environmental degradation. Moreover, while the European and Inter-American courts of human rights were more and more often called upon to deal with environmental related questions, those involved in the protection of the environment - both governmental and non-governmental organizations

- more and more often linked environmental questions to human rights in programmes.

YOHANES BUDI HERNOVAN, of International Service for Human Rights, said human rights defenders were the most at risk in those States where human rights were systematically violated.

Defenders would continue to present the truth to the Commission, without taking sides. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders was evidence of the situation of human rights defenders in the world today; they were subjected to many tactics by Governments that wished to control them by judicial proceedings, surveillance and intimidation tactics. But human rights defenders would not be silenced. The States present at the Commission should publicly recognize the legitimate role played by defenders in the promotion and protection of all human rights, peace, democracy and the rule of law.

MANUEL FAJARDO CRAVERO, of Nord-Sud XXI, said that since 1980, an internal armed conflict had been going on in Peru between the Communist Party of Peru and the State. That situation had prompted the State to promulgate a state of emergency, which had derogated some of the human rights and fundamental freedoms. A military command had been put in place to manage the situation of the state of emergency while legislation, not compatible with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, had been adopted. A policy of genocide against the population had been pursued without regard to the Constitution. Thousands of people had disappeared with the State being accountable for such acts.

That law of exception had been widely used in place of the penal code and other civil laws.

JUAN PERLA, of International Religious Liberty Association, said religious liberty and the elimination of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief were essential to promote understanding, peace, and friendship among people.

The United Nations, government authorities and non-governmental organizations should continue to promote and protect actively the fundamental freedom of religion and the work of human rights defenders in the field. Promoting and protecting this basic right and freedom was, now more than ever, essential to creating a more peaceful world.

SANCHAY CHAKMA, of Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network, said human rights defenders across the world faced serious repression from the authorities. Often, non-governmental organizations were controlled through special financial rules. Human rights defenders were under severe threat in Bangladesh, facing arrest, torture, harassment, extrajudicial killing and numerous troubles. The Commission was urged to take the issue seriously.

GEORGES RUAN, of Transnational Radical Party, said there should be a world-wide moratorium on the death penalty. On a world-wide scale, the application of the death penalty was very bad - and there should be a moratorium for the entire United States as well as other countries. In the name of human rights, morality and mercy, the machinery of death should be stopped in order to study its accuracy, fairness and faults. In non-democratic countries, information on the death penalty was a state secret. In some countries, thousands each year were

UN Commission concludes general debate on promotion and protection of human rights; Issues concerning capital punishment, anti-terrorist laws, human rights defe....

sentenced to death and immediately executed, with no opportunity to appeal. The death penalty in these countries was a humanitarian emergency and the international community had a duty and obligation to intervene.

DEIRDRE McCONNELL, of International Association of Democratic Lawyers, said that human rights defenders exposed human rights violations mostly in countries where there was conflict. They exposed arrest, detention, torture, disappearances, killings, and violence against women committed mostly by the government forces. They spoke out on behalf of civilians including women and children, marginalized social groups and other victims.

They sought justice to end impunity by challenging the perpetrators of human rights violation and reminded all States of their obligations to uphold the rule of law. Those activities sometimes brought them disaster. She enumerated individual cases of human rights violations of a lawyer and a journalist in Sri Lanka.

MICHEL VEUTHEY, of International Institute of Humanitarian Law, said that the Institute's main goal was to promote, disseminate and teach international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law through different training courses.

From its foundation in 1970 until today, the Institute has organized 130 courses for military personnel including basic, specialized and human rights courses. More than 100 countries participated in such courses, which were very important in the education and training of military people on the respect and implementation of fundamental humanitarian standards, particularly in armed conflict. The question of the implementation of humanitarian law must be considered together with the implementation of human rights law. Those two important branches of international law could complete each other not just in peacetime, but also during international armed conflicts, internal conflicts and in situations of violence. In the resolution on the promotion and dissemination of human rights law, a special paragraph should provide for the promotion and dissemination of international humanitarian law and refugee law.

KATHY RICHARDS, of Australian Council for Overseas Aid, said in the last decade, international development donors had considerably increased their focus on good governance activities. These programmes should aim to assist States to provide universal and equitable basic services, protection for human rights and the opportunity for all people to have a say in the decision-making processes affecting their communities.

Yet development programmes addressing poor governance practices had come to primarily focus on the reform of Government and fiscal policies, the building of democratic institutions or training for the judiciary and public sector.

The challenge before donor States was to adopt a more expansive, holistic approach in their good governance activities. The Commission should ensure that a commitment was made for good governance strategies to commence with a clear focus on the empowerment, involvement and representation of communities, especially those living in poverty and despair.

SUSANA T. FRIED, of Centre for Women's Global Leadership, noted with alarm the tendency of some governments to call into question the historic recognition in Vienna that violence against women was a human rights violation. The growing in attacks, both physical and verbal, on women who asserted their human rights around the world, also concerned the Centre.

Governmental backtracking from their previous support of women's human rights in various international and regional documents over the past decade signalled that opposition to women's human right would be tolerated. At the heart of much of the danger faced by women's human rights defenders were the issues of gender role construction, reproductive rights, sexuality and violence against women. Women who were actively working to defend human rights in the public arena could become targets of sexual violence as well as sexually based insinuation, seeking to discredit and debilitate their work on the basis of their sexuality.

JOHN FISHER, of Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, said that it had been encouraging to see a number of States take firm positions of principle in support of non-discrimination and ending human rights violations against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered people and human rights defenders.

UN Commission concludes general debate on promotion and protection of human rights; Issues concerning capital punishment, anti-terrorist laws, human rights defe....

However, while increasing support was being shown cross-regionally, the rights of these populations continued to be violated in regions around the world. It was particularly disheartening to witness States responsible for torture and death of their own gay and lesbian citizens argue against the inclusion of sexual orientation and vow to call for a paragraph vote on the draft text. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered rights demanded the Commission's attention. All States were called upon to support the inclusion of sexual orientation in the resolution under the present debate. A clear message must be sent that none should be killed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

MIRIAM MORALES PALMERO, of World Federation of Democratic Youth, said thousands of people worldwide did not have access to health care, several millions were illiterate and some 200 million youth were homeless. Moreover, many people were living in absolute poverty. The Federation was concentrating its efforts on these aggravating affects and looking at ways to alleviate these problems. The military intervention by the United States in Iraq and the massacre of the Palestinian people by Israel were clear examples of how there was a major lack of respect for human rights. Cuba has been one of the biggest contributors of assistance to the Honduran people, especially when it came to medical assistance; today there were more than 15,000 doctors in 65 countries from Cuba in the third world making efforts to alleviate the situation in those countries.

AHMED SIDY ALY, of International Union of Socialist Youth, said the situation of the Saharawi human rights activists in the occupied territories of the Western Sahara was linked to the day-to-day situation of the Saharawi population living in those territories. Ever since Morocco illegally occupied the territory in 1975, the Saharawi population had been subjected to a series of practices carried out by the Moroccan occupying power which involved forced unemployment, denial of salaries, forced deportation into Morocco, arbitrary arrest and detention, among other things. Those responsible for the gross violations of human rights in the Western Sahara were still continuing to do so without impunity, he added.

M'HAMED MOHAMED CHEIKH, of International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, said there was much concern for the repeated aggressions against the Saharawi human rights defenders in the Western Sahara, where Morocco, the illegal occupying power, had for the last three decades had a policy for the physical eradication of this part of society. This policy was expressed in ways that violated international humanitarian law, but were also crimes against humanity including torture, reduction of the right to freedom of expression, association, and reunion. The international community should take steps to ensure that these attempts ceased against human rights defenders in the Western Sahara, and to ensure that Morocco elucidated the cases of the hundreds of victims of forced disappearances in that territory.

SATISH K. KAREL, of Group for International Solidarity, said extra-judicial executions, forced disappearances, illegal arrests, detention, and torture were widespread in Nepal. The wide-spread human rights violations, absolute impunity for the perpetrators and lack of justice for the victims had generated a negative attitude towards the army, the security forces and the State as a whole. Civil society in Nepal had been asking the international community to open up the space for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide technical support for the protection and monitoring of the situation and helping national institutions to bring perpetrators to justice. The Commission should, among other things, condemn the ongoing repression by the Government against the peaceful demonstrators, human rights activists, lawyers and other professional groups of people committed to democracy and the rule of law.

LAURE GEISSBUEHLER, of France Libertés - Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, said the Commission should have its attention drawn to the case of Professor Bandajevsky, who had been imprisoned in Belorussia since June 2001 for having studied the pathologies linked to radiation in a country that had been touched by the Chernobyl catastrophe, where the population was dying and doctors were muzzled. Eighteen years after the catastrophe, the right to freedom of expression and to truth were ignored to the detriment of scientific research on the consequences of the event which were still felt by the surrounding populations. This was why the Commission should intervene to insist that Professor Bandajevsky be immediately released.

UN Commission concludes general debate on promotion and protection of human rights; Issues concerning capital punishment, anti-terrorist laws, human rights defe....

LAURE-JULIA HOLSTEIN, of Agir Ensemble pour les droits de l'homme, said that she wished to express concern over the situation of human rights in Cuba. Citing the recent wave of arrests and prison sentencing of dissidents and journalists, she said the Commission must take a position on the arbitrary detention of these individuals who had been sentenced to more than 25 years in prison for nothing more than making their opinions heard. The Commission should urge the Government to respect the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and to ensure freedom and respect for the personal integrity of all human rights defenders in Cuba. The Special Representative on human rights defenders should travel to the country and have free access to all political detainees.

JOHN WESLEY HALL, of National Association of Criminal Defence Lawyers, said the death penalty for juvenile offenders was now a practice unique to the United States. Many jurisdictions within the United States had found that evolving standards of decency prohibited the execution of those convicted of crimes when they were juveniles. It was statistically probable that the United States had executed innocent persons, and that was reason enough to require a moratorium on the death penalty everywhere in the world. The fact that a person could be executed for a crime he or she did not commit offended all notions of human decency. All delegates were called upon to actively support the resolution on the question of the death penalty.

JENNIFER ARTBURU, of Human Rights Advocates, said that there were more than 175 million migrants worldwide - a growing number of whom were in dire need of protection from dangerous border crossings and workplace abuses. Migration worldwide was on the increase and a demand for migrant labour in developed countries along with poor economic conditions in sending countries continued to drive the movement. To improve conditions for migrants, Human Rights Advocates asked that countries ratify the Convention on Migrant Workers, particularly receiving countries, as that was where the majority of abuses occurred. Sending countries should keep in mind the billions of dollars in remittances that migrants sent home each year and take more responsibility for their workers abroad, giving them assistance in reporting abuses, and when possible negotiating bilateral treaties for their protection.

Additionally, countries should punish the employers who encouraged human smuggling rather than the migrant workers who were lured by their promises.

BRENDA VUKOVIC, of Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, said there was concern at the massive and systematic violation of economic, social and cultural rights suffered by the Argentine population. There was an urgent need to move forward on punishing violations of economic, social and cultural rights, which were an integral part of civil and political rights.

The economic policies adopted by successive Argentine Governments were accompanied by illegitimate State action and corrupt action had grave results on the civil debt, and along with the corruption and constant inconsistency between the political system and social requirements had caused an explosive crisis. The Argentine population was living under constant threat of becoming socially disappeared. The violation of the rights of the homosexual community was also denounced, as none should be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation or identity.

MEHRAN BALUCH, of Comité international pour le respect et l'application de la Charte africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples - CIRAC, said half a century of continued human rights violations and oppression had reduced the indigenous Baluch population to a minority. The nuclear blasts and defence programmes of Pakistan had made the people of Baluchistan poorer and more vulnerable, and their distinct national, cultural, political and administrative identity was being threatened. Recognition of the aspirations of minority nationalities in the federation of Pakistan and due consideration of their cultural, linguistic, economic and political rights was imperative in order to lessen the sense of deep alienation prevailing among the masses of nationalities. There were several pluralistic states, like Switzerland, which had nationalities and communities that possessed nation-like characteristics but did not have their separate states, and it was unfortunate that the rulers of Pakistan had never thought of accommodating minorities through a constructive and viable mechanism.

UN Commission concludes general debate on promotion and protection of human rights; Issues concerning capital punishment, anti-terrorist laws, human rights defe....

LAKSHMAN LOKUMARAMBAGE, of International Buddhist Foundation, said he wished to bring to the attention of the Commission improvements in the situation of human rights in Sri Lanka since the signing of the ceasefire between the Government and the LTTE in February 2002. After 20 years of war, people had begun to lead normal lives and to embrace one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Among other developments, more than 300,000 internally displaced persons had returned to their homes and much rehabilitation and reconstruction work had taken place in the north and east of the country. Moreover, elections had been held on 2 April 2004. Thus, it was disappointing to see, in spite of such positive developments, one non-governmental organization continue to refer to Sri Lanka in negative terms, raking up outdated allegations and suggesting some form of "separate development" or "bantustanization" when the real need was for calm and restraint for the resolving of differences within a united Sri Lanka. The international community should show solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka and help the parties to resolve the issues affecting them in the context of a democratic, united State, respecting the human rights of all.

MAYA BEN-HAIM ROSEN, of International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists, reiterated its primary criticism regarding the current situation, namely the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Conference States' blocking of an effective international definition of terrorism in the interests of a politically-motivated exception, i.e. that any resistance by all means to occupation, colonial domination, among other things, should not be regarded as an act of terrorism - however many civilians were being targeted, killed or maimed. The Association had reservations about the value of creating a new special procedure, and/or installing a "human rights expert" in a revamped Counter Terrorism Committee. The Association pointed the attention of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the recent article by Justice Aharon Barak, President of the Supreme Court of Israel, - The role of a supreme court in a democracy and the fights against terrorism - which listed a set of principles offered as a useful starting point for such a set of guidelines.

LES MALEZER, of Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action, said there were many situations where defenders were targeted for their work on indigenous and land rights, and there was concern for the use of both the law and the court against human rights defenders. It was disappointing to note that indigenous peoples in defence of their land rights could be labelled as terrorists. Many violations were occurring under the mantle of State-driven racism against the indigenous peoples, through the vicious use of the law, the courts, and legislature, in particular in Australia.

MASSIMILIANO DESUMMA, of International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, said there was grave concern that health professionals and human rights defenders continued to be at risk for their work in documenting acts of torture or in providing treatment and support to victims of torture. There was particular concern for persisting and unfounded allegations against the centre for victims of torture in Harare, Zimbabwe. The human rights of patients, health professionals and indeed all citizens should be assured by the State, especially related to their right to health care. The Commission should remind all States to respect, under all circumstances, the special obligations of health professionals to provide assistance to persons in need of their services.

ANDRES SANCHEZ, of Colombian Association of Jurists, said there was a worsening of the attacks against human rights defenders, leading to attack, persecution, and threats in many countries of the world. In Colombia, 16 defenders had disappeared or had been murdered over the last year. The Government, rather than implementing the recommendations of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, had continued its campaign of harassment of defenders. There was a policy of polarization, causing distrust, separation and hostility by the Government towards the defenders; their work was questioned, and they were accused of being in the service of terrorism. It was not by inspiring hostility towards and rejection of human rights defenders that a truly democratic system of security would be developed. It was of paramount importance that States adopt a policy favouring the fundamental role played by human rights defenders towards democracy.

ANNA BIONDI BIRD, of International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, said that he wished to denounce the violation of trade unionists' fundamental human rights as a result of their democratic activities. Citing instances of such violations in Colombia, China, Republic of Korea, Burma, Djibouti, Cameroon, Belarus, Cambodia, Zimbabwe and Haiti, he said that the examples showed clearly that the fundamental rights to freedom of association and

UN Commission concludes general debate on promotion and protection of human rights; Issues concerning capital punishment, anti-terrorist laws, human rights defe....

collective bargaining remained among the most violated in the world and the Commission must therefore maintain the strong focus on trade union activists among the most endangered of human rights defenders.

FRANK CALZON, of Liberal International, said promoting human rights meant that the international community must commit itself to defend those who tried to exercise the rights set out by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also meant that the Commission supported civil societies and a rule of law that honoured and respected rights. The abuse of human rights was a pressing matter in many of the world's countries, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar, Tibet, China and Cuba. In Cuba's case, much of the world was beginning to express its solidarity with the victims of repression who sought to exercise their rights. Despite Havana's expressed displeasure, democratic governments were inviting the families of Cuba's political prisoners to share their stories.

Right of Reply

CLEMENCIA FORERO UCROS (Colombia), speaking in a right of reply, said that with regard to the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the work of human rights, the Government of Colombia believed that the work of those NGOs in keeping up with international law and human rights standards was valuable and must be respected. There were protection programmes conducted by the Colombian Ministry of Interior where people were welcomed when they were under threat and, moreover, Colombia worked for constructive dialogue with Member States. Furthermore, Colombia said they would like to construct a national human rights plan yet reserved the right to disagree with opinions made in the Commission where there were biased reports presented. They were not satisfied with those opinions expressed and hoped to reduce violence and suffering that was unacceptable to all in the Commission.

BADRIDDIN OBIDOV (Uzbekistan), speaking in a right of reply, said in response to the Representative of Switzerland that the death penalty could only be applied for violations of two types of crime and instances, and alternative sentencing was increasingly replacing the death penalty. In addition to comprehensive measures to prevent torture, the Government had undertaken to reform the system of punishment in general.

There had also been efforts to ensure the informing of the families of persons sentenced to death in compliance with international standards. The Government's plan of action in this regard also included studies on a possible moratorium or abolition of the death penalty.

((M2 Communications Ltd disclaims all liability for information provided within M2 PressWIRE. Data supplied by named party/parties. Further information on M2 PressWIRE can be obtained at <http://www.presswire.net> on the world wide web. Inquiries to info@m2.com)).

Load-Date: April 20, 2004

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

US Fed News

May 9, 2007 Wednesday 10:51 PM EST

Copyright 2007 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 5292 words

Byline: US Fed News

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

The U.S. Department of State issued the following transcript of the daily press briefing:

Sean McCormack, Spokesman

TRANSCRIPT:

12:34 p.m. EST

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay. Who wants to get into some questions?

QUESTION: Should I ask you about the meetings with Mrs. Levinson?

MR. MCCORMACK: You can. She had some meetings over here at the Department. She met with figures from the Consular Affairs Bureau as well as the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau. They talked about our efforts on behalf of Mr. Levinson. We have not heard anything new back either from the Iranian Government or from those other countries that we have asked to work on Mr. Levinson's behalf to try to determine his whereabouts. It's part of our ongoing conversation with Mrs. Levinson. Nick Burns is in frequent contact with her as well, keeping her updated and assuring her that we are working on her husband's behalf. We want to see him reunited with his family.

She's already had the meetings. I can't tell you exactly how long they lasted, but they are at the, I think, office director level. But Nick Burns would have met with her, but he is over in Berlin for some G-8 meetings.

QUESTION: Okay. Is it still three countries, non -

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah. Three -

QUESTION: It hasn't expanded to more.

MR. MCCORMACK: It has not expanded. We're still at three.

Yeah, Sue.

QUESTION: Could you name exactly who she saw there - which directors? And also was she accompanied by anyone, by a lawyer, by someone from the FBI, by -

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: I'll let her - I'll let her speak for herself in terms of who is traveling with her to decide. You know, it's not my place to get into that. I'll see if I can get you the names. I'm not sure that they would be people that you guys would recognize. Not to say they're not important. It's not what I'm saying.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) set of issues.

MR. MCCORMACK: It's not, you know, kind of household names like Matt Lee or Sue Pleming.

QUESTION: Yeah, right. (Laughter.) Did she -

QUESTION: This is just deteriorating.

MR. CASEY: Very fast.

QUESTION: Did she - did she request a meeting with the Secretary?

MR. MCCORMACK: Not to my knowledge.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: Not to my knowledge. It's a topic that - we talk to the Secretary quite often, keep her up to date on what actions we're taking.

QUESTION: Sean, can you talk at all to what extent your work with her has been? I mean, what are you doing on her behalf?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, we are - we've talked about it a lot here from this podium and other places as well. Going to the Iranian Government I think we've had - I can't keep track of the number right now - of inquiries we've made to them. I think about five inquiries, separate inquiries to the Iranian Government, asking about his whereabouts. We've also worked with other governments to see if they can knock on a few doors in Tehran and elsewhere and find any information about Mr. Levinson's whereabouts. We try to follow up on any leads that we - wherever they may occur.

The last communication - one of the last communications we had with the Iranian Government, we included - mentioned some press reporting about the fact that Mr. Levinson had been bundled off by people that appeared to be from Iranian security forces. We can't validate that, so we said - we included by ways of saying, well, look, you say there's no information; this might be something that provides you a lead. So we are doing everything that we possibly can that we think is effective in trying to determine his whereabouts and to get him back as safely here with his family as soon as possible.

QUESTION: I wanted to also ask about this case of the woman, the Iranian-American woman who's been detained -

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: - as of yesterday. Do you have any further information on that?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't have a lot of information I can provide you. We are in touch with some of the families involved here. But you're referring to press reports who are out there today, about some individuals, Iranian-Americans, who have traveled - traveled frequently back and forth to Iran, who on recent trips have had their passports confiscated by Iranian officials and not allowed to leave Iran. This is of a concern to us.

It's of a real concern to their families, and we want to do everything that we can that we think is effective - to work with the families so that we can see these individuals return back with their loved ones. These people don't pose any threat to the Iranian regime. You have an academic scholar - expert on U.S.-Iran relations. You have a journalist included in there as well. These are grandmothers. I don't think that they're going to shake the foundations of the Iranian - you know, the Iranian regime.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

Beyond that, I'm not going to say too much. We want to certainly be respectful of the prerogatives of the family. We don't want to weight down these cases with - you know, fate these cases with some of the other baggage in the Iranian-U.S. relationship. This is about people, and people that should be allowed to return back with their families as soon as possible.

QUESTION: There's been some suggestion that they may have detained her because of possible - you know, her role in possibly contributing to these U.S. Government programs that are reaching out to Iranians inside Iran, even though, you know, her family here says that she had nothing to do with it.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: But there's been some suggestion that that's possibly what the Iranians are doing is trying to send a message to the U.S. Government.

MR. MCCORMACK: You know, I can't tell you the motivations behind these actions by the Iranian Government. I can only repeat that these are people who don't pose any threat to the Iranian Government and, in fact, symbolize the kind of people-to-people interaction that we want to encourage. Whatever problems we may have with the policies of the Iranian Government, we don't want to put a chill in those people-to-people contacts. We think that those are really important.

And one example coming up here is the Secretary is going to visit an exhibition of Iranian artists. It's happening here at the Meridian House in the next couple of days. She's actually going to meet with some Iranian artists. We've had the American wrestling team that was well received in Tehran. We've had experts from the equivalent of the Iranian Centers for Disease Control visit the United States. So we want to encourage more of these kind of exchanges so that we can keep up contacts between the American and the Iranian people. It makes clear that we have no problem with the Iranian people. We want more interaction with them. It's a great culture. It's a great country and we shouldn't let any of the policy differences between the United States and this Iranian Government get in the way of those kinds of exchanges. So it would be a real shame if these actions by the Iranian Government in any way put a crimp in those kinds of exchanges. We don't want to see that.

QUESTION: Sean, two things. One, this is the second time just now that you've referred to these women as grandmothers.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: Is there something about "grandmotherhood" in this case that makes them any less of a threat to, you know - there are some grandmothers who are pretty spry.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah, no, it's true. Yeah, and I don't want to get a lot of letters from grandmothers here, you know. They can be pretty testy.

QUESTION: Too late.

MR. MCCORMACK: Too, late - (laughter) - I'm in trouble already, George. I know. No, it's just - look, I want to try - people try to humanize this. This isn't about U.S.-Iranian government-to-government relations. This is about people who just want to get back and see their families.

QUESTION: Right.

MR. MCCORMACK: See their grandchildren, see their husbands and their children. That's really what I was trying to get at.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: Not in any way trying to diss grandmothers.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

QUESTION: Okay. And on the Secretary's visit to the - these are artworks by Iranian artists.

MR. MCCORMACK: Iranian artists, right.

QUESTION: From Iran not Iranian American artists?

MR. MCCORMACK: No, from the -

QUESTION: And are the artists be there?

MR. MCCORMACK: What's that?

QUESTION: Will the artists be there?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes. And she's going -

QUESTION: And then they will return to Iran?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: Are you in any way concerned given the press reporting in the Iranian newspapers about the threat that they say is posed by these two women who are detained?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: That an Iranian artist meeting with the Secretary of State won't also meet the same kind of fate when they get back to -

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: - wherever they are from in Iran?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right, right. No, I would certainly hope not, Matt. And we're not going to alter our desire for these kind of interactions. And we don't think that the actions by the Iranian Government should be allowed to, in any way, inhibit these kind of interactions. Now of course, people will be free to choose whether or not they meet with the Secretary of State or U.S. officials. We're not going to try to force anything on anybody and if people aren't comfortable for whatever reason, of course they're not going to have to meet with the Secretary of State. But it is, at the very least, a way for the United States to demonstrate in tangible ways that we appreciate Iranian culture, we value Iranian culture, and we value these kinds of exchanges.

QUESTION: Can you give us a little bit more details on this exhibition? When? Where?

MR. MCCORMACK: We'll get you some more details. Yeah, I think she's going to do this tomorrow. Let me check for you.

QUESTION: Could you also find out if she's going to continue her interest in Iranian art or the -

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, yeah. She, yeah, she's - she has a great interest in music, so she has an appreciation for the fine arts. I can't tell you whether or not - how many Iranian art exhibitions she's been to in the past. I mean - but, you know, regardless, I'm sure that this is of high quality. I'm not an art expert, but the important thing here is the symbolism of the American Secretary of State reaching out and demonstrating for the Iranian people an appreciation for a product of Iranian culture.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

QUESTION: The women that were detained, can you tell us whether those were - appear to be connected in any way, or if the reason - and also, if the reason for their detention has been simply because they were Americans or is there anything else?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah, I - Kirit, I can't tell you and I - I'm not going to draw any particular connection with these. We'll deal with them as individual cases. That's our approach to it. I - you can ask Iranian officials if they are drawing any particular linkage among these three cases.

QUESTION: Sean, does this further complicate an already complicated relationship with Iran? You're trying to get them to end their nuclear weapons program, you know -

MR. MCCORMACK: You know, as you point out, it's an already complex relationship. And it's - and it is not unprecedented that we have seen this kind of behavior by the Iranian Government in the past, where the Iranian Americans have had their passports confiscated and not be allowed to exit around. So this is - this has happened in the past before. I can't tell you how many cases per year we have of it, but it has happened in the past.

As for the motivations of the Iranian regime, I can't tell you.

QUESTION: But right now - just three cases plus Mr. Levinson, is that what we're talking about?

MR. MCCORMACK: That's what - yeah, that's what we're aware of, yes.

QUESTION: Sean.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah.

QUESTION: You said this is the first - you've seen this in the past. Is that just the detentions - or, sorry, the passports have been taken or the actual arrests that you've seen in the past?

MR. MCCORMACK: I can't speak to the latter. I know that we have had past cases of people with their passports being confiscated and there are people not being allowed to return for some period of time. It's not only American - American citizens as well; I know that there have been, in recent years, cases of other foreign nationals that have been prevented from leaving Iran. There was recently a case involving a Canadian citizen as well, a Canadian academic. So this isn't - this behavior on the part of the Iranian regime is not limited to American citizens. This is, unfortunately, something that they've done with others in the past as well.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Is this also a problem with other - specifically for Americans of dual nationality? Hasn't this also been a problem with China - with other countries where the country -

MR. MCCORMACK: It has for different -

QUESTION: The other country definitely does not recognize the dual nationality and says that - claims them for their own to the point of imprisoning them?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah, it has - yeah, it has happened. I can't detail for you all the cases around the world. Certainly, China is a case. We've seen a number of those human rights cases. I'm not trying to - I'm not going to try to draw any parallels between those cases and the Iranian cases. I think you have to deal with them each in their own right, but yeah, it has happened in the past.

Yeah.

QUESTION: So, would you advise Iranian Americans from traveling to Iran? And what about the wrestling team? Are they - have they given you a reply yet? Are they coming?

MR. MCCORMACK: Whether to come here? I'll check for you. I don't know.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: I know that they express an interest in it and we encourage them to have a return visit here. As for any updates to the travel warnings, we'll keep you updated. The bureaucracy usually works on those and they land on my desk right before they go out to yours.

Yes, Goyal.

QUESTION: Another subject.

MR. MCCORMACK: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: Sean, this former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina has been allowed to return to Bangladesh.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: And now here is Special Envoy from Bangladesh Mr. Farooq Sobhan is traveling the U.S. and meeting U.S. officials. Is anybody in that - here at the State Department carrying this kind of special message about the situation in Bangladesh?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't - I'll look into it, Goyal. I don't know if he's met with anybody here on his recent visit. It's positive action that the government has allowed Sheikh Hasina back into Bangladesh. We encourage that development. What needs to happen in Bangladesh is that this caretaker government needs to move as quickly and effectively as it can to elections so that you continue the momentum of Bangladeshi democracy. What you don't want to have happen is that we get stuck with a non-elected government for an extended period of time. That would be a setback for Bangladesh and Bangladeshi democracy.

So we are in contact with those officials who are essentially running the government right now and encouraging them to move forward with the elections. We're encouraging as much participation as possible by - across the political spectrum in Bangladesh, including opposition parties.

QUESTION: Sean, (inaudible). Mr. Richard Boucher is now traveling to Sri Lanka. I see him traveling there; human rights problems and the problems between - the fighting going on and all that.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: So where do we stand as far as - or he's getting any special message from the Secretary as far as the situation in Sri Lanka is concerned?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, our concern is to try to get the government and the Tamil Tigers back to the negotiating table. That has been an on-and-off enterprise over the past several years. We very much appreciate the efforts of the Norwegian Government in this. They have taken a real lead and interest, as have we, in the issue. Unfortunately, the meetings that they have had hasn't - haven't really resulted in any progress. It's a fight that's been going on for several decades now. So it's a real - it's a very, very difficult problem. And in the meantime, you have a number of people that have lost their lives as a result of this fighting, and that - that's a terrible tragedy.

So Richard is there to try to further our efforts in this regard. I can't tell you whether he's carrying a special message from the Secretary. She has, in the past several months, met with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister and encouraged the government to do everything that it could to further the cause of peace, but at this point, Goyal, I don't - sadly, don't have any breakthroughs to announce for you.

QUESTION: Do you know -

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay, all right -

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

QUESTION: (Inaudible) the president of Sri Lanka. Mr. Boucher was scheduled to meet with the President of Sri Lanka.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: You know, Goyal, you - you know, inquire with our Embassy there to get a readout of his meetings. I'm not in touch with Richard as he's traveling around the globe.

Yeah, Sylvie.

QUESTION: If I can go back to Iran.

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: The Iraqi Foreign Minister said today in an interview to The Independent of London that the five Iranians that have been detained by the coalition in Iran - in Iraq would be detained - would be released soon because you have some limitation in the - legal limitation you cannot keep them more than 90 days, renewed once? Can you confirm that?

MR. MCCORMACK: I can't tell you. What I can confirm for you is that they are still being detained and that they are going to go through the normal review process. They're being held under mandates - Security Council mandates as well as Iraqi law. Under Iraqi law, there is a provision that security detainees, I think, can be held a maximum of six months and that - at least every six months. You can check with the Iraqis, but at least every six months, there is a review of the status of all security detainees. They would fall under that review process. I can't tell you exactly when that date's going to be. Check with MNFI as to when that review date comes up.

But that would be an opportunity if there is a - depending on the outcome of the review process, for them to be returned to Iran. I can't tell you that that is going to be the outcome. It's going to be up to the officials - Iraqi and - I believe Iraqi and American. I think there's a joint consultation that goes on there as to whether or not they are released.

Yes. Okay. Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Thanks. North Korea insisted to have the North Korea funding in BDA be transferred to an American banking institution. Is it agreeable to the United States?

MR. MCCORMACK: They're still working with their bankers and if there's any requirement for an opinion from the Treasury Department as to whether or not this is a transaction that the financial institutions involved would feel comfortable doing, then the Treasury Department will take a look at that and see what it is that they can do.

You can speak to my colleagues over at Treasury as to whether or not they're looking at that or working on anything. But again, the main issue here is to get BDA over and done with, have it completed so we can get back to the six-party talks and focus on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, which is what everybody's major concern is here.

Nicholas.

QUESTION: Sean, don't you think that the North Koreans are just becoming really, really pretentious about where the money could go? I mean, they now can choose what bank to send the money to? I mean, is it - when are you going to just crack down and just say, "I'm sorry, resolve your problems the way you can, but don't prolong this." It's been two months almost since the deadline.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: How long are they going to take? Italian banks, South Korean banks, American banks, where is it going?

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, you - look, Nicholas, you can talk to them about where it's going. (Laughter.) Look, we all want this. You know, we all want this to be over and done with. As I've said many, many times over, it's a heck of a lot more complicated than anybody would have ever thought it. Everybody wants to see this transaction completed, over and done with, so that we can move on. And to my knowledge it hasn't taken place. We all look forward to the day, especially me, when this happens, so we don't have to answer questions about BDA and we can talk more about the six-party talks and what we're doing there.

QUESTION: But how realistic is it to think that any American Bank after what happened to BBDA, or the treasury did to BDA that any American bank would be willing to accept, you know, the money?

MR. MCCORMACK: Nicholas, you would have to - obviously individual banks regardless if they're American or Italian or Russian or whatever flavor, they're going to have to make their own decisions about risk and reward, about their - any reputational risks that might come along with this. I would assume that as part of that calculation that they're going to look at what the reaction from the Department of Treasury might be. As I pointed out earlier, you can talk to the Treasury Department whether or not they're looking at any of these issues. That wouldn't be our call. And ultimately, it would come down to the parties involved, the North Korea, the Macanese authorities, I assume Chinese Authorities, the specific banks, other banks involved, non-Macanese banks involved. And ultimately if required, some opinion or signal from the Department of Treasury.

Lambros.

QUESTION: On Albania, Mr. McCormack.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes.

QUESTION: According to Associated Press in the Fort Dix military base in New Jersey for humanitarian purposes, 4,000 Albanians from Kosovo who were settlers as a refugee since 1999 - I'm wondering if the Department of State was aware about that and why - Albanian men and not women and children too?

MR. MCCORMACK: Lambros, where did that question come from?

QUESTION: Here is the (inaudible).

MR. MCCORMACK: What does that have to do with me and the State Department?

QUESTION: It's - because it's a humanitarian mission and I can tell you that your embassy is over there in the area.

MR. MCCORMACK: Lambros, if you have a question about the FBI case, talk to the FBI.

QUESTION: This is FBI issue?

MR. MCCORMACK: The fact that they arrested six people, yeah.

QUESTION: They arrested - what I'm saying -

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't - we don't arrest people.

QUESTION: No, no, no. I'm not saying that - I'm saying that -

MR. MCCORMACK: Actually, the DS might arrest people. I take that back.

QUESTION: Well, I'm -

MR. MCCORMACK: We didn't arrest these people.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

QUESTION: I got the message yesterday. You said no. I'm focusing the question that in these days, you're - 74,000 Albanians from Kosovo since 1999. I'm wondering why.

MR. MCCORMACK: Lambros, you know, just - I have no idea.

Yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) question on Cuba and on Posada Carilles, too.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: On Cuba there is this letter that Fidel Castro signed a couple of days ago concerning those two people who tried to hijack a plane and blame the United States. More in the letter, the fact that he started - he reappeared, do you have any hint or any idea that he may be going back or anything about his health?

MR. MCCORMACK: We don't have any more information than we have to my knowledge over the past several months about his state of health. He has not, as far as I know, assumed the duties again as leader of the Cuban regime. I think the experience over the past, you know - six to nine months or so - certainly does indicate however that there is some form of transition underway. We don't know how long that transition is going to take. We hope at the end of that transition that the Cuban people will have the opportunity to freely choose who leads them and who leads their government.

QUESTION: And Posada Carriles - Congressman Delahunt seems that like he wants to start some actions to go back to the extradition issue. Has the State Department anything to do with this?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, it fundamentally is a Department of Justice issue. They are the ones who are taking a look at the judgment of this - the federal judge regarding the immigration charges. They're taking a look at the ruling, deciding what their options are. And the Department of Homeland Security ultimately has jurisdiction about, you know, what foreigners are in the United States and whether or not they are allowed to remain. As a matter of foreign policy, yes, we do consult with the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security on the matter. But we are not the ultimate arbiters of either (a) what court case may be brought against Mr. Posada Carriles or (b) whether or not he remains in the United States.

Sylvie.

QUESTION: Do you have anything on this four U.S. oil workers abducted in Nigeria?

MR. MCCORMACK: Only that we are in contact with Chevron security officials who work - there's a - unfortunately, this is an all-too-common occurrence in the Niger River Delta area and we have a lot of experience working with officials from the oil companies. We consult with them, provide them whatever assistance - appropriate assistance we can, whatever assistance they want. But beyond that, I don't have any information about the "who," as who took them. We want to, obviously, see them reunited with their families and to be able to return back to their jobs if they choose to do so as soon as possible.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Going back to the Posada Carriles case, what has happened with the Posada Carriles extradition request presented by Venezuelan on June 15, 2005? And also, what impacts will it have in other governments cooperating with the U.S. on the global war on terror?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right. Well, I don't think that there's any doubt about the U.S. commitment to fighting terrorism around the world. As for the extradition request, it's not something that's been acted on to this point. I know that we have done some due diligence with the Government of Venezuela. It was a process where there was a lot of back and forth requesting documentation. But it's not something, as of this point, that the U.S. Government has acted on.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. MCCORMACK: We have a couple more here. Yes.

QUESTION: What's the Department doing to reassure members of Congress who are seeking a greater oversight of the Al-Hurra network?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right. Thanks for asking that question. The - Al-Hurra falls under the umbrella of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. In the Broadcasting Board of Governors there is - there for a couple of different reasons. It provides some overall strategic supervision to the various entities that fall under its umbrella, including VOA and Al-Hurra as well as other U.S. Government entities. It's also there as a way of preventing - as a firewall between a, you know, news organization and the United States Government so that it serves a couple of purposes. So they have the primary responsibility for day-to-day, you know, strategic management oversight of Al-Hurra. Karen Hughes is the Secretary's representative to that board.

Al-Hurra is a relatively new enterprise if you look at it, you know, against other longstanding organizations like Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, et cetera. And in the startup there were some problems, there were some problems about editorial content and there were some problems about the professionalism in the newsroom and the structure that they had in the newsroom, whether or not that led to good straightforward, honest reporting of events coming out of Al-Hurra. And so as a result we, the U.S. Government, took some steps. And one of the most important steps is about six months ago - I mean, five, six months ago - we hired a new managing director. I don't know if that's his exact title, but essentially managing director - executive managing editor for Al-Hurra, actually hired him from CNN. His name's Larry Register and he - we believe he's actually doing a pretty good job, a very good job. There had been some incidents that members of Congress have raised and written about in public. We know about those. And those actually occurred, I think, just about the time that Mr. Register came onboard and he has taken steps to ensure that those kinds of incidents don't happen again. So we think that this has become a more professional news organization. The United States does not benefit by trying to skew the flow of information to put out propaganda.

One of the reasons why VOA and Radio Free Europe were successful during the Cold War is because they provided what we believe is unbiased facts, people tuned in. And we hope that that is the case with Al-Hurra going forward. We've heard, you know, various reviews from the region states, you know, including Israel, saying that they thought that Al-Hurra was putting out a good product. Now, that isn't - that's not the only metric you want to use, obviously. But it just goes to show you that some of the accusations that have been leveled against Al-Hurra may be ones that are reflecting some of the echoes of the past and not a new management.

QUESTION: Sean, one more thing. Sean, whether there's a connection - al-Qaida connection or not for the terrorists arrested in New York, but according to U.S. intelligence agencies an article in U.S. News and World Report, once al-Qaida's top leaders or members were on the run, now they are regrouping in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Also the same article is saying that Usama bin Ladin is having a safe haven in Pakistan.

MR. MCCORMACK: Goyal, there are people who work every single day to find Usama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and the very top leadership of al-Qaida. One day we'll get them.

There is a - there's also an effort to go after that level of leadership just under that uppermost level and we've had some degree of success in going after them. And that doesn't mean that they replenish - don't replenish their ranks, they do. But over time, their ability to lead that terrorist organization diminishes, slowly over time you degrade their capabilities. So that's -

QUESTION: Can I follow up? In recent days, after all these articles and intelligence reports and all that, have you had on the State Department any (inaudible) with the General Musharraf or anybody in the Pakistan Government about all these reports of -

MR. MCCORMACK: I can't tell you,

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 9

Joel.

QUESTION: Sean, yesterday a Darfur conflict prevention and resolution - conference forum was held at Johns Hopkins, sponsored by a search for common ground and moderated by Charles Dambach, who is the CEO of Alliance for Peacebuilding. Officials from the State Department and USAID were in attendance and the groups that were featured were the Genocide Prevention network, ENOUGH and Columbia University. Are you now encouraging these groups to settle, or to attempt to settle this issue, and end this nightmare over Darfur?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, Joel, I'll give you a very general answer here. We stay in contact with a number of the nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in seeing the violence in Darfur end and we have regular contact with them. The Secretary does on occasion. I know Jendayi Frazer, Andrew Natsios have, and I expect that Deputy Secretary will as well.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yep.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:07 p.m.)

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: May 10, 2007

End of Document

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

States News Service
May 10, 2007 Thursday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 5397 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

The following information was released by the U.S. Department of State:

INDEX:

DEPARTMENT/IRAN

Mrs. Levinson's Meetings at the State Department

US Efforts Regarding the Welfare and Whereabouts of Mr. Levinson

Iranian-Americans Detained in Iran / State Department in Touch with Families / Motivations of Iranian Regime /
Department Travel Warnings

Secretary Rice to Visit Iranian Art Exhibit at Meridian House

Status of Sports Exchanges with Iranians

BANGLADESH

Sheikh Hasina Wajed's Return to Bangladesh

Bangladesh Special Envoy Visit to US

SRI LANKA

Travel by Assistant Secretary Boucher to Sri Lanka / Meetings

Secretary Rice's Meeting with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister

IRAQ/IRAN

Status of Five Iranian Security Detainees in Iraq

NORTH KOREA

Status of Transfer of Funds from BDA

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

CUBA

Status of Fidel Castro's Health

VENEZUELA

Case of Luis Posado Carriles

NIGERIA

Reports of Four American Oil Workers Kidnapped

MISCELLANEOUS

Al Hurra Oversight and Operations

SUDAN

US Contact with NGOs on Darfur

TRANSCRIPT:

[View Video](#)

12:34 p.m. EST

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay. Who wants to get into some questions?

QUESTION: Should I ask you about the meetings with Mrs. Levinson?

MR. MCCORMACK: You can. She had some meetings over here at the Department. She met with figures from the Consular Affairs Bureau as well as the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau. They talked about our efforts on behalf of Mr. Levinson. We have not heard anything new back either from the Iranian Government or from those other countries that we have asked to work on Mr. Levinson's behalf to try to determine his whereabouts. It's part of our ongoing conversation with Mrs. Levinson. Nick Burns is in frequent contact with her as well, keeping her updated and assuring her that we are working on her husband's behalf. We want to see him reunited with his family.

She's already had the meetings. I can't tell you exactly how long they lasted, but they are at the, I think, office director level. But Nick Burns would have met with her, but he is over in Berlin for some G-8 meetings.

QUESTION: Okay. Is it still three countries, non --

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah. Three --

QUESTION: It hasn't expanded to more.

MR. MCCORMACK: It has not expanded. We're still at three.

Yeah, Sue.

QUESTION: Could you name exactly who she saw there -- which directors? And also was she accompanied by anyone, by a lawyer, by someone from the FBI, by --

MR. MCCORMACK: I'll let her -- I'll let her speak for herself in terms of who is traveling with her to decide. You know, it's not my place to get into that. I'll see if I can get you the names. I'm not sure that they would be people that you guys would recognize. Not to say they're not important. It's not what I'm saying.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) set of issues.

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: It's not, you know, kind of household names like Matt Lee or Sue Fleming.

QUESTION: Yeah, right. (Laughter.) Did she --

QUESTION: This is just deteriorating.

MR. CASEY: Very fast.

QUESTION: Did she -- did she request a meeting with the Secretary?

MR. MCCORMACK: Not to my knowledge.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: Not to my knowledge. It's a topic that -- we talk to the Secretary quite often, keep her up to date on what actions we're taking.

QUESTION: Sean, can you talk at all to what extent your work with her has been? I mean, what are you doing on her behalf?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, we are -- we've talked about it a lot here from this podium and other places as well. Going to the Iranian Government I think we've had -- I can't keep track of the number right now -- of inquiries we've made to them. I think about five inquiries, separate inquiries to the Iranian Government, asking about his whereabouts. We've also worked with other governments to see if they can knock on a few doors in Tehran and elsewhere and find any information about Mr. Levinson's whereabouts. We try to follow up on any leads that we -- wherever they may occur.

The last communication -- one of the last communications we had with the Iranian Government, we included -- mentioned some press reporting about the fact that Mr. Levinson had been bundled off by people that appeared to be from Iranian security forces. We can't validate that, so we said -- we included by ways of saying, well, look, you say there's no information; this might be something that provides you a lead. So we are doing everything that we possibly can that we think is effective in trying to determine his whereabouts and to get him back as safely here with his family as soon as possible.

QUESTION: I wanted to also ask about this case of the woman, the Iranian-American woman who's been detained --

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: -- as of yesterday. Do you have any further information on that?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't have a lot of information I can provide you. We are in touch with some of the families involved here. But you're referring to press reports who are out there today, about some individuals, Iranian-Americans, who have traveled -- traveled frequently back and forth to Iran, who on recent trips have had their passports confiscated by Iranian officials and not allowed to leave Iran. This is of a concern to us.

It's of a real concern to their families, and we want to do everything that we can that we think is effective - to work with the families so that we can see these individuals return back with their loved ones. These people don't pose any threat to the Iranian regime. You have an academic scholar -- expert on U.S.-Iran relations. You have a journalist included in there as well. These are grandmothers. I don't think that they're going to shake the foundations of the Iranian -- you know, the Iranian regime.

Beyond that, I'm not going to say too much. We want to certainly be respectful of the prerogatives of the family. We don't want to weight down these cases with -- you know, fate these cases with some of the other baggage in the Iranian-U.S. relationship. This is about people, and people that should be allowed to return back with their families as soon as possible.

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

QUESTION: There's been some suggestion that they may have detained her because of possible -- you know, her role in possibly contributing to these U.S. Government programs that are reaching out to Iranians inside Iran, even though, you know, her family here says that she had nothing to do with it.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: But there's been some suggestion that that's possibly what the Iranians are doing is trying to send a message to the U.S. Government.

MR. MCCORMACK: You know, I can't tell you the motivations behind these actions by the Iranian Government. I can only repeat that these are people who don't pose any threat to the Iranian Government and, in fact, symbolize the kind of people-to-people interaction that we want to encourage. Whatever problems we may have with the policies of the Iranian Government, we don't want to put a chill in those people-to-people contacts. We think that those are really important.

And one example coming up here is the Secretary is going to visit an exhibition of Iranian artists. It's happening here at the Meridian House in the next couple of days. She's actually going to meet with some Iranian artists. We've had the American wrestling team that was well received in Tehran. We've had experts from the equivalent of the Iranian Centers for Disease Control visit the United States. So we want to encourage more of these kind of exchanges so that we can keep up contacts between the American and the Iranian people. It makes clear that we have no problem with the Iranian people. We want more interaction with them. It's a great culture. It's a great country and we shouldn't let any of the policy differences between the United States and this Iranian Government get in the way of those kinds of exchanges. So it would be a real shame if these actions by the Iranian Government in any way put a crimp in those kinds of exchanges. We don't want to see that.

QUESTION: Sean, two things. One, this is the second time just now that you've referred to these women as grandmothers.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: Is there something about "grandmotherhood" in this case that makes them any less of a threat to, you know -- there are some grandmothers who are pretty sly.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah, no, it's true. Yeah, and I don't want to get a lot of letters from grandmothers here, you know. They can be pretty testy.

QUESTION: Too late.

MR. MCCORMACK: Too, late -- (laughter) -- I'm in trouble already, George. I know. No, it's just -- look, I want to try -- people try to humanize this. This isn't about U.S.-Iranian government-to-government relations. This is about people who just want to get back and see their families.

QUESTION: Right.

MR. MCCORMACK: See their grandchildren, see their husbands and their children. That's really what I was trying to get at.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: Not in any way trying to diss grandmothers.

QUESTION: Okay. And on the Secretary's visit to the -- these are artworks by Iranian artists.

MR. MCCORMACK: Iranian artists, right.

QUESTION: From Iran not Iranian American artists?

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: No, from the --

QUESTION: And are the artists be there?

MR. MCCORMACK: What's that?

QUESTION: Will the artists be there?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes. And she's going --

QUESTION: And then they will return to Iran?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: Are you in any way concerned given the press reporting in the Iranian newspapers about the threat that they say is posed by these two women who are detained?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: That an Iranian artist meeting with the Secretary of State won't also meet the same kind of fate when they get back to --

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: -- wherever they are from in Iran?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right, right. No, I would certainly hope not, Matt. And we're not going to alter our desire for these kind of interactions. And we don't think that the actions by the Iranian Government should be allowed to, in any way, inhibit these kind of interactions. Now of course, people will be free to choose whether or not they meet with the Secretary of State or U.S. officials. We're not going to try to force anything on anybody and if people aren't comfortable for whatever reason, of course they're not going to have to meet with the Secretary of State. But it is, at the very least, a way for the United States to demonstrate in tangible ways that we appreciate Iranian culture, we value Iranian culture, and we value these kinds of exchanges.

QUESTION: Can you give us a little bit more details on this exhibition? When? Where?

MR. MCCORMACK: We'll get you some more details. Yeah, I think she's going to do this tomorrow. Let me check for you.

QUESTION: Could you also find out if she's going to continue her interest in Iranian art or the --

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, yeah. She, yeah, she's -- she has a great interest in music, so she has an appreciation for the fine arts. I can't tell you whether or not -- how many Iranian art exhibitions she's been to in the past. I mean -- but, you know, regardless, I'm sure that this is of high quality. I'm not an art expert, but the important thing here is the symbolism of the American Secretary of State reaching out and demonstrating for the Iranian people an appreciation for a product of Iranian culture.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah.

QUESTION: The women that were detained, can you tell us whether those were -- appear to be connected in any way, or if the reason -- and also, if the reason for their detention has been simply because they were Americans or is there anything else?

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah, I -- Kirit, I can't tell you and I -- I'm not going to draw any particular connection with these. We'll deal with them as individual cases. That's our approach to it. I -- you can ask Iranian officials if they are drawing any particular linkage among these three cases.

QUESTION: Sean, does this further complicate an already complicated relationship with Iran? You're trying to get them to end their nuclear weapons program, you know --

MR. MCCORMACK: You know, as you point out, it's an already complex relationship. And it's -- and it is not unprecedented that we have seen this kind of behavior by the Iranian Government in the past, where the Iranian Americans have had their passports confiscated and not be allowed to exit around. So this is -- this has happened in the past before. I can't tell you how many cases per year we have of it, but it has happened in the past.

As for the motivations of the Iranian regime, I can't tell you.

QUESTION: But right now - just three cases plus Mr. Levinson, is that what we're talking about?

MR. MCCORMACK: That's what -- yeah, that's what we're aware of, yes.

QUESTION: Sean.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah.

QUESTION: You said this is the first -- you've seen this in the past. Is that just the detentions -- or, sorry, the passports have been taken or the actual arrests that you've seen in the past?

MR. MCCORMACK: I can't speak to the latter. I know that we have had past cases of people with their passports being confiscated and there are people not being allowed to return for some period of time. It's not only American -- American citizens as well; I know that there have been, in recent years, cases of other foreign nationals that have been prevented from leaving Iran. There was recently a case involving a Canadian citizen as well, a Canadian academic. So this isn't -- this behavior on the part of the Iranian regime is not limited to American citizens. This is, unfortunately, something that they've done with others in the past as well.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Is this also a problem with other -- specifically for Americans of dual nationality? Hasn't this also been a problem with China -- with other countries where the country --

MR. MCCORMACK: It has for different --

QUESTION: The other country definitely does not recognize the dual nationality and says that -- claims them for their own to the point of imprisoning them?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah, it has -- yeah, it has happened. I can't detail for you all the cases around the world. Certainly, China is a case. We've seen a number of those human rights cases. I'm not trying to -- I'm not going to try to draw any parallels between those cases and the Iranian cases. I think you have to deal with them each in their own right, but yeah, it has happened in the past.

Yeah.

QUESTION: So, would you advise Iranian Americans from traveling to Iran? And what about the wrestling team? Are they -- have they given you a reply yet? Are they coming?

MR. MCCORMACK: Whether to come here? I'll check for you. I don't know.

QUESTION: Okay.

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: I know that they express an interest in it and we encourage them to have a return visit here. As for any updates to the travel warnings, we'll keep you updated. The bureaucracy usually works on those and they land on my desk right before they go out to yours.

Yes, Goyal.

QUESTION: Another subject.

MR. MCCORMACK: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: Sean, this former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina has been allowed to return to Bangladesh.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: And now here is Special Envoy from Bangladesh Mr. Farooq Sobhan is traveling the U.S. and meeting U.S. officials. Is anybody in that -- here at the State Department carrying this kind of special message about the situation in Bangladesh?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't -- I'll look into it, Goyal. I don't know if he's met with anybody here on his recent visit. It's positive action that the government has allowed Sheikh Hasina back into Bangladesh. We encourage that development. What needs to happen in Bangladesh is that this caretaker government needs to move as quickly and effectively as it can to elections so that you continue the momentum of Bangladeshi democracy. What you don't want to have happen is that we get stuck with a non-elected government for an extended period of time. That would be a setback for Bangladesh and Bangladeshi democracy.

So we are in contact with those officials who are essentially running the government right now and encouraging them to move forward with the elections. We're encouraging as much participation as possible by -- across the political spectrum in Bangladesh, including opposition parties.

QUESTION: Sean, (inaudible). Mr. Richard Boucher is now traveling to Sri Lanka. I see him traveling there; human rights problems and the problems between -- the fighting going on and all that.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: So where do we stand as far as -- or he's getting any special message from the Secretary as far as the situation in Sri Lanka is concerned?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, our concern is to try to get the government and the Tamil Tigers back to the negotiating table. That has been an on-and-off enterprise over the past several years. We very much appreciate the efforts of the Norwegian Government in this. They have taken a real lead and interest, as have we, in the issue. Unfortunately, the meetings that they have had hasn't -- haven't really resulted in any progress. It's a fight that's been going on for several decades now. So it's a real -- it's a very, very difficult problem. And in the meantime, you have a number of people that have lost their lives as a result of this fighting, and that -- that's a terrible tragedy.

So Richard is there to try to further our efforts in this regard. I can't tell you whether he's carrying a special message from the Secretary. She has, in the past several months, met with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister and encouraged the government to do everything that it could to further the cause of peace, but at this point, Goyal, I don't -- sadly, don't have any breakthroughs to announce for you.

QUESTION: Do you know --

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay, all right --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) the president of Sri Lanka. Mr. Boucher was scheduled to meet with the President of Sri Lanka.

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: You know, Goyal, you -- you know, inquire with our Embassy there to get a readout of his meetings. I'm not in touch with Richard as he's traveling around the globe.

Yeah, Sylvie.

QUESTION: If I can go back to Iran.

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: The Iraqi Foreign Minister said today in an interview to The Independent of London that the five Iranians that have been detained by the coalition in Iran -- in Iraq would be detained -- would be released soon because you have some limitation in the -- legal limitation you cannot keep them more than 90 days, renewed once? Can you confirm that?

MR. MCCORMACK: I can't tell you. What I can confirm for you is that they are still being detained and that they are going to go through the normal review process. They're being held under mandates -- Security Council mandates as well as Iraqi law. Under Iraqi law, there is a provision that security detainees, I think, can be held a maximum of six months and that -- at least every six months. You can check with the Iraqis, but at least every six months, there is a review of the status of all security detainees. They would fall under that review process. I can't tell you exactly when that date's going to be. Check with MNFI as to when that review date comes up.

But that would be an opportunity if there is a -- depending on the outcome of the review process, for them to be returned to Iran. I can't tell you that that is going to be the outcome. It's going to be up to the officials -- Iraqi and -- I believe Iraqi and American. I think there's a joint consultation that goes on there as to whether or not they are released.

Yes. Okay. Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Thanks. North Korea insisted to have the North Korea funding in BDA be transferred to an American banking institution. Is it agreeable to the United States?

MR. MCCORMACK: They're still working with their bankers and if there's any requirement for an opinion from the Treasury Department as to whether or not this is a transaction that the financial institutions involved would feel comfortable doing, then the Treasury Department will take a look at that and see what it is that they can do.

You can speak to my colleagues over at Treasury as to whether or not they're looking at that or working on anything. But again, the main issue here is to get BDA over and done with, have it completed so we can get back to the six-party talks and focus on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, which is what everybody's major concern is here.

Nicholas.

QUESTION: Sean, don't you think that the North Koreans are just becoming really, really pretentious about where the money could go? I mean, they now can choose what bank to send the money to? I mean, is it -- when are you going to just crack down and just say, "I'm sorry, resolve your problems the way you can, but don't prolong this." It's been two months almost since the deadline.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: How long are they going to take? Italian banks, South Korean banks, American banks, where is it going?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, you -- look, Nicholas, you can talk to them about where it's going. (Laughter.) Look, we all want this. You know, we all want this to be over and done with. As I've said many, many times over, it's a heck of

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

a lot more complicated than anybody would have ever thought it. Everybody wants to see this transaction completed, over and done with, so that we can move on. And to my knowledge it hasn't taken place. We all look forward to the day, especially me, when this happens, so we don't have to answer questions about BDA and we can talk more about the six-party talks and what we're doing there.

QUESTION: But how realistic is it to think that any American Bank after what happened to BBDA, or the treasury did to BDA that any American bank would be willing to accept, you know, the money?

MR. MCCORMACK: Nicholas, you would have to -- obviously individual banks regardless if they're American or Italian or Russian or whatever flavor, they're going to have to make their own decisions about risk and reward, about their -- any reputational risks that might come along with this. I would assume that as part of that calculation that they're going to look at what the reaction from the Department of Treasury might be. As I pointed out earlier, you can talk to the Treasury Department whether or not they're looking at any of these issues. That wouldn't be our call. And ultimately, it would come down to the parties involved, the North Korea, the Macanese authorities, I assume Chinese Authorities, the specific banks, other banks involved, non-Macanese banks involved. And ultimately if required, some opinion or signal from the Department of Treasury.

Lambros.

QUESTION: On Albania, Mr. McCormack.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes.

QUESTION: According to Associated Press in the Fort Dix military base in New Jersey for humanitarian purposes, 4,000 Albanians from Kosovo who were settlers as a refugee since 1999 -- I'm wondering if the Department of State was aware about that and why -- Albanian men and not women and children too?

MR. MCCORMACK: Lambros, where did that question come from?

QUESTION: Here is the (inaudible).

MR. MCCORMACK: What does that have to do with me and the State Department?

QUESTION: It's -- because it's a humanitarian mission and I can tell you that your embassy is over there in the area.

MR. MCCORMACK: Lambros, if you have a question about the FBI case, talk to the FBI.

QUESTION: This is FBI issue?

MR. MCCORMACK: The fact that they arrested six people, yeah.

QUESTION: They arrested -- what I'm saying --

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't -- we don't arrest people.

QUESTION: No, no, no. I'm not saying that -- I'm saying that --

MR. MCCORMACK: Actually, the DS might arrest people. I take that back.

QUESTION: Well, I'm --

MR. MCCORMACK: We didn't arrest these people.

QUESTION: I got the message yesterday. You said no. I'm focusing the question that in these days, you're -- 74,000 Albanians from Kosovo since 1999. I'm wondering why.

MR. MCCORMACK: Lambros, you know, just -- I have no idea.

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

Yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) question on Cuba and on Posada Carriles, too.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: On Cuba there is this letter that Fidel Castro signed a couple of days ago concerning those two people who tried to hijack a plane and blame the United States. More in the letter, the fact that he started -- he reappeared, do you have any hint or any idea that he may be going back or anything about his health?

MR. MCCORMACK: We don't have any more information than we have to my knowledge over the past several months about his state of health. He has not, as far as I know, assumed the duties again as leader of the Cuban regime. I think the experience over the past, you know -- six to nine months or so -- certainly does indicate however that there is some form of transition underway. We don't know how long that transition is going to take. We hope at the end of that transition that the Cuban people will have the opportunity to freely choose who leads them and who leads their government.

QUESTION: And Posada Carriles -- Congressman Delahunt seems that like he wants to start some actions to go back to the extradition issue. Has the State Department anything to do with this?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, it fundamentally is a Department of Justice issue. They are the ones who are taking a look at the judgment of this -- the federal judge regarding the immigration charges. They're taking a look at the ruling, deciding what their options are. And the Department of Homeland Security ultimately has jurisdiction about, you know, what foreigners are in the United States and whether or not they are allowed to remain. As a matter of foreign policy, yes, we do consult with the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security on the matter. But we are not the ultimate arbiters of either (a) what court case may be brought against Mr. Posada Carriles or (b) whether or not he remains in the United States.

Sylvie.

QUESTION: Do you have anything on this four U.S. oil workers abducted in Nigeria?

MR. MCCORMACK: Only that we are in contact with Chevron security officials who work -- there's a -- unfortunately, this is an all-too-common occurrence in the Niger River Delta area and we have a lot of experience working with officials from the oil companies. We consult with them, provide them whatever assistance -- appropriate assistance we can, whatever assistance they want. But beyond that, I don't have any information about the "who," as who took them. We want to, obviously, see them reunited with their families and to be able to return back to their jobs if they choose to do so as soon as possible.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Going back to the Posada Carriles case, what has happened with the Posada Carriles extradition request presented by Venezuelan on June 15, 2005? And also, what impacts will it have in other governments cooperating with the U.S. on the global war on terror?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right. Well, I don't think that there's any doubt about the U.S. commitment to fighting terrorism around the world. As for the extradition request, it's not something that's been acted on to this point. I know that we have done some due diligence with the Government of Venezuela. It was a process where there was a lot of back and forth requesting documentation. But it's not something, as of this point, that the U.S. Government has acted on.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. MCCORMACK: We have a couple more here. Yes.

QUESTION: What's the Department doing to reassure members of Congress who are seeking a greater oversight of the Al-Hurra network?

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: Right. Thanks for asking that question. The -- Al-Hurra falls under the umbrella of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. In the Broadcasting Board of Governors there is -- there for a couple of different reasons. It provides some overall strategic supervision to the various entities that fall under its umbrella, including VOA and Al-Hurra as well as other U.S. Government entities. It's also there as a way of preventing -- as a firewall between a, you know, news organization and the United States Government so that it serves a couple of purposes. So they have the primary responsibility for day-to-day, you know, strategic management oversight of Al-Hurra. Karen Hughes is the Secretary's representative to that board.

Al-Hurra is a relatively new enterprise if you look at it, you know, against other longstanding organizations like Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, et cetera. And in the startup there were some problems, there were some problems about editorial content and there were some problems about the professionalism in the newsroom and the structure that they had in the newsroom, whether or not that led to good straightforward, honest reporting of events coming out of Al-Hurra. And so as a result we, the U.S. Government, took some steps. And one of the most important steps is about six months ago -- I mean, five, six months ago -- we hired a new managing director. I don't know if that's his exact title, but essentially managing director -- executive managing editor for Al-Hurra, actually hired him from CNN. His name's Larry Register and he -- we believe he's actually doing a pretty good job, a very good job. There had been some incidents that members of Congress have raised and written about in public. We know about those. And those actually occurred, I think, just about the time that Mr. Register came onboard and he has taken steps to ensure that those kinds of incidents don't happen again. So we think that this has become a more professional news organization. The United States does not benefit by trying to skew the flow of information to put out propaganda.

One of the reasons why VOA and Radio Free Europe were successful during the Cold War is because they provided what we believe is unbiased facts, people tuned in. And we hope that that is the case with Al-Hurra going forward. We've heard, you know, various reviews from the region states, you know, including Israel, saying that they thought that Al-Hurra was putting out a good product. Now, that isn't -- that's not the only metric you want to use, obviously. But it just goes to show you that some of the accusations that have been leveled against Al-Hurra may be ones that are reflecting some of the echoes of the past and not a new management.

QUESTION: Sean, one more thing. Sean, whether there's a connection -- al-Qaida connection or not for the terrorists arrested in New York, but according to U.S. intelligence agencies an article in U.S. News and World Report, once al-Qaida's top leaders or members were on the run, now they are regrouping in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Also the same article is saying that Usama bin Ladin is having a safe haven in Pakistan.

MR. MCCORMACK: Goyal, there are people who work every single day to find Usama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and the very top leadership of al-Qaida. One day we'll get them.

There is a -- there's also an effort to go after that level of leadership just under that uppermost level and we've had some degree of success in going after them. And that doesn't mean that they replenish -- don't replenish their ranks, they do. But over time, their ability to lead that terrorist organization diminishes, slowly over time you degrade their capabilities. So that's --

QUESTION: Can I follow up? In recent days, after all these articles and intelligence reports and all that, have you had on the State Department any (inaudible) with the General Musharraf or anybody in the Pakistan Government about all these reports of --

MR. MCCORMACK: I can't tell you,

Joel.

QUESTION: Sean, yesterday a Darfur conflict prevention and resolution -- conference forum was held at Johns Hopkins, sponsored by a search for common ground and moderated by Charles Dambach, who is the CEO of Alliance for Peacebuilding. Officials from the State Department and USAID were in attendance and the groups that were featured were the Genocide Prevention network, ENOUGH and Columbia University. Are you now encouraging these groups to settle, or to attempt to settle this issue, and end this nightmare over Darfur?

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING -- MAY 9

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, Joel, I'll give you a very general answer here. We stay in contact with a number of the nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in seeing the violence in Darfur end and we have regular contact with them. The Secretary does on occasion. I know Jendayi Frazer, Andrew Natsios have, and I expect that Deputy Secretary will as well.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yep.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:07 p.m.)

Load-Date: May 11, 2007

End of Document

No Headline In Original

The Associated Press

December 27, 2006 Wednesday 8:04 PM GMT

Copyright 2006 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

Section: DOMESTIC NEWS

Length: 1355 words

Body

Dec. 28

The Sydney Morning Herald, Australia, on post-tsunami changes in Indonesia and Sri Lanka:

Two years after the Asian tsunami disaster, the political legacies in two of the worst-hit countries, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, could hardly be more different. In Indonesia's Aceh province, the waters swept away obstacles to a settlement of a 30-year-long separatist war. Its huge non-local military garrison was withdrawn, provincial autonomy was made institutional, and elections for an autonomous government have just been held, returning a former rebel commander as governor to the chagrin of Jakarta and the exiled secessionists in Sweden who launched the uprising.

In Sri Lanka, where the tsunami devastated coastal villages and killed 35,000 people, togetherness between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamils of the north and east was short-lived. Aid distribution became corrupted throughout the Sinhalese regions of the center and southwest, while the separatist ***Tamil Tigers*** insisted on tight control of aid coming into their territory. This year a ceasefire agreed with government forces in 2002 has frayed to shreds of paper, only notionally obeyed to keep foreign aid flowing. Violations by both sides have killed more than 2,500 people since January and displaced about 200,000 from their homes. This fertile, picturesque country, well located to take advantage of the Asia-wide industrial revolution, is sliding back into a vicious war that will further impoverish many of its 20 million people.

What do the two examples tell us? With Aceh, perhaps that Indonesia is still one country, despite fears that one man's political ceiling of autonomy could yet be another's floor on the way to independence. With Sri Lanka, perhaps that it is no longer a single nation, unless mindsets change drastically. A new international push is needed to avoid a return to war. It will need to persuade the Tamils to amend a system that recruits 12-year-olds as soldiers, instills a suicide culture, venerates its leader as a god-king, silences alternative voices and extorts funds from the Tamil diaspora. Colombo's upper-class Sinhalese politicians and ethno-nationalist monks need to be dragged back from responding to attacks on their comfort zone with death squads, lies and call-ups, and made to recognize why the Tamils are fighting.

On the Net:

<http://www.smh.com.au/editorial/index.html?pagefullpage#contentSwap1>

Dec. 27

Bahrain Tribune, on ***women*** in Afghanistan:

No Headline In Original

Five years ago, after the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan's new government pledged swift action to improve the lives of women.

But a recent report by the international women's organization Womankind Worldwide said millions of Afghan women and girls continue to face discrimination and violence in their day-to-day lives.

Afghan women's rights groups acknowledge that women now have a variety of rights which they didn't have under Taliban rule. But in practice, they say, many of those rights are ignored. And activists face intimidation, or worse.

In September, the head of the Women's Affairs Ministry in the southern city of Kandahar, Safia Amajan, who'd criticized the Taliban's treatment of women, was shot dead. One of her former colleagues, who was too afraid to give her name, says since then activists have been staying home.

All Afghans are affected by worsening security. But for women, widespread domestic violence is an additional problem. "My husband beats me whenever he feels like it," a young mother of three from Kabul told the BBC. "Once he broke my arm, then my legs. Now he's broken my arm again. I try not to make a fuss because of the children."

Hamayra Daqiq, a policewoman in Kabul, says women like this turn up at the city's central police station every day looking for help. "There are many reasons why domestic violence happens," she says. "One big reason is poverty. Many parents marry their daughters off to wealthy, older men when the girls are very young, often when they are underage.

"Another reason is where a family resolves a dispute with another family by handing over one of their daughters. The girl usually gets treated really badly by the second family." About 57 percent of Afghan girls are married before the legal marriage age of 16; about 60-80 percent of marriages are forced. ...

On the Net:

<http://www.bahraintribune.com/ArticleDetail.asp>

Dec. 27

Daily Nation, Nairobi, Kenya, on violence in Somalia:

All-out war is about to erupt in the Horn of Africa following Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia early this week.

Thousands of people are reported to have fled their homes to escape the fighting,

The IUC, who emerged in June to capture huge swathes of southern Somalia, are an assemblage of former warlords led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys a radical on both U.N. and U.S. terrorism lists.

But support for the IUC (also known as the Council of Islamic Courts) is not in short supply, which is why a majority of Somali youths have joined it.

While it would be silly to reduce the conflict to a mere contest between the "Islamist" Somalia and "Christian" Ethiopia, this religious appendage is appealing to both sides.

What the world is witnessing is a resurrection of old tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia, now fanned by proxies.

On the face of it, Eritrea, which has some unfinished business with Ethiopia over a disputed border that climaxed with bruising battles between 1998 and 2000, have allied themselves with the IUC.

Then there are the Arab states that have expressed a wish to spread Islam in the Horn and beyond, and who have supported the IUC cause.

No Headline In Original

But the lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia places the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the United Nations in a precarious position as the Somali crisis threatens to escalate into a regional conflict.

On the Net:

<http://www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/nmgopinion.asp?categoryid4>

Dec. 27

Haaretz, Tel Aviv, Israel, on West Bank checkpoints:

Reducing the number of checkpoints in the West Bank so that Palestinians can live normal lives, go to work, do their shopping, visit relatives, go to school and even (as in Hebron) cross the road without having to make a kilometers-long detour, should not have to be considered a "gesture" to Mahmoud Abbas, but rather something that should have been done a long time ago. The Defense Ministry, focused on security issues, has had plans for removing checkpoints, but apparently the leadership capable of implementing them was not to be found.

The world of the West Bank checkpoints has been documented in Israeli and foreign-made documentaries, and sometimes it looks like a laboratory experiment designed to test the limits of the human capacity to adapt to impossible conditions.

... In 2005, a plan drafted by Baruch Spiegel, an aide to the defense minister, specifying 49 roadblocks that could be removed, was submitted to the Cabinet. It was not implemented because no one took an interest in it until there was a need to make a "gesture" to Palestinian Authority Chair Mahmoud Abbas. Now Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is offering to build road bypasses. This development shows Israel cannot meet the task of managing the lives of people under its occupation but is also unwilling to part from them so as not to be forced to part from the settlements as well. The separation fence, which was intended to obviate the need for the roadblocks in the West Bank and set temporary borders for the country, cannot fulfill this function as long as there are settlements to its east.

Israeli-Palestinian relations are the key to preventing further radicalization in the Middle East, as King Abdullah II of Jordan said this week, but the conflict is still languishing at the stage of gestures. In the absence of a determined leadership, it is the brigade and battalion commanders who are determining how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict looks in daily life; every checkpoint and roadblock and dirt pile and concrete cube is another brick in the wall of hatred. Reducing the number of checkpoints is a gesture not to the Palestinians, but to ourselves.

On the Net:

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/806056.html>

END Editorial Rdp

Load-Date: December 28, 2006

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN
DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF
RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007**

States News Service

September 25, 2007 Tuesday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 7172 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

The Council this afternoon concluded its general debate on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, taking up issues concerning follow up to the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the defamation of religions.

Delegates said there was a resurgence of racism, increasing Islamophobia and anti-Muslim feeling in particular, and emerging contemporary forms of racial intolerance. The exploitation of racism in politics had to stop, and the media also had to be more responsible. The Durban Review Conference would become an important milestone in the world's joint fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It should identify obstacles to further progress in combating racism, and look into contemporary forms of racism and ways to deal with them. The consensus-seeking approach should continue during the preparatory process. Constructive dialogue in an open and mutually respectful atmosphere was a necessary prerequisite for harmonious coexistence.

Other speakers raised a range of points: the post-9/11 rise of Islamophobia; the legal and social issues of how to handle defamation of religions, including under Special Procedures; the need for joint international action against racism; the significance of the Durban Review Conference; and issues of wider discrimination against minorities, including the caste system in India.

Najat Al-Hajjaji, Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference, in concluding remarks, said the Review Conference would provide very valuable tools to tackle new forms of racism. Attacks on Islam had shown the importance of education to deal effectively with racism. Democracy and racism were contradictory notions. It was important to continue to listen to non-governmental organizations and victims of racism, and much remained to be done in the lead-up to the Durban Review Conference. She hoped that the actual spirit of consensus and harmony continued to prevail until the next meeting.

Juan Martabit, President-Rapporteur of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, in concluding remarks, said the theme of compliance with the Durban process was deeply rooted in international thought, and had an agenda which was affecting not only development, but also situations that could undermine peace, stability, harmony and co-existence, all of which elements should be present if human beings were to all enjoy human rights. The Human Rights Council should

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

open up possibilities for frank and constructive dialogue on issues related to culture, civilisation and religion. The Human Rights Council was the best place for such a dialogue.

Kyungwha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, said there had been constructive suggestions regarding the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights work in this area. She thanked Ambassadors Al-Hajjaji and Martabit for their roles in the process. As the High Commissioner noted in her address to the Non-Aligned Movement at an earlier date, no culture or school of thought stood above the rights to all freedoms, including those of belief and religion, and the Office would work hard in pursuit of the goals established under the fight against racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance.

Speaking in the general debate were the representatives of Azerbaijan, Italy, Russian Federation, Switzerland, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Senegal, China, Mexico, Peru, Nicaragua, Indonesia, Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Malaysia, Senegal, China, Mexico, Peru, Nicaragua, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Republic of Korea, Turkey, Rwanda, Morocco, Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Algeria, Tunisia, Panama, Norway, Argentina and Venezuela.

Also speaking were representatives of the following non-governmental organizations: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (speaking on behalf of several NGOs¹); International Humanist and Ethical Union (speaking on behalf of Association for World Education; World Union for Progressive Judaism; and Association of World Citizens); Fraternite Notre Dame; Japan Fellowship of Reconciliation; International Movement against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism; European Union of Public Relations; International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations; International Human Rights Association of American Minorities; Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisemitisme; World Muslim Congress; International Association of Democratic Lawyers; World Circle of the Consensus; International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (speaking on behalf of Organization for Defending Victims of Violence); Interfaith International; World Population Foundation; World Union for Progressive Judaism (speaking on behalf of Association for World Education); European Centre for Law and Justice; and Action Canada for Population and Development (speaking on behalf of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era and International Alliance of Women).

Speaking in right of reply were the representatives of Japan, Sri Lanka and the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea.

The Human Rights Council will resume its work on Wednesday, 26 September at 10 a.m. to hear a presentation of the report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to hold an interactive dialogue with him.

General Debate on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

SEYMUR MARDALIYEV (Azerbaijan) said Azerbaijan was deeply concerned over the growing and alarming tendency worldwide of incidents of intolerance and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. These alarming phenomena continued to lead, in particular, to increasing instances of Islamophobia and stereotyping of Muslims. There was an urgent need to develop cooperative and effective methods of combating defamation of religions. Inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue was crucial for the prevention of intolerance and discrimination, and for promoting respect for religions and beliefs. The minimum prerequisite for harmonious coexistence was that different civilisations and traditions recognised and mutually respected each others cultural differences. There was a need for an approach that understood the importance to preserve and respect differences as enriching elements, rather than abandoning them to create fertile ground for enmity and hatred. A strong and unequivocal message should be sent by the Council against religious and racial hatred.

ROBERTO VELLANO (Italy) said the issue of dialogue among cultures and civilizations was among the most important and yet most challenging issues the Council had to address. Italy welcomed contributions toward a constructive dialogue in an open and mutually respectful atmosphere, and looked forward to a high-level panel or round-table dialogue within the Council on the racism issue. Inter- and intra-religious dialogue was already integrated into the United Nations and other regional or inter-regional frameworks. Italy was committed to

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND
PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

supporting measures aimed at fostering tolerance and respect. Such respect stemmed from knowledge of history, traditions and cultural roots.

NATALIA ZOLOTOVA (Russian Federation) said that the fight against racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination had traditionally been viewed as a priority in human rights by Russia. Nowadays, a resurgence of racism, taking new forms, was noted. Governments did not always have appropriate answers. It was a threat to democracy. The Durban Review Conference was welcomed. It was expected that the High Commissioner would take an active part in the Conference. The participation of victims and non-governmental organizations was important. It was only through joint efforts that the international community would be able to work to counter these topics.

ANH THU DUONG (Switzerland) said Switzerland was, like many other countries, facing certain trends with regards to globalization which could give rise to a climate of tension, and thus encourage racist and discriminatory attitudes. Switzerland had been involved in the negotiations leading to the Durban Conference in 2001, and would continue to be implicated in the Durban Review Conference. It hoped the very substantial decisions adopted during the Preparatory Committee meetings would be adopted during the Review Conference. At the national level, Switzerland had adopted a number of measures aimed at implementing the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action. Switzerland wished to learn and share best practices with other countries with regards to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

TEHMINA JANJUA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said the Working Group had made significant progress and would make a substantive input into the Durban Conference. The OIC appreciated also the work of the High Commissioner and the African Group in the process. The OIC assured its continued support through the preparatory report that would lead to a meaningful Conference. The Durban Conference should also look into contemporary forms of racism and ways to deal with them. It must deal with Islamophobia and other structural forms of racism. Sufficient budgetary allocations must be provided and contributions from all Special Procedures were needed to enhance the preparatory process. Well-coordinated regional and national initiatives should also provide valuable input. The Anti-Discrimination Unit at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be given a higher profile and improved resources. The OIC supported the Ad Hoc Committee in full and hoped new normative standards would be developed to combat racism.

IDHAM MUSA MOKTAR (Malaysia), said racism was abhorrent not only on its own but also as a root cause of more egregious violations such as genocide and ethnic cleansing. The Review Conference would take place as the world was witnessing rising incidences of racist violence and intolerance. Malaysia was dismayed to see how the aftermath of September 11 had had a negative impact on attempts to combat racism. The events provoked anti-Muslim and anti-Arab reaction, racial profiling and defamation of Islam. The media had an important role to play, especially on issues of religion, in channeling information so as to promote a fair and balanced representation. Malaysia believed governments could do more to combat racism and intolerance. Inclusiveness was at the heart of any such efforts.

MOUSSA BOCAR LY (Senegal) said Senegal was concerned about the tendency to legitimize racism. Despite the Durban commitments, persons of African descent and migrants were still the object of discriminatory practices. This tendency must be reversed more than ever in order to obtain results, if it was truly wished to show that human beings belonged together. Everything had to be done in order to ensure that the Review Conference was successful. Combating discrimination was worthy of support. The international community should deal with discrimination by inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. It was urgent to strengthen political will to combat defamation of religions and to ensure inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

KE YOUSHEG (China) said the Preparatory Committee had adopted decisions by consensus during its meeting, and this established a good basis for the Review Conference. Six years had passed since the Durban Conference, and yet the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action had yet to be implemented. New forms of racism had cropped up. The Review Conference would therefore become another important milestone in the world's joint fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Focus should be on follow-up and effective

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND
PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

implementation of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action. The organisational meeting had decided on the means of financing the preparatory process, and it was hoped this would be effectively implemented. However, much remained to be done before 2009, and all should work together constructively with this aim.

ELIA SOSA (Mexico) said the Intergovernmental Working Group had made important contributions to tackling the issue of racism in relation to health, education, poverty and other social-economic areas. It had also worked to analyse complementary standards on racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, to be taken up again shortly by the Ad Hoc Committee. Within the Durban framework, it would be up to the Working Group to make a substantial contribution, which could be attained by taking up and strengthening the recommendations and conclusions of the Working Group in its five years of work. The search for common solutions was central to Ambassador Martabits approach and it was hoped the search would continue on the same consensus-seeking lines.

CARLOS CHOCANO (Peru) said that the fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance was of particular importance for Peru, a country which was characterized by an ethnic and multicultural variety. The delegation of Peru had actively participated in the work of the Working Group and was convinced that the future work had to be carried out on the basis of a balanced agenda, reflecting the interests of all regions.

NESTOR CRUZ TORU'O (Nicaragua) said it was important to continue the process of review of the Durban Conference. Nicaragua hoped the Review Conference would accomplish the objectives of analysing the recent signs of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and would make progress with regard to implementing the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action, including an exchange of national and regional experiences and best practices in order to combat these violations. There was a need to create an atmosphere of tolerance in a world including a wide number of religions and beliefs. Nicaragua intended to criminalize religious discrimination. The work of the Working Group and its efforts towards consensus should be preserved and emulated at the Review Conference but also within the Council.

BENNY SIAHAAN (Indonesia) said good results had been achieved on procedure and objectives for the Durban Conference. There had been positive, consensual outcomes. The Conference should also serve to encourage ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and should become a forum of exchange on good practice. On the defamation of religions, Indonesia agreed that underlying causes of religious discrimination were ignorance and lack of respect for diversity. Accusations and name-calling should stop and dialogue, political will and cooperation should increase.

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN (Bangladesh) said that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action had been historic and had provided necessary guidelines. Yet racism was still existent, with new forms appearing. States should show the political will to take action to combat those issues. The publishing of cartoons was not contributing to a spirit of freedom between all nations. The international community should identify gaps in international law. The exploitation of racism in politics had to stop. The media also had to be more responsible. The exploitation of the freedom of expression argument to the detriment of other rights was wrong. Bangladesh looked forward to the forthcoming Durban Review Conference.

DONG-HEE CHANG (Republic of Korea) said the Republic of Korea was concerned that the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance was growingly affecting not only human rights but also the stability of the international community, and causing unnecessary confrontation among the Member States of the Council. The Working Group should lend its continued contribution to finding a way of uprooting such a tenacious phenomenon. It should hammer out concrete and meaningful outcomes, while providing the impetus for further actions, initiatives and practical solutions to eliminate every kind of racism in the world. The Review Conference would offer a good opportunity for soul-searching on trials and errors in struggling to fulfil the promises of Durban, and should identify obstacles to further progress in combating racism, as well as bolstering the gains already achieved. It would be problematic to reconcile the notion of defamation with the concept of discrimination. However, the negative effect of contemporary intolerance among religions deserved the concern of the Council.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

AHMET UZUMCU (Turkey) said racism was gaining ground in several countries due to hostile political platforms. Migrant communities were targets for discrimination and xenophobia, and religious identity was becoming a major component in identifying the other. Adoption by consensus of the objectives of the Review Conference had been an important step forward. An open-minded and constructive approach was necessary. Turkey also welcomed the consensual outcome of the intergovernmental Working Groups fifth session. Additional mechanisms should be created only after all existing ones established by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had been fully explored.

VENETIA SEBUDANDI (Rwanda) said that the Durban Declaration had demonstrated the commitment of the international community to combat racism in all its forms and manifestations. Rwanda fully supported the values represented in it and was actively involved in its implementation. The Declaration had clearly shown that genocide was an extreme manifestation of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The justification of genocide and revisionism were also serious cases of racial discrimination and defamation of the victims. Not all States were cooperating with the International Tribunal for Rwanda in Tanzania and there were serious gaps that needed to be addressed.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco) said in accordance with the decisions adopted by the Working Group, the Preparatory Conference and the Council, the Review Conference would contribute to the universal quest against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Conference should examine and evaluate the progress achieved in the implementation of the Durban Declaration and the Plan of Action, whilst playing particular attention to new manifestations of racism and intolerance. It was hoped that the same spirit of cooperation and compromise would reign during the Conference as it did in the Working Group, as this would have a positive effect on efforts aiming to eliminate all forms of racism and racial discrimination. There was a continuing trend to make manifestations and acts of defamation of religion seem commonplace, especially those against Islam, and the international community should deal promptly and energetically against these manifestations.

CHOE MYONG NAM (Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea) said racism was still rampant, and had multiplied into modern manifestations including defamation of religion and Islamophobia. In the lead-up to the Durban Conference the international community had recognized the need for compensation for racist practices, colonialism and crimes committed out of so-called racial superiority in the past. The Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea had suffered under Japanese military occupation for decades. This criminal past had not been resolved, and today there was discrimination in Japan against Koreans, including violence and arrests. All races in the world had a right to have their diversity respected.

MOHAMMED BESSEDIK (Algeria) said Algeria welcomed the launching of preparations for the Durban Review Conference. It hoped that this process would produce positive results, especially in light of the developments since September 11. Algeria also hoped that the spirit of open mindedness seen in the Preparatory Conference would continue. The need to mobilize sufficient funds was underscored. The fact that the High Commissioner would be the head of the Review Conference was welcomed. The Durban Declaration constituted an appropriate form to counter the roots of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. New measures should be adopted for new forms of racism. The anti-Semitism against Arabs was now a clear fact and not only a rumour as stated by the High Commissioner.

SAMIR LABIDI (Tunisia) said Tunisia was satisfied at the results achieved at the Preparatory Conference for the Durban Review Conference. All should work together to ensure that the best possible conditions were established for the Conference, by mobilising all actors, at the national and international levels, and by assessing the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action, and analysing the new manifestations of racism and racial discrimination. Islamophobia and its adverse consequences with regards to discrimination was a new reality which obliged the international community to shoulder its responsibilities fully. There should be shared denunciation of this phenomenon, and there should be joint strategies promoting tolerance and dialogue between religions, cultures and civilisations.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND
PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

LUZ LESCURE (Panama) said Panama was multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. Respect for diversity was a priority in a country inhabited by descendants of nine different ethnic groups, all working together towards development in peace and under a modern legal system. Panama was currently working to widen the Panama Canal and the arrival of workers from around the world would hopefully increase and enrich the cultural diversity of Panama. Durban proposals were vital in the development of human society and future coexistence of the human species.

VEBJORN HEINES (Norway) said that in their view it was due to the excellent work of the Chairperson as well as the Facilitator that they had been able to reach consensus on concrete, realistic and constructive decisions during the organisational sessions of the Durban Preparatory Conference. Norway was fully committed to the fight against racism and intolerance as well as the follow-up of the decisions made in Durban. Norway would therefore continue to participate in the preparations for the Review Conference. A common approach was needed to fight against racism and intolerance. The Durban review process had created high expectations. It was a joint responsibility to meet these expectations through innovative approaches and a transparent process.

SEBASTIAN ROSALES (Argentina) said Argentina had done major work internationally and internally on the follow-up to the Durban Conference. It planned to continue to promote consensus-based decisions, as they took place during the Preparatory Committee meeting. Argentina had a National Plan against Discrimination, which contained diagnostic tools to diagnose discrimination, based on three pillars: racism, poverty and social exclusion, and the situation of society.

ENZO BITETTO GAVILANES (Venezuela) said the right to religious freedom was central to the Constitution of Venezuela. Eradication of all forms of intolerance was fundamental and States should guarantee adequate protection for freedom of thought and conscience and particularly should offer remedies for situations where violations of these freedoms occurred. The delegation of Venezuela fully shared the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism Doudou Diene to the effect that the Human Rights Council should make room to discuss these themes and stimulate Member States to work towards application of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

GIULIA CHIARA, of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, speaking on behalf of several NGOs¹, said that the spirit of cooperation that had guided the work of the Preparatory Committee was welcomed. The Durban agreements contained a profound analysis of the roots of racism and constituted an important step forward. Governments had committed to take concrete steps, however in the past few years they had seen new and extremely violent manifestations of racial discrimination. This had to be addressed. It was also important to include victims of racism in the preparations for the Conference and to ensure their participation. There was a need to mobilize public opinion.

ROY W. BROWN, of International Humanist and Ethical Union, speaking on behalf of Association for World Education; World Union for Progressive Judaism; and Association of World Citizens, said the report on Islamophobia by the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism was seriously flawed in three important respects - he failed to distinguish between Islamophobia and legitimate concerns regarding the rise of Islamic extremism; he failed to recognise the important differences that existed between the Islamic and modern European worldviews; and he failed to distinguish between opposition to Islamic extremism and hostility towards Muslims. It was regrettable that he also failed to address in any meaningful way the contribution of Islamic extremism to the rise of religious confrontation in Europe.

SABINE LEGRAND, of Fraternite Notre Dame, said Fraternite Notre Dame deplored the growing atmosphere of intolerance in France. Deceitful press campaigns, phone calls to the media, and other acts aimed at slandering the Fraternite were a sad testament to this. The plight of spiritual minorities in Europe deserved the Council's attention.

SUMIE OGASAWARA, of Japan Fellowship of Reconciliation, noted the Special Rapporteurs warning about a hierarchisation of discrimination against different religions. It had been the hierarchy by the Japanese Emperor that had made possible the enslavement of Korean women by the Japanese military. Issues such as official apology

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

and compensation had still not been settled, as noted by the Special Rapporteur. The Japanese Government was urged to make a formal apology to the victims.

GEORGIA STEVENS, of International Movement against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism, said the efforts made towards preparing for the Durban Review Conference were welcome. The Durban Declaration represented the commitments arising from the complex global dialogue which had taken place. The Plan of Action was a road map illustrating how the international community should follow up on the commitments made therein. The Durban Plan of Action was both historic and forward-looking. The Durban Conference also brought to light new and other forms of discrimination.

REFEQUAT ALI KHAN, of European Union for Public Relations, said the scourge of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia was widespread, and since 9/11 new forms of religious discrimination had been added to the mix. Islamophobia was not merely a consequence of 9/11 but a reaction to the aggressive assertion of identity that had been expressed by groups who had hijacked the issue of identity and justified violence in its name. Even today some in the Muslim world expressed admiration for Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Member States should demonstrate firm political will to combat the rise of racial and religious hatred.

FRANCESCA GLAWWOTTI, of International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, said that the current and last report on racism, discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance highlighted the importance of addressing the core issues. It was hoped that States would apply the Special Rapporteurs recommendations. In India, the lower castes continued to face discrimination. Muslims were underrepresented in the Indian Government. The lowest castes continued to be deprived of their economic rights and were forced to work without remuneration. Their social rights were virtually non-existent. The Human Rights Council and the Special Rapporteur should look into this grave situation.

ALTAF HUSSEIN WANI, of International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, said the World Conference had led the international community to believe that sooner, not later, the world would witness positive developments against racial discrimination. The need for joint international action against racism had rarely been as urgent as it was today. Unfortunately, progress so far was not encouraging. The conditions of those suffering from racism and racial discrimination had rather deteriorated over the past years. The Council should accord utmost importance in the agenda for the elimination of race-based discrimination and hatred, and implement policies and programmes that promoted social, cultural and racial harmony.

NICOLAS CAPT, of Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisemitisme, said the League was worried about the scope of the Resolution and the problem of incitement to hatred. Mr. Dines report focused on anti-Muslim discrimination. Racism in fact affected all minorities. The League said it was unacceptable for States to affirm the principle of secularism and to conflate rights with religion or race among certain minorities. Repeated attacks against freedom of expression were a throwback to the Inquisition.

SHAGUFTA ASHRAF, of World Muslim Congress, said that fighting racism had become a challenge. There was a need for joint international action against it. People suffered from it. The rights guaranteed under international laws were being infringed upon. It was unpleasant that it continued in certain parts of the world, like the caste system in India. The social rights of the lower castes were non-existent. The Human Rights Council should take concrete measures to end racism in this modern world.

RAYMOND MERAT, of International Association of Democratic Lawyers, said it was historically known that the Durban Declaration affirmed that ethnic minorities should be treated equally and should enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination of any kind, and its Plan of Action urged States to ensure this within their jurisdiction. A large number of Koreans living in Japan were today suffering from discrimination. It was sufficiently important for the Council to ask one of its Special Procedures to check these facts, and bring them to the attention of the Council.

GRASS ROSWITHA, of World Circle of the Consensus, said she wished to share a message of hope: a Group of Sages, Maietrya and the Masters of Wisdom, were ready to help. They could not come and interfere with our

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

freewill, so they must be invited. Let us expand our consciousness and open our hearts and let love flow and fear diminish. They can lead us to a world where sharing, joy, peace and justice and harmony will reign.

ROSA VALERIO, of International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, speaking on behalf of Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, said that manifestations of xenophobia were a continuous problem. It was surprising and depressing to see the resurfacing of old forms of racism such as anti-Semitism together with the surfacing of new ones such Islamophobia. Also, new forms of racism that arose since 9-11 should be taken into account in the next Durban Conference.

VISUVALINGHAM KIRUPATARAN, of Interfaith International, said the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action was an eye opener for any society which was knowingly or unknowingly practicing racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. The economic, social and cultural rights of the people were denied, violated, and the people became marginalized on the grounds of protection of national identity. Systematic discriminatory legislation had proved that racism and xenophobia existed in Sri Lanka. All participants in the Council should take cognisance of these facts, and all should respect their commitment to the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action.

ROY W. BROWN, of World Population Foundation, said the Foundation often encountered opposition from religious leaders when working to improve reproductive health rights. In Africa there were religiously-inspired campaigns for AIDS prevention promoting abstinence in circumstances where it was simply not an option for many young girls. As the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had said, human rights must take precedence over religious principles.

DAVID LITTMAN, of World Union for Progressive Judaism, speaking on behalf of Association for World Education, said that the Special Rapporteurs report on racism had numerous omissions in one major field. He had referred only very briefly to anti-Semitism and Christianophobia. As Irans President prepared to address the UNs General Assembly today, his statements denying the holocaust should be recalled. Surprisingly, no State had invoked the Genocide Convention. Even the UN Charter article condemning threats against Member States had also been forgotten by all. The time for words of concern and warnings were past; it was time for urgent action.

TERRENCE MC KEEGAN, of European Center for Law and Justice, said the issue of defamation of religion belonged under the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. Defamation of religions could offend people, but did not necessarily result in a violation of their rights, including the freedom of religion. Under international law, the standard for determining incitement to hatred or violence had been an objective one, but this was often no longer the case. Violence from any group was never justified, and no State or individual was justified in condoning it. States should take particular care that they did not endorse statements that had no critical assessment. The Council should transfer the issue of defamation to the appropriate mandate, and address it under the appropriate international law on religious freedom.

SANDEEP PRASAD, of Action Canada for Population and Development, speaking on behalf of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era and International Alliance of Women, said a draft inter-American Convention on Racism was in preparation at the initiative of Brazil. This recalled the need expressed in Durban to eliminate racism and racial discrimination to permit societies to develop and exercise their human rights. Discrimination could impact at many levels: race, religion, sexual orientation, cultural situation, level of education, living standard, status as refugee, health or other factor. The vast majority of Latin-American and Caribbean States were supportive of the draft. Its vast range reflected the complexity of the discrimination issue.

Concluding Remarks

NAJAT AL-HAJJAJI, Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference, in concluding comments, noted that the delegations had all expressed their satisfaction with the results of the first session of the Preparatory Committee and had welcomed the spirit of consensus that had prevailed. This should continue to prevail during the next two sessions. The Review Conference would provide very valuable tools to tackle new forms of racism. Regarding Islamophobia and religion-phobia, attacks on Islam had stressed the importance of education to deal effectively with racism. Education was of supreme importance in curbing this. Democracy and racism were

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

contradictory. Democracy should call for respect. The statements made by delegations recalling the importance of the implementation of the goals were welcomed. It was important to continue to listen to non-governmental organizations and victims of racism. Much remained to be done until the Durban Review Conference. It was hoped that the actual spirit of consensus and harmony continued to prevail until the next meeting.

JUAN MARTABIT, Chairman of the Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, said he wished to express his thanks for the very kind comments made by various delegations, and for their support. The success of the Group was due to the Group itself - it had excellent diplomats in it, and was willing to work, which was worthy of acknowledgement. This also encouraged the Working Group to continue with the important work before it.

All should devote themselves to the process leading to the Review Conference. The theme of compliance with the Durban process was deeply rooted in international thought today, and had an agenda which was affecting not only development, but also situations that could undermine peace, stability, harmony and co-existence, all of which elements should be present if human beings were to all enjoy human rights.

If the international community set itself the collective task of reaching the Review Conference in 2009 with an additional Protocol on education to combat racism, or to build constructively a fairer world, then a substantial contribution to the process would be made. The Human Rights Council should open up possibilities for frank and constructive dialogue on issues related to culture, civilisation and religion. It seemed that it could not deal with such issues in a politicised environment - and thus the Human Rights Council was the best place for such a dialogue, and it should hold it systematically, in good faith, as this would allow it to draw some conclusions which would ultimately cover the broad range of human rights.

KYUNG-WHA KANG, Deputy High Commissioner of Human Rights, said there had been constructive suggestions regarding the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights work in this area. She thanked Ambassadors Al-Hajjaji and Martabit for their roles in the process. As the High Commissioner noted in her address to the Non-Aligned Movement at an earlier date, no culture or school of thought stood above the rights to all freedoms, including those of belief and religion, and the Office would work hard in pursuit of the goals established under the fight against racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance.

Right of Reply

ICHIRO FUJISAKI (Japan), speaking in a right of reply concerning the statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said that their allegations were unfounded. Japan had been ordering equality before the law without discrimination against all the people residing in Japan in accordance to its Constitution. It had acceded to international human rights institutions and conventions. Japan was fully implementing all obligations under all the conventions and hoped that countries who were not members would join these treaties, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

RAJIVA WIJESINHA (Sri Lanka), speaking in a right of reply, said the Government of Sri Lanka regretted as much as did the representative of Interfaith International the paucity of Tamils in the armed forces and high positions in Government in Sri Lanka, but thought that it should be made clear that much of this arose from a form of intolerance practiced by the Tigers. The former Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, a Tamil, was killed precisely because he participated in the democratic process, as had been other high-ranking Tamils. It was important to recognise that the Government tried to be pluralistic, but the efforts of Tamil Tigers had reduced the participation of Tamils in the Government and in the army over recent years. There was tremendous pressure on minorities by the Tigers not to join the police and the army. The world should realise that the attempts of the Government to move towards pluralism were stymied by attacks by the Tigers on those Tamils who were trying to participate fully in the democratic process. The representative of the NGO was being disingenuous in suggesting that it was the Governments fault rather than the Tigers, as these latter tolerated no opposition to their position.

CHOE MYONG NAM (Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea), speaking in a right of reply, said his delegation rejected the Japanese allegations. Japan had committed crimes against humanity during the 40-year occupation of

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON RACISM, DURBAN DECLARATION AND
PROGRAMME OF ACTION, DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

Korea. Added to this was the oppression and discrimination against Koreans living in Japan today. Again he urged Japan to address the human rights violations against Koreans now living in Japan.

ICHIRO FUJISAKI (Japan), speaking in a second right of reply, said that he did not think he needed to repeat himself. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's statement was unacceptable and wrong. Japan had stated in the past that it was ready to address these issues as part of the normalization of their talks. It was hoped that they would come to an agreement and that they did not need to discuss this matter in this Council.

CHOE MYONG NAM (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in a second right of reply, said the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea categorically rejected the Japanese allegations, and was concerned about the intention of Japan to hoodwink the international community, and to not settle its past actions. The crimes against humanity committed by Japan during the occupation of Korea were evidence of its avoidance of admitting its wrongdoing. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had strongly criticised the unequal treatment of Korean high-school students in Japan. Japan should stop all discrimination and unequal treatment of Koreans in Japan, and settle all past crimes.

1Joint statement on behalf of: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples; Indian Council of South America; International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations; North-South XXI; Interfaith International; English International Association of Lund; International Educational Development; Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association; Worldwide Organization for Women; Asian Legal Resource Centre; Reporters Without Borders - International; International Committee for the Respect and the Application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarite; Association of World Citizens; Union of Arab Jurists; Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association; International League for the Rights and Liberation of peoples; World Young Women's Christian Association; Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights; International Movement against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism; International Federation of University Women; International Alliance of Women; International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination; International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities; International Union of Socialist Youth; Colombian Commission of Jurists; Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network; and World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Association.

For use of the information media; not an official record

Load-Date: September 26, 2007

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES INTERACTIVE DEBATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

States News Service

March 15, 2007 Thursday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 4976 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

The Human Rights Council this morning concluded its interactive debate with United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour concerning her annual report which she presented yesterday.

In concluding remarks, the High Commissioner said regarding Nepal, at the moment, work had to focus on the deep-rooted marginalisation and exclusion of groups who wished to be included in the new Nepal that was being built. On the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, she shared the concerns expressed in the General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in that country, and continued to believe that engagement with the Special Rapporteur would be an important step forward in addressing the situation. On allegations of racism in Japan, the Special Rapporteur on racism and related intolerances had visited the country and had submitted a report that had been subject for an interactive dialogue in the Council.

Ms. Arbour said on human rights difficulties in Sri Lanka and witness protection in relation to the Commission of Inquiry the Government had launched, there could be no serious effort to combat impunity without a serious framework to protect witnesses, and discussions were taking place with the Government, which understood the importance of such a framework. This issue was also relevant for Sudan. On the situation in Kosovo, her Office would be strengthening its presence in Kosovo, in light of the serious human rights concerns in that region, in particular intolerance towards minorities. Regarding work in Iraq, the Office worked very closely with the Minister for Human Rights, and offered her all support within the serious constraints existing in light of the security situation. The efforts in Sudan should be focussed on protecting the victims of human rights violations, and addressing the responsibility of perpetrators. Humanitarian access was the most critical factor.

Speakers participating in the interactive debate stressed issues such as supporting the fieldwork of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the need to increase it; poverty eradication policies; and the importance of ensuring gender equality and protecting **women** and children. A number of countries, including Uganda, Serbia, Nepal, Zimbabwe and Sudan also rejected some allegations made against them and outlined national efforts to uphold the promotion and protection of human rights.

Participating in the interactive dialogue were Uganda, Serbia, Nepal, United States, Sweden, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Republic of Korea, Spain, Senegal and Italy.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES INTERACTIVE DEBATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Also providing statements in the interactive dialogue were the Asian Forum for Human Rights (joint statement), International Commission of Jurists, International Indian Treaty Council, International Humanist and ethical Union, Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany, Indian Movement Tupaj Amaru, Association of World Education, Pax Romana, Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de L'Homme, and Soka Gakkai International.

Speaking in right of reply at the end of the interactive dialogue were Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Iran and Japan.

The Council is meeting today non-stop from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At noon, it started to review reports prepared by intergovernmental working groups on the institution-building process of the Council, after which it will take up reports prepared by the Secretariat, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human rights and the Secretary-General.

Interactive Dialogue

CISSY TALIWAKU (Uganda) said with regards to the report of the High Commissioner on Uganda, on the question of political human rights developments, Uganda had made huge progress in building the institutions of a democratic State, with separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive powers. As a result of the reforms implemented over the last 20 years, there was a vibrant democracy, a free and unfettered press, and an unfettered judiciary. On the peace talks, the Government was committed to a comprehensive solution to the conflict, and Uganda was at peace, with the situation in the northern areas returning to normalcy, allowing all parties to return to normal activities, with the return process going slowly but smoothly, and with the Government doing all it could, within its financial means.

All regions of the world were affected by the proliferation of illicit weapons. States had the duty of protecting their citizens from the misuse of weapons, and the Government of Uganda was working in this direction. All States should carry out a regional disarmament exercise. On transitional justice, the Government was committed to granting amnesty to those who had voluntarily laid down their arms. On indictments by the International Criminal Court, the Government was committed to fighting impunity, and would continue to work to reconcile the difficult elements of justice and the fight for peace.

SLOBODAN VUKCEVIC (Serbia) said Serbia aligned itself with the statement of the European Union, especially regarding strengthening the human rights dimension in United Nations missions. The situation in the province of Kosovo and Metohija was grave, in spite of the United Nations presence there. Could the High Commissioner provide details on how serious human rights concerns and upcoming challenges would be tackled, and how the presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights would be strengthened in Kosovo and Metohija.

BHAGIRATH BASNER (Nepal) said that there had been substantial improvements as highlighted in the report in Nepal. The ongoing peace-process was moving forward in the direction of democratisation and granting fundamental freedom to its people. However, the report could in some points have been more complete. At this crucial stage of state construction, Nepal did not want any group to be left out of the building process of the nation. The Government of Nepal agreed with the High Commissioner that the question of human rights was central and important for the peace process. Nepal was in the final stage and was optimistic that there would be a fully understanding of building the peace process.

WARREN W. TICHENOR (United States) said the United States supported the work which the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights did in the field, often at risk to their well being in places such as Darfur. It had been hoped that the Government of Sudan would follow through on the commitment it undertook when it accepted the consensus resolution of the December Special Session and allow the Assessment Mission to visit the region.

The United States was also concerned by recent events in Zimbabwe, where democratic opponents of the Mugabe regime who gathered peacefully for a prayer meeting were brutally attacked by Government security forces over the weekend. The United States believed the Council should consider urgent situations such as this. The report on the

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES INTERACTIVE DEBATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

recent visits to Asia and Latin America were appreciated, and future updates on Burma , North Korea , Iran and Cuba were requested. These were countries where citizens were unable to exercise their basic civil and political rights, suffered the repressive tactics of dictatorial regimes, and waited at home for the international community to respond to their pleas for support.

CHRISTOPHER BENG (Sweden) welcomed the focus of the Office of the High Commissioner on the fight against poverty and widespread violations of economic, social and cultural rights. In fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals there had been collective commitments to human rights. Empowerment of the poor through participation in the political process, accountability by governments and non-discrimination in the execution of economic and social policies were key to these efforts. Sweden requested clarification on the efforts made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in this regard.

CHITSAKA CHIPAZIWA (Zimbabwe) said that Zimbabwe was concerned about the change of the tone to the worse in this Council. Zimbabwe had nothing to hide and wanted to cooperate with the United Nations field officer in the country. Concerning an illegal political rally in Zimbabwe on 11 March, reinforcements had had to be called in. The opposition leaders were among the injured. A demonstrator had been killed. The matter was now in the hands of the judiciary. This had not been a real prayer meeting, because on the same day, another prayer meeting was held in another part of Harare without intervention. Zimbabwe denounced that some countries wanted to turn African countries against each other. Zimbabwe was looking forward to working together with the Human Rights Council.

ABDUL MONEIM OSMAN (Sudan) said Sudan had hoped the report of the High Commissioner would give equal space to various elements of human rights. The High Commissioner had called for an international presence to defend victims in Darfur, and it was queried whether this was in line with the United Nations Charter as to the role of regional organizations and their role in preserving peace and security. This recommendation was perhaps linked to the criteria of the International Criminal Court, and it was surprising that the High Commissioner had requested such a mission without discussing it with the country concerned.

In view of the current understanding between Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations with regards to the Darfur Agreement, there was legitimate concern about the contents of the report of the High Commissioner. This was a misuse of international legitimacy and of the principle to protect, which was used as a pretext to interfere in a country that was attempting to restructure, as was the case in Sudan. The consequences of non-consensual intervention were seen on the television every day; this intervention was no magic wand, it was instead often a political tool for certain States.

KIM MOON-HWAN (Republic of Korea) said the process of institution building in the Council had benefited from input from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the delegation supported a strengthened field presence of OHCHR. The Office should base its deliberations on objective and impartial information. Independent experts should play an increasing role. The Office should identify expertise and develop tools for monitoring. Special Procedures should have full and professional assistance to enable them to work effectively, and there should be enhanced systematic interaction between the Office and Special Procedures mechanisms and UN bodies. Efforts to put women's and gender issues at the core of the Office's work were commended. The importance of human rights education in primary and secondary schools, and the need for in depth study of the role of globalization and multinational cooperation towards human rights was stressed. The Republic of Korea hoped OHCHR would play a role in these areas.

SILVIA ESCOBAR (Spain) said that Spain supported the statement of the Ambassador of Germany on behalf of the European Union. Spain wanted to emphasize the general efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the promotion of the rights of women and the eradication of poverty, and the work done in the field. Now was a crucial phase for the Council and it was hoped that in June the institution-building process would be finalized. Spain hoped that the efforts made to foster the rights of women would be developed furthermore.

The Council must play a fundamental role in this matter because women were always among the victims of human rights violations. The trafficking of women and children had also been highlighted in the report. Spain favourably

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES INTERACTIVE DEBATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

viewed the establishment of field offices for bilateral cooperation. It was time for a substantial improvement in the human rights of women in all the spheres covered. The main cause of the Human Rights Council was to ensure that all people were enjoying human rights all over the world.

MOUSSA BOCAR LY (Senegal) said the measures already taken in the report of the High Commissioner and those planned to defend gender equality and the culture of human rights were appreciated, as was the intention of establishing within the Office of the High Commissioner a department for women's rights and parity. The transfer of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women from New York to Geneva would give fresh impetus to the fight against the discrimination from which women suffered. The fight against poverty was part of the struggle to ensure the right to development. The interdependence and indivisibility of human rights was undeniable.

There was surprise that the right to food, which had been subject to lengthy deliberations, was not reflected in the work of the High Commissioner. There was a need to respect multilingualism as a part of cultural diversity so that all delegations could fully participate in the work of the Council. The prestigious choice of Senegal to host the regional headquarters for human rights had been welcomed.

ROBERTO VELLANO (Italy) supported other speakers in thanking the High Commissioner for her report. Italy was particularly concerned about the most vulnerable, such as the rights of children, economic and social discrimination, and racism and xenophobia. Italy supported effective action to promote women's rights and combat violence and discrimination. Italy was proud to support the Office financially, including its contribution to the fund for Victims of Torture, which it hoped to increase. Italy's support for work toward the abolition of the death penalty and negotiations was based on mutual respect and dialogue.

RUKSHAN FERNANDO, of the Asian Forum For Human Rights, said in a joint statement that there were only two sub-regional offices of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Asia, covering thus less than 20 per cent of the population in the Asia region. The High Commissioner for Human Rights was urged to give a priority to setting up sub-regional offices in South and Northeast Asia with a view to providing better assistance and services, including the protection of human rights defenders who were working under difficult situations and threats.

LAILA KARIMI, of International Commission of Jurists, said there was great concern about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka, where civilians were caught in the middle of an escalating conflict, in which the fundamental principle of distinction between civilians and combatants was not being respected. The Council and the High Commissioner should establish a full-fledged international human rights field operation. The Council should also regularly monitor the situation of human rights in Colombia, and make recommendations to the State to ensure compliance with its obligations under international human rights law and recommendations to all armed actors to respect international humanitarian law.

ESTEBANCIO CASTRO, of International Indian Treaty Council, said the great contribution of the Council was the possibility for indigenous peoples to participate in its sessions. The Global Caucus of Indigenous Peoples affirmed its support for the Special Rapporteur and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and recommended that a new Permanent Expert Group be established. He also called for collaboration between the International Indian Treaty Council, the Office and Council.

ROY BROWN, of International Humanist and Ethical Union, said that if a State had something to hide, it would always find reasons not to cooperate with the Council, whether it would be with a Periodic Review, with Special Rapporteurs or with a Commission of Inquiry. The Council was barely one year old and already had a major credibility problem. The reputation of the Council would be determined by its response to the crisis in Darfur. If the Council failed to consider the report of the high-level mission, a clear condemnation of the failure of the Government of Sudan to cooperate with the Council should be made.

HARTMUT SCHONKNECHT, of Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany, said the acknowledgement of the importance of the universal protection of human rights and non-discrimination as key pillars of the United Nations human rights system was welcomed. In the upcoming weeks, the Council would hear about numerous human rights violations experienced on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. The High Commissioner should

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES INTERACTIVE DEBATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

suggest to the Council how it could most effectively address these issues, and what support the Office could provide in order to ensure universal human rights protection without discrimination, including on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

LAZARO PARY, of Indian Movement Tupaj Amaru, supported much of the contents of the High Commissioner's report on the Universal Periodic Review, mandates and other issues. Neo-liberal governments, state terrorism and corporations continued to deprive indigenous peoples of land and resources, and debt and poverty remained serious scourges. The World Bank and financial institutions of the United Nations had failed. Rich countries had not shown the political determination needed to tackle these problems, and the international order remained deeply unjust, socially racist and morally insupportable.

DAVID LITTMAN, of Association of World Education, said that in the statement of the High Commissioner, she had referred to the mission mandated by the Council to Sudan. The Association asked for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in providing current and future support for advancing human rights in Darfur. The majority of the non-governmental organizations present in this Council were firmly convinced that it should endorse the recommendations made by the high-level mission, despite the fact that one of its members, an Ambassador, had since left the mission. It was crucial for its own survival that the Council was seized by the ongoing genocidal tragedy in Darfur without further delay.

BUDI TJAHJONO, of Pax Romana, said the report of the High Commissioner provided valuable information and indicated the way forward. One of the great challenges facing human rights over the decades was how to appropriately extend the net of human rights accountability to non-State actors. In the Asian region as a whole, there was a dearth of regional and sub-regional human rights institutions beyond national borders, and this should be remedied. Standard setting was an ongoing work, and a key challenge in this regard concerned all forms of discrimination faced by elderly persons including exclusion, restriction and preference.

MARINA YUNG, of Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme, complimented the Office on the work done in Colombia, where the trials of military members suspected of violations were welcomed. The Federation called for further action to protect human rights, demobilisation of paramilitary groups, and to stop attacks on human rights defenders. The Federation supported the work in Guinea Conakry where it called for stronger condemnation of excessive use of force and arbitrary detention, and noted, with reference to violations in Chechnya and extra-judicial killings of human rights defenders, the setting up of the Office of the High Commissioner in the Russian Federation.

KAZUNARI FUJII, of Soka Gakkai International, said in a joint statement that he wanted to know how the Council incorporated the primary responsibility of the promotion of human rights education and learning in institution building of the Council. The first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education was scheduled to conclude at the end of 2007. Would the Council consider either to extend the first phase or alternatively to identify a sector or issue of the second phase after the end of the first phase sometime within this year in order to meet one of the primary responsibilities of the Council, which was the promotion of human rights education and learning.

Concluding Comments by the High Commissioner for Human Rights

LOUISE ARBOUR, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said regarding the work in Nepal, it should be stressed that from the beginning the presence had not been limited to the capital - there had been field offices. An inclusive approach, in the spirit of new legislation, was being worked on. At the moment, work had to focus on the deep-rooted marginalisation and exclusion of the groups who wished to be included in the new Nepal that was being built. It was hoped that collaboration with the Government would expand in the future.

Regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ms. Arbour said that she shared the concerns expressed in the General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in that country, and continued to believe that engagement with the Special Rapporteur would be an important step forward in addressing the situation. On allegations of racism in Japan, on that issue the Special Rapporteur on racism and related intolerances had visited

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES INTERACTIVE DEBATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

the country and had submitted a report that had been subject for an interactive dialogue in the Council, which latter was an important way of ensuring that issues were debated.

On human rights difficulties in Sri Lanka and witness protection in relation to the Commission of Inquiry the Government had launched, there could be no serious effort to combat impunity without a serious framework to protect witnesses, and discussions were taking place with the Government, which understood the importance of such a framework. This issue was also relevant for Sudan. On the situation in Kosovo, the Office had been active for more than 20 years in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and would be closing the office in June 2007, but would remain in the region by strengthening the presence in Kosovo, in light of the serious human rights concerns in that region, in particular intolerance towards minorities.

Regarding work in Iraq, the Office worked very closely with the Minister for Human Rights, and offered her all support within the serious constraints existing in the light of the security situation, in particular with the need to increase the rule of law and allow the country to have a means for addressing the impunity which contributed to the excessive violence. The efforts in Sudan should be focussed on protecting the victims of human rights violations, and addressing the responsibility of perpetrators. On the necessary protection of civilians, there was a need for increased international presence, and with regards to the problem of humanitarian access, aid workers were facing violence at a previously unseen scale, leaving victims in need of ever greater aid. Humanitarian access was the most critical factor.

On the question of Islamophobia, a report had been presented at the previous session of the Council, in which it had been stressed that the freedom of belief and non-discrimination were one of the strongest pillars of human rights and should be guaranteed for all. The promotion of tolerance needed to be addressed at the policy and the political level. All rights holders were entitled to turn to their Government to ensure their protection from violence, including State-sponsored violence, and this principle suffered no exception, and should be applied regardless of any personal characteristic, including sexuality and sexual orientation. Further discrimination based on gender was also an issue the Office was focussing upon.

Through research and advocacy as well as field work and partnerships with Governments, United Nations country teams and non-governmental organizations, particular effort was being done to focus on poverty in a country-specific manner and to promote women's rights. The absence of any elaborated reference to the right to food in the report was not to indicate a lack of interest in this issue.

Rights of Reply

RODOLFO REYES RODRIGUEZ (Cuba), speaking in a right of reply, said that it was outrageous to see how the imperial dictatorship of the United States which started with the ethnic cleansing of indigenous peoples. Hundreds of thousands of Africans were uprooted from their homes and enslaved to observe the racist, dominant behaviour and messianic dogmas of this empire. Following history, looking at the situation in the Caribbean and in Latin America, there was complicity in disappearances, torture, and assassination of politicians. The dictatorship of Washington in its imperial mission had killed millions in South East Asia, and had manipulated the sad episode of September 11 to unleash aggression and to carry out spying on their own citizens. Iraq was subjected to the aggression and occupation of the empire. The High Commissioner should focus attention on this dictatorship.

CHOE MYONG NAM (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in a right of reply, said that he regretted the statements of the Japanese delegation and the one from the United States. Domestic violations were committed by both countries, such as what the United States did and was still doing in Iraq. Concerning Japan, it was responsible for huge human rights violations in the past and present such as abductions, genocidal killings and slavery. Japan even tried to deny those crimes. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea urged that Japan should consider its own violations of human rights instead of playing political games.

SARALA FERNANDO (Sri Lanka), speaking in a right of reply, said with regards to the alleged deteriorating situation in Sri Lanka, statistics indicated that allegations of abductions, disappearances and killings were on a declining trend. Investigations had also resolved a number of alleged abductions. Statements had also been heard

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONCLUDES INTERACTIVE DEBATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

on the situation of internally displaced persons, who due to natural occurrences had become displaced. The Government took care of such persons, providing them with shelter and food and compensation. Long-term solutions were being sought for internally displaced persons. In spite of the huge challenges facing Sri Lanka, including terrorist threats as well as natural threats, economic growth continued, and the Government had been able to allocate greater resources to the health and education systems.

Sri Lanka continued to hold its high place in the United Nations Development Index. Throughout the years, the Government had continued to fund the entire Governmental administration, even in areas where the **LTTE** had appropriated a significant portion of the resources. Economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights were one side of the same coin, and yet they were still addressed individually; thus, a more comprehensive and balanced approach was required.

SEYED HOSSEIN REZVANI (Iran), speaking in a right of reply, objected to the statement of the Representative of the United States. This was a country recognized and condemned by the people of the world as a most dictatorial empire and serious violator of human rights around the world. The unlawful, unilateral occupation and invasion of Iraq has caused death, misery and destruction; there had been rape and killing by American soldiers. This was an arrogant adventure, a slap in the face of the Security Council and the values of the UN system and Human Rights Council. Guantanamo presented appalling facts: torture, inhumane and degrading treatment. Prisoners were held in Iraq in appalling circumstances, and the United States gave same theatrical responses and showed a failure to yield to international objection.

ICHIRO FUJISAKI (Japan), speaking in a right of reply, said that the statement of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding racial discrimination in Japan was totally unfounded. Japan had acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and was working together with a Special Rapporteur on that topic. The latter had visited Japan for that purpose. Concerning the statements of the past, clear statements were already made yesterday by Japan. Japan hoped that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would start cooperating with a Special Rapporteur, which had not happened yet and would stop raising new issues in order to hide or justify its great violations of human rights.

CHOE MYONG NAM (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in a second right of reply, said the Japanese allegations were rejected, as these were part of a dirty political lobby, aimed at naming and shaming the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The only Japanese case had been completely resolved. The only outstanding problem in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-Japan relations was the lack of a Japanese decision to settle outstanding crimes from the Second World War. Japan continued to deny its past crimes, as had recently been made clear, and this was indicative of its intentions to repeat these past crimes, as evident in Japan today where rampant discrimination took place, targeting Koreans. Japan should settle its past and present crimes.

ICHIRO FUJISAKI (Japan), speaking in a second right of reply, said he did not clearly understand some of the statements of North Korea. The abduction case of Japan was the only one resolved - were there other cases of abduction? In answer to the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, he said former Prime Ministers of Japan had expressed heartfelt apology. He requested international cooperation in seeking cooperation between Japan and Korea, and hoped this same encounter would not take place next time.

Load-Date: April 17, 2007

TANZ; "Ich entscheide, mit wem ich arbeite!"

Die Presse

30. April 2005

Copyright 2005 Die Presse Verlags-Gesellschaft m.b.H. & CO KG Alle Rechte Vorbehalten



Length: 1734 words

Body

"Wir sind doch keine Anstalt zur Berufssicherung von Tänzern", sagte Staatsoperndirektor Ioan Holender zu den Vorwürfen anlässlich der Frühpensionierung einiger Ensemblemitglieder. Und: "Wenn der Publikumszustrom zu den Vorstellungen mit Eva Petters wirklich so hoch gewesen wäre, wie jetzt behauptet wird, wäre ihre Pensionierung sicher die falsche Entscheidung.

Gyula Harangozó, der designierte Ballettchef der zusammengelegten Tanzkompanien von Staats- und Volksoper, meinte dazu: "Ich habe die Entscheidung aus rein künstlerischer Perspektive getroffen. Als Direktor muss ich die Autonomie haben, entscheiden zu können, mit wem ich arbeite.

Es werde nach der Zusammenlegung auch keine Zweiklassengesellschaft unter den Tänzern geben, betonte Harangozó. Doch die Flexibilität beim Einsatz der Tänzer sei in Zukunft höher. "Oft sind ältere Tänzer körperlich nicht mehr so perfekt, dafür viel stärker im Ausdruck, in der Bühnenpräsenz. Man kann dann viel gezielter Rollen besetzen. Unter den künftigen Gastsolisten sind Vladimir Malakhov, Polina Semionova, Tamas Solymosi und Gregor Hatala. Erste Solisten gibt es nicht mehr.

Premieren 2006: "Coppelia", "Onegin"

Die Zusammenlegung erfolgt in Form einer Arbeitsgemeinschaft. "Eine

schlanke und unbürokratische Organisationsform", so die neu bestellte kaufmännische Leiterin Simone Wohinz. Harangozó sei dabei künstlerische und finanzielle Autonomie garantiert, die Tänzer würden nach ASVG-Recht von der Ballettleitung vertraglich für beide Häuser bis maximal drei Jahre beschäftigt. "Diese Lösung ist auch am finanziell günstigsten", meinte Georg Springer, Chef der Bundestheaterholding. "Wir sparen im Gegensatz zu einer GmbH die Kosten für Bilanzen, Abschlussprüfungen etc.

Der neue Spielplan sieht zwei Premieren an der Staatsoper vor: "Coppelia" am 29. 1. 2006 in der Choreografie von Gyula Harangozó senior, inszeniert von Sohn und Ballettdirektor Harangozó junior, und "Onegin" von John Cranko zur Musik Tschaikowskis am 8. April. Im Repertoire bleiben "Dornröschen", "Giselle", "Schwanensee", "Wie es euch gefällt", Zanelas "Diaghilew-Abend" und "Der Nussknacker".

In der Volksoper bietet Harangozó "Nicht nur Mozart" mit vier Stücken am 16. März, "Tschaikowski Impressionen" am 19. November und eine Ballett-Gala am 26. Juni. Im Repertoire bleibt Giorgio Madias "Alice". Eine Reform der

TANZ "Ich entscheide, mit wem ich arbeite!"

Ballettschule steht noch an, aber "dafür brauche ich noch Zeit. Ich werde mir das in der nächsten Saison genau anschauen", so Harangozó.tom

Die lieben Alten? Die alten Lieben!

Zwei Ausstellungen in Salzburg und Wien beschäftigen sich mit dem

Tabuthema Altern, speziell bei Frauen.

Von Almuth Spiegler

Nicht einmal Vanessa Beecroft (35) setzt in ihren "Lebenden Bildern"

nur mehr auf makellos straffe Körper. Bei ihrer letzten Aktion Anfang April in der Berliner Nationalgalerie ließ sie zwar wie gewohnt stundenlang 100 nur spärlich - diesmal mit Nylonstrumpfhosen - bekleidete Frauen posieren. Neu aber war der Generationenmix: Die Modelle waren zwischen 18 und 65 Jahren alt. Eine, wie der "Spiegel" beobachtete, enthemmte und anzügliche Zuschauermasse begaffte und kommentierte die körperlichen Unterschiede. Selbst Beecroft, die geglaubt hatte, den "philosophischen" Deutschen "menschlichere Mädchen" zumuten zu können, begann zu zweifeln: "Ich glaube, dass die Nacktheit diese Frauen stark macht. Aber ich bin nicht mehr ganz sicher, ob ich sie nicht doch erniedrige. Interessant. Bei ihren jungen Modells kamen ihr diese Bedenken nicht. Warum sollten sich jetzt gerade die älteren Freiwilligen gedemütigt fühlen?

Nacktheit im Alter ist ein Tabu. Sex im Alter noch mehr. Udo Jürgens wurde im deutschen Boulevard mit der von ihm wieder dementierten Aussage zitiert: "Ab 40 ist bei Frauen Schluss mit Sex!" Und im österreichischen Kleinformat suchte diese Woche ein Leser unter dem Titel "Unvorstellbar" Rat: Er habe seine 66-jährige Mutter mit dem 71-jährigen Lover im Bett erwischt. Obwohl Werbung, Wirtschaft, Politik das Stereotyp der "jungen Alten" propagieren, die, physisch fit, am besten lebenslang lernen, also arbeiten sollten, bleiben ihre Bedürfnisse, geschweige denn die sexuellen, ausgeblendet. Nur, was heißt schon "Alter"? Es ist ein Konstrukt: In der Kunst gilt als "jung" alles unter 35. Im Internet wird Sex mit "dirty old women" über 40 angeboten.

"Dirty old women" am Laufsteg

"Dirty", das Prädikat ist sonst nur für Männer geläufig, denen vor

allem im Zusammenwirken mit jüngeren Frauen ein Sexleben bis ins hohe Alter zugestanden wird. Ines Doujak wählte es für den Titel ihrer Ausstellung in Salzburg. Die 1959 in Wien geborene Künstlerin befasst sich seit 2004 verstärkt mit dem Altern, speziell bei Frauen. In Workshops arbeitete sie in Barcelona mit einer Playback singenden Pensionisten-Band, in Wien mit einer türkischen Frauengruppe, die Elfriede Jelineks "Stecken, Stab und Stangl" probt, in Salzburg mit einer zufällig zusammengewürfelten Damenrunde. Ein Ergebnis, eigentlich dessen Relikte, ist ausgestellt: Auf einem Laufsteg-Podest sind Fantasie-Kleider zu bewundern, die von Doujaks Schützlingen zwischen Ende 50 und 70 in einer emotional tief bewegendenden Performance am Mittwoch zur Eröffnung vorgeführt wurden. Kein "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" war das, sondern verspielte, ironische, sentimentale und durchaus geile Selbstdarstellungen. "Dirty old women" eben. Die Kostüme sind gespickt mit "nicht-klischeehaften" Fotos von "Weiblichkeiten", die Doujak nach einem Aufruf im Internet zugesandt bekam.

Das Leben ist flüchtig

Eines dieser Fotos kam aus Wien, von einer Gruppe aus 24 biologisch

wohl als jung einzustufenden Künstlern (fast alle 70er Jahrgänge), die die denkmalgeschützte "Kornhäusel-Villa" in Ottakring "Wachgeküsst" haben, so der Titel der Schau. Unter dem Motto "Lang ist die Kunst, flüchtig das Leben" - in der Nachbarschaft soll ein generationenübergreifendes Wohnprojekt entstehen - bespielt man die baufälligen Räume mit meist ziemlich originellen, expliziten und trashigen Installationen, Videos, Fotografien. In einem Dummy hausen Maden (Hans Riedel), vor einem Marterl im Garten steht ein Mütterchen (Wolfgang Hofer), dahinter die ephemere Draht-Kutsche von Andrea Starl - am Abstellgleis. Mit Plastilin verlieren selbst Barbie-Puppen ihre

TANZ "Ich entscheide, mit wem ich arbeite!"

Idealmaße (Cornelia Foerch/Lena Knilli), und Markus Grabenwoeger lässt eine an Multipler Sklerose erkrankte Pensionistin zu Wort kommen, deren Mann sie im Stich gelassen hat.

Alles nicht unbedingt neu, das Altern beschäftigt die Kunst schon seit Jahrhunderten. Dürer zeichnete 1514 seine greise Mutter, US-Künstlerin Hannah Wilke fotografierte sich 1981 nackt mit ihrer sterbenden Mutter. Jede Kunst ist aber in ihrer Zeit zu verstehen: So wundert es nicht, dass sich Doujak bei ihrem Salzburger Workshop tiefenpsychologischer Methoden bediente, des "Katathym imaginativen Bilderlebens". Sie führte ihre Gruppe auf eine fiktive Reise, dann erzählte jede von ihren Erlebnissen - meist traf man dabei übrigens: nicht die lieben Alten, sondern die alten Lieben.

disc theque

Arular (XL/Edel)

SO VIEL CHAOS,

SO VIEL LIEBE,

SO VIEL REVOLUTION!

"I bongo with my lingo, beat it like a wing yo, from Congo to Colombo, can't stereotyp my thing yo. Zu äußerst trockenen Breakbeats sprudelt es aus der jungen Frau heraus: Tamilisch, Cockney, amerikanischer Ghetto-Slang. Dann setzt jäh ein unwiderstehlicher, im Original von Dr. Buzzards Original Savannah Band stammender Refrain ein, der den ungestümen Gestus von der wilden Rapperin aufs Reizvollste konterkariert. "Sunshowers" nennt sich der ungewöhnlich klingende Ohrwurm. Hinter dem Akronym M.I.A. (für "Missing in Action") steht die unorthodox reimende Protagonistin Maya Arulpragasam, die trotz ihrer Jugend schon einiges mitgemacht hat. Geboren in Hounslow, einer etwas heruntergekommenen Ecke in London, zog sie mit ihrer Familie nach Sri Lanka zurück, wo sich ihr Vater als Kämpfer der **Tamil Tigers** einen Namen machte. Mehrmals musste Mayas Mutter mit ihren drei Kindern ins indische Madras flüchten. Letztlich gelang ihr die Rückkehr nach London, wo sie und die Kids in einer Flüchtlingsbetreuungseinrichtung unterkamen. Dort lernte Maya mit zwölf Jahren Englisch. Durch den Fluch des Akzents Außenseiterin, wurden ihr Hiphop und Malen zur Heimat. Zunächst sah es aus, als ob die Kunst zu ihrer Domäne werden würde - sie wurde für den alternativen Turner-Prize nominiert. Dann aber hatte sie ein Rendezvous mit dem Musikgerät Roland 505, auf dem sie unter großzügiger Ignoranz der technischen Hindernisse aus Banghra, Hiphop, Electro und Dancehall ihr höchst eigentümliches Sound-Destillat kreierte. So viel Chaos, so viel Liebe, so viel Revolution!sam

Tanita Tikaram

AKKORDEON und dunkles TIMBRE für WINTERherzen

1988, als Teenager, eroberte die schöne brünette Britin mit dem

dunklen Timbre mit "Twist in my Sobriety" Herzen und Hitparaden. Die große Krise nach dem Erfolg kam so sicher, wie die erste große Liebe bricht, in der Folge wechselte Tikaram Sounds und Identitäten wie die Hüte. Nun legt sie aber mit "Sentimental" ein reifes Opus vor, das vor allem in punkto Melodik begeistert. Auf zehn akustisch instrumentierten Songs gleitet sie mit schweren Flügeln durch das Gewölk ihres Traumes von Liebe. Irgendwie ahnt sie, dass die Realität an die Imagination nur schwer herankommt, aber dass Winterherzen mit Akkordeon, French Horn, Piano und Violinen reichlich gekost gehören, um die Lebenssäfte wieder fließen zu lassen. Schwere Lieder, durchsetzt von Resignation, aber auch von der Erinnerung an die fernen Tage gleißender Emotion.sam

elemente

Hormontherapie: Neuer Streit

Wieder sorgt die britische "Million **Women** Study" (MWS) für Aufregung: 2003 lasen Forscher aus ihr, dass Hormonersatztherapie für Frauen nach dem Wechsel das Brustkrebsrisiko um bis zu 66 Prozent erhöhe. Nun hat

TANZ "Ich entscheide, mit wem ich arbeite!"

Valerie Beral (Uni Oxford) in The Lancet die Auswirkungen auf die Entstehung von Krebs der Gebärmutter-Schleimhaut (Endometrium) analysiert. Ergebnis: Das synthetische Hormon Tibolon erhöht das Risiko um 79 Prozent, Einnahme von Östrogenen (ohne Gestagene) um 45 Prozent. Keine Änderung des Risikos ergibt sich bei Kombinationspräparaten in zyklisch sich verändernder Dosierung. Gegen diese Aussagen wenden sich manche österreichische Gynäkologen (z. B. Christian Egarter, Ernst Kubista, Christian Menzel): Sie sprechen von "verzerrenden Einflüssen", in der MWS sei Tibolon just Frauen mit erhöhtem Brust- und Gebärmutterkrebs-Risiko verordnet worden.

Load-Date: April 30, 2005

End of Document

No Headline In Original

Associated Press International

March 16, 2003 Sunday

Copyright 2003 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

Section: INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Length: 1716 words

Body

WORLD AT 0200 GMT:

Update - IRAQ: Saddam warns Iraq will take war anywhere in the world, if attacked.

Update - AZORES SUMMIT: On brink of war, Bush sets Monday deadline for U.N. Security Council nations to agree to authorize force against Iraq.

New - ANALYSIS--US-IRAQ-GOING TO WAR. Azores meeting leaves little doubt war is near.

Update - ASIA-PNEUMONIA: Asian outbreak may be new strain of flu or exotic virus; some patients improving.

Update - KOREAS-NUCLEAR: North Korea says U.S. pushing nuclear situation into "tight corner."

Update - SALVADOR-ELECTIONS: Former rebels claim victories against conservatives in congressional, mayoral elections in El Salvador.

New - CHINA-POLITICS: Wen? Now: China's Wen Jiabao inherits giant nation's premiership, convulsive economy.

New - CHINA-THE TWO PREMIERS: In shepherding China's economy, departing premier and successor offer differing images, identical goals.

IRAQ DEFIANT: Saddam warns Iraq will take war anywhere in the world

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein warned that if Iraq is attacked, it will take the war anywhere in the world "wherever there is sky, land or water." U. S. President George W. Bush gave the United Nations through Monday to find a diplomatic solution to the standoff. BC-ME-GEN--IRAQ. Has moved. By Hamza Hendawi. AP Photos XDG101-102

AZORES SUMMIT: On brink of war, Bush sets Monday deadline for U.N. Security Council nations to agree to authorize force against Iraq

LAJES, Azores Islands - On the brink of war, U.S. President George W. Bush, and prime ministers Tony Blair of Britain and Jose Maria Aznar of Spain gave the United Nations a Monday deadline to endorse the use of force to compel Iraq's immediate disarmament. BC-EU-GEN--AZORES SUMMIT. Has moved. By Ron Fournier. AP Photos XSL122, 206; PMM116; LMC109.

ALSO:

- BC-NA-ANL--US-IRAQ-GOING TO WAR. WASHINGTON - The message from the Azores couldn't have been clearer: Diplomacy has run its course and war with Iraq is all but inevitable. Few give any realistic chance of success to a final 24-hour burst of diplomacy in a deadlocked U.N. Security Council. Has moved. By Tom Raum.

No Headline In Original

- BC-EU-GEN--FRANCE-IRAQ. PARIS - President Jacques Chirac says he is willing to accept a 30-day deadline for Iraq to disarm, provided the move was endorsed by the chief U.N. weapons inspectors. Has moved. By Kim Housego.

- BC-UN-GEN--UN-IRAQ. UNITED NATIONS - As U.S. President George W. Bush pushed the United Nations to the wall, France and its allies were undeterred, insisting Iraq should have more time to disarm. U.N. chief weapons inspector Hans Blix was preparing a plan that would prolong inspections for several more months. Has moved.

- BC-NA-GEN--US-IRAQ-DIPLOMACY. WASHINGTON - The strained relations between Washington and Paris took another hit as Vice President Dick Cheney said "it's difficult to take the French serious" and dismissed a new disarmament deadline for Iraq almost as soon as it was proposed. Has moved. AP Photo WX102.

- BC-UN-GEN--UN-IRAQ-BLIX. UNITED NATIONS - Calling the current situation with Iraq "very threatening," chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix said he is watching events "hour by hour" but is still planning to produce a list of priority disarmament issues for Saddam Hussein to meet in the coming months. Has moved.

- BC-ME-GEN--KUWAIT-CULTURAL SHIELDS. KUWAIT CITY - A dozen years ago, Iraqi troops looted the National Museum during their seven-month invasion, then torched it. Today, on the eve of another war, it remains largely a charred wreck, though a small exhibition hall was reopened in January. Has moved. By Tini Tran. AP Photo EKW101.

RARE PNEUMONIA: Asian outbreak may be new strain of flu or exotic virus; some patients improving

LONDON - A deadly, mysterious respiratory illness spread largely among health care workers in Asia could be a new strain of flu or even an exotic virus passed from animals to people, a health official said. BC-EU-GEN--ASIA-PNEUMONIA. Has moved. By Emma Ross. AP Photo HK802.

KOREAS-NUCLEAR: North Korea says U.S. pushing nuclear situation into "tight corner"

SEOUL, South Korea - North Korea accused the United States of pushing a crisis over its suspected nuclear weapons programs into a "tight corner" and claimed Washington was preparing an invasion of the communist country. BC-AS-GEN--KOREAS-NUCLEAR. Has moved. By Jae-Suk Yoo.

CHINA-POLITICS: Wen? Now: China's Wen Jiabao inherits giant nation's premiership, convulsive economy

BEIJING - China's new premier takes office with a reputation for caring about the countryside and a challenge to prove it, inheriting the Herculean job of reducing the yawning gap between urban rich and rural poor while keeping Asia's most dynamic economy growing. BC-AS-POL--CHINA-POLITICS. Has moved. By Christopher Bodeen. AP Photos BEJ125, 128, 131.

WITH:

- BC-AS-POL--CHINA-THE TWO PREMIERS. BEIJING - The old: cantankerous, unpredictable and tough. The new: genial, humble and a consensus builder. The arduous task of being China's premier, the top economic official in one of the world's most important economies, has fallen upon the small shoulders of Wen Jiabao, a geologist with financial and rural expertise who took over the job from Zhu Rongji. Has moved. By Audra Ang. AP Photos BEJ108-111.

SRI LANKAN PEACE TALKS: Sri Lanka peace talks to resume despite deadly clash with Tamil Tigers

TOKYO - A deadly clash at sea between the Sri Lanka government and Tamil Tiger rebels could overshadow a critical round of negotiations to end one of Asia's longest-running civil wars. BC-AS-GEN--JAPAN-SRI LANKA-PEACE TALKS. Has moved. By Beth Duff-Brown.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Rebel chief suspends country's constitution, dissolves national assembly

BANGUI, Central African Republic - Rebels in the Central African Republic captured the capital and their leader declared himself the new president of this coup-prone nation and dissolved the legislature. Rebel leader Gen. Francois Bozize also suspended the constitution. BC-AF-GEN--CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC. Has moved. By Joseph Benamsse. AP Photos PAR101-102.

EL SALVADOR: Former rebels claim victories against conservatives in congressional, mayoral elections

No Headline In Original

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador -The former guerrillas of the leftist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) claimed they had retained the mayorships of the capital city and a major suburban area in Sunday's election. BC-LA-GEN--SALVADOR ELECTIONS. Has moved; developing. By Eloy O. Aguilar. AP Photos VSAL101-103, 105; SALLR101.

ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS: American protester killed by Israeli bulldozer, first foreigner to die in 29 months of fighting GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - JERUSALEM - A 23-year-old student from Washington state becomes the first international protester to be killed during 29 months of Israel-Palestinian fighting when she is run over by a bulldozer she was trying to stop from demolishing a building in a refugee camp. BC-ME-GEN--ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS. Has moved; developing. By Mark Lavie. AP Photos GAZ109-114.

IRAQ-MASSACRE: Halabja remembers Saddam's chemical attack on Kurdish minority 15 years ago

HALABJA, Iraq - The people of northern Iraq pause to remember a day 15 years ago that gave the mountain town of Halabja a painful place in history. On March 16, 1988, Saddam Hussein's forces launched a chemical attack on the Kurdish minority in their northern homeland, killing 5,000 men, women and children in Halabja. BC-ME-GEN--IRAQ-MASSACRE MEMORY. Has moved. By Borzou Daragahi. AP Photos XHS101-104.

SERBIAN BLUES: Tough times ahead for Serbia after premier's assassination

BELGRADE, Serbia-Montenegro - Jovanka Milic said she has made up her mind. First, she attended the funeral of Serbia's slain prime minister, and now she will emigrate to the West. "The bullets that killed Zoran Djindjic killed the last hope in Serbia," she said, reflecting the gloom that has settled over the troubled republic after the assassination of its most energetic and reformist leader since World War II. BC-EU-GEN--SERBIA'S BLUES. Has moved. By Dusan Stojanovic. AP Photo BEL102.

WITH:

- BC-EU-GEN--SERBIA-ASSASSINATION. BELGRADE, Serbia-Montenegro - Serbia's Democratic Party moves quickly to replace slain Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, hoping to keep his assassination from plunging the country into new turmoil. Has moved. By Jovana Gec. AP Photos XSI104, BEL102.

FINLAND-ELECTIONS: Finland opposition party wins most seats in parliamentary elections, but may not take power

HELSINKI, Finland -The opposition Center Party edged out the Social Democrats in elections for the Finnish parliament, but may not have the partners to form a government. BC-EU-POL--FINLAND-ELECTIONS. Has moved. By Matti Huuhtanen. AP Photos HEL101-102, 104.

LIECHTENSTEIN-PRINCE: Liechtenstein prince wins vote for more power

VADUZ, Liechtenstein - The royal flag flies proudly on the imposing 13th century castle above the tiny capital of Liechtenstein as Prince Hans-Adam II celebrates a crushing victory in a constitutional fight for more power. BC-EU-POL--LIECHTENSTEIN-PRINCE. Has moved. By Clare Nullis.

HUMAN RIGHTS TRADE-OFFS: U.N. human rights body meeting opens under shadow of likely war in Iraq

GENEVA - The United Nations' top human rights body starts its annual six-week meeting Monday under the shadow of a likely war in Iraq that has activists fearing that nations will hold off condemning the worst offenders for political reasons. BC-UN-GEN--HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. Has moved. By Naomi Koppel.

ELF SCANDAL: Trial probing well-greased underside of former state-run oil giant to open Monday

PARIS - After an eight-year investigation, a court on Monday is to begin hearing the main case in the many-tentacled scandal surrounding the former state-run oil giant Elf Aquitaine. Secret bank accounts, Cartier jewels and oil are certain to figure in the proceedings. BC-EU-GEN--FRANCE-ELF TRIAL. Has moved. By Verena Von Derschau.

-

LOOKING AHEAD: On Tuesday, the Sri Lankan government and Liberation Tigers of Tamileelam begin the sixth round of peace talks in Hakone, Japan.

No Headline In Original

YOUR QUERIES: The editors in charge are Peter James Spielmann and Charles Gans. Requests to The Associated Press World Service are welcome. Contact your local AP bureau or the AP International Desk in New York, by telephone: (1) 212-621-1650, fax: (1) 212-621-5449, e-mail: worldnews@ap.org.

Load-Date: March 17, 2003

End of Document

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

States News Service

December 12, 2007 Wednesday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 9161 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

The Human Rights Council this afternoon held an interactive discussion on reports presented by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Rodolpho Stavenhagen, and by the Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Martin Scheinin.

Rodolpho Stavenhagen, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, noted that this year he had devoted his thematic work to indigenous development. The recent adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provided a specific framework for the implementation and evaluation of public policies on indigenous issues. In particular, the right to prior, free and informed consent, one of the pillars of the Declaration, set an indispensable threshold for any development activities directed towards indigenous peoples. He also discussed findings from an official visit to Bolivia, and of a general study on the rights of indigenous people in Asia.

Martin Scheinin, Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, gave an account of the three missions he undertook in 2007, to South Africa, the United States and Israel. On South Africa, he identified some aspects of new South African counter-terrorism legislation as examples of good practice, but other elements, including the fact that Foreigners could be detained for security-related reasons without trial or effective review, were cause for concern. As for the United States, which as a world leader had a special responsibility in the protection of human rights while countering terrorism, the Special Rapporteur expressed grave concern over the situation of detainees at Guantanamo Bay and other locations, and the lack of judicial guarantees and fair trial procedures for those suspected of terrorist activities. As for Israel, the report welcomed Israel's invitation to comment on new counter-terrorism legislation. However, there were serious incompatibilities between this and its obligations pertaining to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In the ensuing interactive dialogue, a number of speakers echoed the sentiment expressed by one that abuses committed in the name of the war on terror by some nations had strengthened the appeal of extremism. Several delegations criticized the Special Rapporteur on indigenous people's approach, in particular in his report on indigenous peoples in Asia. Notably, the report was not balanced, as it did not contain the views of the States concerned, and was thus not in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures. Many Speakers also wondered why the Special Rapporteur decided to commence this regional focus on Asia, as a

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

large number of Asian countries did not have indigenous peoples, considering their entire populations to be indigenous. Speakers on the issue of human rights while countering terrorism noted that a fine balance between human rights and the need combating terrorism had to be struck, and asked where the limits should be drawn in this regard.

Speaking this afternoon as concerned countries were the representatives of Bolivia, South Africa, the United States of America, Israel and Palestine.

Also speaking were the representatives of Portugal, on behalf of the European Union, Pakistan, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, India, Cuba, Mexico, China, on behalf of the Asian Group, Canada, Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Bangladesh, Brazil, Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Peru, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, Algeria, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Venezuela and Norway.

Speaking in rights of reply were Israel and Palestine.

The next meeting of the Council will be tomorrow morning, at 9 a.m, when it will conclude its interactive debate on the reports on the human rights of indigenous peoples and the situation of human rights in the context of countering terrorism. When it concludes that debate, the Council will continue without interruption until 6 p.m., taking up the review, rationalization and improvement of mandates begun in the first part of its sixth session, notably looking at the mandates of the Representative of the Secretary-General for the rights of internally displaced persons; the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Sudan; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; and the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Liberia.

Documents

The Council has before it the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Rodolfo Stavenhagen (A/HRC/6/15 and Add.1-3), which summarizes the main activities undertaken by the Special Rapporteur since his second report to the Council. In its thematic section, the report focuses on the implications for indigenous peoples of a human rights-based approach to development. Indigenous peoples, according to that approach, are identified as human rights holders and the realization of their rights is posited as the main objective of development. In conclusions, the Special Rapporteur highlights that, although over the past 50 years extensive efforts and resources have been devoted to overcoming the poverty and marginalization from which most indigenous communities suffer, the economic, social and human development levels of these communities generally remain very low. Key to understanding the limited impact of development policies is that they have not attacked the structural causes underlying the marginalization of indigenous peoples, causes that are directly linked to the failure to recognize, protect and guarantee observance of their individual and collective human rights. The recently adopted United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is promoted as a clear normative framework for development policies and actions on behalf of indigenous peoples, based on self-determination; free, prior and informed consent; effective participation, autonomy and self-management; territorial control; and non-discrimination. The report concludes with a number of recommendations focused on ensuring a human rights-based approach to indigenous development.

A first addendum contains information on the communications sent to Governments from 1 January to 2 September 2007 and the responses received until 19 October 2007. The information received shows that an implementation gap continues to affect indigenous peoples' enjoyment of all their human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural. This gap continues to widen in the socio-economic realm, where there is a growing distance between the objectives of government policies and indigenous peoples' actual conditions of life. Special concern continues to be raised about the unremitting loss of indigenous peoples' traditional lands, territories and natural resources.

A second addendum sets out preliminary findings of the Special Rapporteur following his mission to Bolivia, undertaken from 25 November to 7 December 2007. The Special Rapporteur notes that, in 2005, an indigenous President was elected for the first time, setting out the clear intention to promote major social and economic policy changes aimed at benefiting the situation of indigenous peoples in the country and remedying the historical

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

injustices to which they had been subjected. It documents numerous achievements of President Morales to that end, including the appointment of a number of indigenous Ministers and Vice Ministers to his cabinet, the incorporation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as part of domestic law, and the inclusion of numerous provisions relative to the collective rights of indigenous peoples. However, it also highlights a number of serious, and ongoing, issues of concern, in particular, persisting racism and discrimination against indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous women, which extends even to the actions of Government agents on the national and local levels and to the activities of political parties; continuing, illegal exclusion of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands; the conditions of servitude to which the Guarani people are subjected to in their daily life; and contamination of indigenous environmental resources, owing to mining concessions.

A third addendum to the report gives a general overview of the situation of the rights of indigenous peoples in Asia, based on the information gathered by the Special Rapporteur during recent activities in the region. Drawing from specific examples, the report focuses on issues of particular concern in the region, including the steady loss of indigenous lands, territories and natural resources; situations of internal conflict, violence and repression faced by these peoples; the implementation of peace accords and autonomy regimes; and the special abuses faced by indigenous women. The Special Rapporteur concludes that indigenous peoples in Asian countries face similar patterns of discrimination and human rights violations as in other parts of the world.

The Council has before it the report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Martin Scheinin (A/HRC/6/17 and Add.1-4), which contains a summary of the Special Rapporteur's activities from 1 January to 31 October 2007, and in its subsequent chapters highlights and addresses his concern that economic, social and cultural rights have been neglected or underdeveloped in efforts towards the promotion and protection of human rights in the fight against terrorism. In conclusion, the report contains a series of specific recommendations, based on his country visits, as well as a set of general recommendations. Among the latter, the Special Rapporteur encourages States and intergovernmental organizations to utilize fully the potential of promoting economic, social and cultural rights as an inherent feature of long-term sustainable strategies to prevent terrorism; recommends that more attention be paid to the right to education as a key right in the enjoyment of several other human rights and as a cornerstone in sustainable long-term strategies for the prevention of terrorism; and urges States not to apply their counter-terrorism laws and measures to social movements or protest by indigenous peoples or minority communities who claim recognition and full protection for their economic, social and cultural rights.

A first addendum to the report contains communications transmitted to Governments between 1 January and 15 September 2007, as well as replies received up to 1 November 2007. In addition, the report also covers press releases issued in 2007.

A second addendum contains a report of the Special Rapporteur's visit to South Africa, carried out from 16 to 26 April 2007. Among his conclusions, the Special Rapporteur says that, in its counter-terrorism policies and legislation, South Africa has sought an overall framework for addressing security concerns related to terrorism without undermining the protections of the Constitution. Nevertheless, as part of a preventive approach to counter-terrorism, firmer action is needed to address violence and other expressions of xenophobia towards immigrants, both from private individuals and any government actors.

Addendum three contains the report of the Special Rapporteur's mission to the United States, from 16 to 25 May 2007. The report considers a number of issues, including the Guantanamo Bay detainees and their categorization as "unlawful enemy combatants"; the use of military commissions to try terrorist suspects; interrogation techniques; definitions of terrorism under U.S. law; alleged targeted killings of terrorist suspects by U.S. agents; and profiling. Among its recommendations are that the categorization of persons as "unlawful enemy combatants" be abandoned, and that the United States release or put on trial those persons detained under that categorization; and that legislative amendments be made to remove the denial of habeas corpus rights under the Military Commissions Act 2006 and the restrictions upon the ability of Guantanamo Bay detainees to seek full judicial review of their combatant status. Gravely concerned at the enhanced interrogation techniques reportedly used by the CIA, the

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

Special Rapporteur urges the United States to ensure that all its officials and agencies comply with international standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and the Geneva Conventions. He recommends that the Army Field Manual be revised to expressly state that only enumerated techniques are permissible. The Special Rapporteur further urges the Government to take transparent steps to ensure that the CIA practice of "extraordinary rendition" is completely discontinued and is not conducted in the future, and that CIA interrogation techniques are regulated in line with the position expressed above in respect of the Army Field Manual.

A fourth addendum presents the report of the Special Rapporteur's mission to Israel, from 3 to 10 July 2007, and his visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Among subjects treated are the state of emergency declared by Israel; legal implications regarding the classification of suspected terrorists as "unlawful combatants"; investigation and prosecution of terrorist suspects, including the legal definition of terrorism, interrogation methods, detention procedures and the use of military courts; the construction of a security barrier in the West Bank; the situation in Gaza; and Israel Defense Force Operations, including the use of "human shields", the demolition of houses, targeted killings and the killing of civilians. In the final section, the Special Rapporteur provides a brief conclusion and recommendations, drawing the Government's attention to the fact that the high emotional toll of counter-terrorism or security measures easily leads to counterproductive effects. The Special Rapporteur recommends the withdrawal of all Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the replacement of the still unfinished barrier with a security infrastructure that, for its geographical position, respects the Green Line or is otherwise accepted by the Palestinians.

Presentation of Report by Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People

RODOLPHO STAVENHAGEN, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, said the report covered the period from January 2007 up to his recent visit to Bolivia, and he was presenting a brief preliminary note on that. This year he had devoted his thematic work to indigenous development. The recent adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provided a specific framework for the implementation and evaluation of public policies on indigenous issues. The report provided documentation on a number of good practices which had been implemented to encourage endogenous and sustainable development, and these processes could be described as a process of empowerment under which indigenous peoples enjoyed their rights. Successful examples of this type of approach had been seen in education and health in countries such as Brazil and Peru, where the indigenous people had taken control of these issues, incorporating their own priorities and needs. A significant portion of the human rights-based approach experiences in the indigenous context had to do with recognition of the rights of the indigenous over their land and natural resources.

Important experiences had been achieved with regards to preservation of indigenous territories. The right to prior, free and informed consent, one of the pillars of the Declaration set an indispensable threshold for any development activities directed towards indigenous peoples. In this way, there had to be effective participation of communities in designing, implementing and evaluating development activities. It was essential to identify the holders of rights, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups, including indigenous women. These were good practices in human rights, particularly with regards to the rights-based approach to development.

Mr. Stavenhagen said he had carried out an official visit to Bolivia in September 2007. An indigenous President had been elected there for the first time, and he had announced plans to implement policies that would rectify injustices undergone by indigenous people. The Government had made the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples an internal law in terms of status - and the new Constitution of the State incorporated many provisions on the collective rights of indigenous peoples. One of the main subjects that had struck Mr. Stavenhagen on his trip to Bolivia was the continuing phenomenon of racism against indigenous people, especially women, expressed through certain actions of the officials of the Government, and through incitement to violence against people of indigenous origins. Particular concern was aroused by the situation of bondage in which the Guarani were living in certain areas, due to the historic plundering of their lands, and the pollution caused by mining. There had

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

been major progress in the recognition of the rights of the indigenous, and in their role in national economic and political life.

Mr. Stavenhagen said he had also attended a follow-up meeting in the Philippines during the last year. He was concerned about the accelerated loss of forests, as these were important for many for survival. There was an increase in the number of extrajudicial killings, torture, and other human rights violations, committed by the armed forces and police, in particular targeting human rights defenders, community activists and other leaders, and these had particular negative effects on the international perception of the Philippines. He had also carried out a mission to Mexico, along with Miloon Kothari, the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing. A general study on the rights of indigenous people in Asia was also being submitted - indigenous people in Asia were particularly subject to discrimination, excluded from decision-making processes, and victimised by systematic violations of their human rights, sparked by the loss of their lands and ancestral territories. Many of these peoples were at risk of disappearing. Indigenous rights were human rights, and the Declaration was already part of the international normative framework that was required to promote human rights throughout the world. Mr. Stavenhagen hoped his work over the last few years had contributed to achieving the goal of equal rights for all indigenous people.

Presentation of Report by Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism

MARTIN SCHEININ, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, hoped that the period of transition from the Commission on Human Rights was now completed and that the Council would be able to act on the reports presented to it by the Special Procedures, including his own mandate. Three missions were completed in 2007 and a visit to Spain was planned for 2008. The Philippines had not been able to confirm dates but said a visit would be welcomed. Visit requests were outstanding with Algeria, Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan and Tunisia. The report focussed on the negative impact of counter-terrorism measures on economic, social and cultural rights, and the role of promoting these rights in order to prevent terrorism. South Africa, the United States and Israel were thanked for their cooperation during missions in 2007, and the Palestinian Authority was thanked for the opportunity to meet relevant interlocutors.

Mr. Scheinin said the report identified some aspects of the South African protection of Constitutional democracy against terrorist and related activities act (2005) as examples of good practice, but other elements caused concern. Foreigners could be detained for security-related reasons without trial or effective review, although racial, ethnic or religious profiling was excluded from counter-terrorism measures. It was regretted that, while full access was given to prison facilities, this was not the case for ad hoc visits to police detention facilities.

The United States, as a world leader, had a special responsibility in the protection of human rights while countering terrorism. The report expressed grave concern over the situation of detainees at Guantanamo Bay and other locations, and the lack of judicial guarantees and fair trial procedures for those suspected of terrorist activities. It was hoped that unmonitored interviews with detainees would be possible in the future, despite the Government's current objections.

The report welcomed Israel's invitation to comment on new counter-terrorism legislation. However, there were serious incompatibilities between this and its obligations pertaining to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Given the illegality of Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, all such settlements should be withdrawn and the barrier replaced with a security infrastructure.

Social and economic marginalization of and discrimination against vulnerable groups often amounted to violation of their human rights, and this could provide fertile soil for recruitment to organizations that might support terrorism. Mr. Scheinin recommended that the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council address the potential of promoting economic, social and cultural rights in strategies to prevent terrorism.

Statements by Concerned Countries

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

ANGELICA NAVARRO LLANOS (Bolivia), speaking as a concerned country, thanked the Special Rapporteur for his visit to Bolivia. The election of President Morales had opened the way for the indigenous peoples not only to be represented but also to be elected. Bolivia was implementing a national plan of development aimed at the "well-being" of all its citizens, in search of an equilibrium or balance. Indigenous ideas could well be used in multilateral debates. The Constitution of Bolivia specifically referred to the indispensability of cultural plurality which helped create the history of Bolivia. Bolivia was surprised by the mention of racist and anti-indigenous feelings in the report of Mr. Stavenhagen.

GLAUDINE MTSHALI, (South Africa), speaking as a concerned country, said in national consultative meetings with all the national stakeholders to reflect on the report of the Special Rapporteur, a few factual inaccuracies were observed. South Africa was, on the whole, grateful for the opportunity to interact with Mr. Scheinin on his sensitive mandate. His interaction with all the stakeholders was insightful. The recommendations of the Special Rapporteur to the Government were sound, and South Africa was in the process of integrating them into national policies.

South Africa hoped that it would have further opportunities to engage with the Special Rapporteur on some of his recommendations as and when necessary. It had also taken note of the Special Rapporteur's observation that the applicable pieces of legislation in South Africa tended to place a high premium on counter-terrorism measures with the potential consequence of a negative impact on human rights. South Africa would continue to work on these issues to ensure that it struck an appropriate balance between implementing the required counter-terrorism measures whilst promoting and protecting human rights.

MELANIE J. KHANNA (United States), speaking as a concerned country, said the United States appreciated the Special Rapporteur's observation that the military judge was doing his utmost to ensure fair and orderly proceedings. Given the complexity of military commission cases, it was not surprising that there were logistical challenges which could occur in any domestic criminal system in any country. The United States was disappointed that the Special Rapporteur declined an offer to tour the detention facility. Such a tour would have enabled him to offer a valuable perspective. Mr. Scheinin's oral presentation about his Guantanamo visit was in part misleading about the facts of the process and repeated previous, ill-informed criticisms of military commissions.

The report did acknowledge United States leadership in the international fight against terrorism, but missed a number of opportunities to deepen the ongoing international discussion of how democracies might best deal with current terrorist threats. A large part of the report repeated unfair and oversimplified criticisms. While the extension of this mandate was supported, it was hoped that in future the work of the Special Rapporteur would proceed differently and focus on more practical solutions to common problems faced by the international community.

ITZHAK LEVANON (Israel), speaking as a concerned country, said that Israel recognized the value and merit of engaging in a constructive dialogue with all human rights mechanisms whose mandates were equitable, fair and balanced. In recognition of the constant daily threats of terrorism facing Israel, the Special Rapporteur had rightly called attention to the fact that among the devastating consequences of terrorism were also traumatic psychological consequences. In considering Israel's conduct, it was crucial to examine the situation in its proper context. Israel was striking a delicate balance between competing human rights considerations and security concerns. It was because of such constant and imminent threats that Israel was compelled to remain under a state of emergency.

Israel disagreed with the Special Rapporteur's assertion that this state of emergency was incompatible with Israel's strong democratic legacy. Some of the Special Rapporteur's conclusions were challenged. The security fence was not a political one but a security one and could be dismantled as had been done before. Israel was also open to suggestions as to how to improve the humanitarian situation of Palestinians in Gaza while it remained vigilant about the reality on the ground and against terrorist attacks.

MOHAMMED ABU-KOASH, (Palestine), speaking as a concerned country, thanked the Special Rapporteur for his valuable report which asked Israel to abide by international law in its policies and practices towards the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory. Bombarding Palestinian residential quarters, using Palestinian children as human shields, torturing detainees, hindering pregnant women from reaching hospitals, the Apartheid Wall, the

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

colonial settlements and the very continuation of the occupation of Palestine and Syrian and Lebanese Territories constituted flagrant violations of international law. Israeli creeping geography had been countered by the Palestinian crawling demography, as the victims of Aryan purity had been transformed into the proponents of Jewish purity.

A flower enjoyed its own natural turf, and yielded its fragrance in its own environment. Likewise, Palestinians had the right to enjoy their olive trees, carnations, and the ancient narrow passages leading to the holy sites of the Dome of the Rock and the Holy Sepulchre that stood out as grand testimonies negating the Israeli town to the holy town of Jerusalem. Noah's Ark had no tyrants, it had those who found grace in the eyes of God.

General Debate on Reports on Indigenous Peoples and Counter-Terrorism

DORA RAMOS (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the discussion of indicators to measure the impact of development projects affecting the rights of indigenous peoples. It was also noted that environmental degradation was becoming a new form of eviction, further impacting on the rights of indigenous peoples. Could the Special Rapporteur elaborate on how development cooperation strategies should be developed to improve that situation?

The European Union thanked the Special Rapporteur for the interesting details on his recent visits, including to Guantanamo Bay. All States should fully cooperate with Special Rapporteurs and respect pledges made when seeking election to the Council. Regarding outstanding requests for visits, were more details on discussions conducted with those countries and timetables available? Regarding commenting upon Israeli draft legislation, were there any other opportunities for this type of activity, or any other actors that might be involved, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights? Economic, social and cultural rights had been highlighted in the report, but it had stopped short of any clear causal link with terrorism. Had the Special Rapporteur been in contact with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other groups on this issue?

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said that the fight against terrorism had to remain a priority, but within the context of respect for international law. Abuses committed in the name of the war on terror by some nations had strengthened the appeal of extremism. The Organization of the Islamic Conference was concerned about the terrorist abuses committed by certain occupying Powers to achieve their ends, and the existence of Islamophobia under the guise of counter-terrorism in some societies.

It was hoped that the Human Rights Council would call for a withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian territories. Checkpoints and other measures should not constitute disproportionate harm and hamper the Palestinian people from enjoying their social and cultural rights. The Organization of the Islamic Conference supported the Special Rapporteur's recommendation that more attention be paid to education for the prevention of terrorism.

SWASHPAWAN SINGH (India), referring to the report on the situation of indigenous peoples in Asia, said that India regretted the fact that the Special Rapporteur's approach in preparation of the report was not in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures. In order to carry out an objective analysis of the issues, it was imperative that the mandate holders gave due consideration to the views of the States concerned.

The report on Asia contained several references to the situation of Adivasis, or a tribal population in India, and termed them "indigenous peoples". In India's understanding, the issue of indigenous rights pertained to peoples in independent countries who were regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present State boundaries, and who, irrespective of their legal status, retained some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. India regarded the entire population of India at independence, and their successors, to be indigenous, consistent with that definition. Accordingly, the identification of only a part of the population by the Special Rapporteur as indigenous peoples was unacceptable.

YURI ARIEL GALA LOPEZ (Cuba) welcomed the focus on a human rights-based approach to indigenous development contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people. Much still remained to be done regarding the rights of indigenous peoples after 500

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

years of colonization, and the issue should be kept high on national and international agendas. Cuba could be counted on to support all efforts to formally guarantee and implement all rights of all indigenous peoples.

On the reports by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, the wall being built in Israel was having an enormous adverse impact on the human rights of the people living in the region. The report was right to deal with the spread of terrorism in the world today and equally right to highlight problems with North American law on military commissions. The Special Rapporteur had not been allowed to visit North American facilities as requested, and had been concerned by intensive interrogation techniques used by the security agencies of the Government. It was hoped that a future report would address violations of the human rights of Cuban and North American citizens by anti-Cuban terrorist groups operating with clear impunity in Florida, and the violation of the human rights of Cuban anti-terrorists held in detention.

LUIS ALFONSO DE ALBA (Mexico) welcomed the important recommendations contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people to improve the living conditions of indigenous people. The Mexican Government also thanked the Special Rapporteur for the work undertaken in the course of his visit to Mexico, which had contributed to enhancing the current consultation process in the country.

BO QIAN (China), speaking on behalf of the Asian Group, said the Asian Group was concerned about the approach adopted by the Special Rapporteur in preparation of the report on indigenous peoples in Asia. The report was based on information gathered primarily from non-governmental sources, and did not take into account the views of States. Thus, the approach of the Special Rapporteur had been in clear disregard of the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures. The Asian Group also found it difficult to understand why the Special Rapporteur decided to commence a regional focus series with Asia, as a large number of Asian countries did not have indigenous peoples as vulnerable groups among their populations - as their entire populations were indigenous.

The Asian Group was also concerned about the misuse of the concepts of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in the report. Further, while the report stated in the introduction that it did not attempt to provide a full picture of the situation in the region, yet it jumped to conclusions and made sweeping recommendations for countries in the region, which was indicative of the unbalanced nature of the report.

Turning to the report on counter-terrorism, and speaking now in a national capacity, China categorically rejected the allegation in Mr. Scheinin's report that there had been human rights violations in China. Repressing terrorist activities was part of the international fight against terrorism. China, like all States, was against terrorism, and in its fight against it, China had always respected international human rights and international humanitarian law. To let terrorist groups act was to violate the human rights of others.

WAYNE LORD (Canada) felt that the right to development in relation to indigenous peoples was one that required a multidimensional approach that could be addressed through many modalities. Canada had launched an action plan in November 2007 to address the legal duty of federal departments and agencies to properly consult with First Nation, Metis and Inuit groups when Crown conduct might adversely impact their rights. The plan aimed to assist consultation and accommodation of aboriginal and treaty rights; create sustainable approaches in relation to consultation; provide more predictability, certainty and transparency on consultation and accommodation of Treaty rights; and promote reconciliation of aboriginal and treaty rights with other societal interests.

Canada noted that there had been increased focus on urban indigenous issues at the international level, and in that connection asked the Special Rapporteur for his views on the human rights-based approach to development as it applied to indigenous people living in urban settings.

OMAR SHALABY (Egypt) said that one of the negative impacts that counter-terrorism measures could have was in preventing people from enjoying their cultural rights. That should be addressed. The fight against terrorism should not go against human rights. All human rights mechanisms and bodies should play a significant role in addressing

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

the violations in the Palestinian occupied territories. Pressure exerted by the international community could show Israel that there was no place for such violations.

On the new draft Egyptian anti-terrorism legislation, the Egyptian Government was keen to include all parties in the debate. A fine balance between human rights and combating terrorism had to be ensured in all such cases.

IDHAM MUSA MOKTAR (Malaysia) said, with regard to the approach taken by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, the preparation of the report had not been in accordance with the mandate entrusted to the Special Rapporteur. Moreover, by taking a regionally based approach to highlighting the so-called problems faced by the indigenous peoples in various Asian countries, the Special Rapporteur had been led to make a series of generalizations of such problems in his report. That had, in turn, led to a serious deficit in a really good understanding and appreciation of each of the situations cited in the report. Generalization was certainly not helpful to the constructive dialogue pertaining to the common efforts to protect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples worldwide.

The indigenous people in Malaysia who had been referred to in the report were in fact an integral part of over 64 different groups of the indigenous population - the majority in the country. Today, indigenous people had fair and equal opportunity in Malaysia's political and development process, and occupied Government and senior public positions at the local, state, and federal levels.

GUSTI AGUNG WESAKA PUJA (Indonesia), referring to the report on the situation of indigenous peoples in Asia, wanted to know why other continents had not been included? It should also be pointed out that Achenese people were Indonesian and most Indonesians were indigenous people, contrary to the assertions in the report. Politically, the Aceh region enjoyed far more than "limited autonomy" and the current governor was a former Free Aceh Movement member. The Papuan people also enjoyed a similar autonomy, and Indonesia was a multi-ethnic society with more than 1,000 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. The sweeping conclusions that the rights of indigenous people were totally cut-off from the national legislations and constitutions of Asian countries were of concern. It would have been hoped that the Special Rapporteur would have actively sought to receive and exchange information from all relevant sources in order to ensure a more balanced report.

On the report of the of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Indonesia supported the report's recommendation urging Israel to withdraw Jewish settlements from the occupied Palestinian territories. Indonesia also agreed that the construction of barrier walls was having a severe negative impact on the enjoyment of all human rights of the Palestinian people and that they should be abolished.

ROMAN KASHAEV (Russian Federation) noted with satisfaction the cooperation between the United Nations Forum on Indigenous People and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people. Regarding the recent adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and the new tasks it placed before the Rapporteur, it was clear that to solve the problem of indigenous peoples a constructive dialogue with governments had to take place.

On counter-terrorism, the Russian Federation highlighted that terrorism was not only violating human rights, but was geared towards destroying them. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism had been justified when he had touched upon the effects of the enjoyment of cultural and social rights while combating terrorism. Counter-terrorism measures should not hamper the enjoyment of freedoms, but what where should the limits be drawn? Charity work was often used as a cover to conduct terrorist activities. Russia hoped that the activities of both Rapporteurs would continue, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures.

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN (Bangladesh) said Bangladesh supported all efforts for the protection and promotion of the human rights of indigenous people, and, as such, supported the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people that aimed at improving their situation. Bangladesh was, however, disappointed that the Special Rapporteur had devoted so much effort to produce a

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

report on the situation of indigenous people in Asia, where the issue had marginal relevance. The indigenous/non-indigenous dichotomy did not apply at all in characterizing the population of Bangladesh. Designating sub-groups as indigenous could divert the discussion, and thereby dilute the focus on the plight of the true indigenous people living elsewhere. Despite strong reservations on the relevance here, Bangladesh shared that the legitimate concerns of the tribal people should get as much of the due attention of the Government as others.

With regard to the statement of Special Rapporteur Scheinin, Bangladesh supported the ongoing global fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and was satisfied that the issue continued to draw the priority attention of the international community. The Special Rapporteur had rightly said that prolonged unresolved conflicts, ethnic and other forms of discrimination, political exclusion, and socio-economic marginalization were conditions, among others, that fomented terrorism. Unless efforts were made to improve the situation, to address those causal factors, counter-terrorism measures could yield no enduring result.

SERGIO ABREU E LIMA FLORENCIO (Brazil) supported the importance of identifying indigenous people as human rights holders and the new trend in development that respected the indigenous segments of society, which were otherwise excluded from participation in the framing of policies relative to areas in which they traditionally lived. The National Foundation for the Indian had been working in Brazil to prevent future development policies that did not take into proper account the status of indigenous people as full stakeholders in all questions related to human rights.

The denial of human rights undermined society. Governments had a responsibility to investigate human rights violations and prosecute perpetrators. Counter-terrorism legislation should be developed within a framework that did not infringe on fundamental freedoms, such as ethnic profiling.

ERLINDA F. BASILIO (Philippines) said that, in the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, the Human Rights Council should recall that the Special Rapporteur had to develop a regular cooperative dialogue with relevant actors, including Governments, in the exercise of his mandate. The addendum report on the situation of indigenous peoples in Asia had not been prepared in dialogue with States, thus it could not adequately represent the complete picture of the situation. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur's follow-up visit to the Philippines this year had not been conducted as an official visit, which was part of the standard procedures of the Council.

On terrorism, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism's desire to conduct a visit to the Philippines was actively being considered.

LEE SUK-TAE (Republic of Korea) said the Republic of Korea was concerned that counter-terrorism measures could be a source of severe human rights abuses when taken on a permanent or long-term basis, in an unbalanced manner. The spirit and substance of international human rights norms and humanitarian law should be fully respected in efforts to counter terrorism. It was Member States that had the primary obligation to prevent any violations of human rights and to provide remedy for victims. It was evident that respect for human rights was the first step in eliminating terrorist groups and fostering an environment of sustainable peace and human security.

The international community, including the United Nations and treaty bodies, should continue to study methods to better guarantee compliance with human rights. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism had a valuable role to play in that task, and the Republic of Korea therefore supported his mandate.

ALEJANDRO NEYRA SANCHEZ (Peru) said that it was particularly important to mention participation and empowerment in a discussion of indigenous peoples. Through a process of decentralization, congressmen from Andean regions in the interior of Peru were now able to convey their needs and concerns at the highest level. The Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People was now in place, and the Human Rights Council needed to ensure that it was implemented in a practical way.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

How could greater participation and empowerment of indigenous peoples be brought about, Peru asked? Did the Special Rapporteur know of any cases where legislative implementation of the rights of indigenous people had helped the cause of indigenous people?

RAJIVA WIJESINGHE (Sri Lanka) said that the recent terrorist attacks in Lebanon, Algeria and Iraq showed how important the current dialogue was. There was a need for certain measures to be implemented to respect human rights in the fight against terrorism. Better coordination might be appropriate while dealing with the side effects of the fight against terrorism on human rights. Education was important in that regard.

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism had mentioned the importance of restricting funding to terrorist groups in his report. It was ironic to find in an official document a reference to an old document of 2005 about the financing of the Tamil Tigers. The Special Rapporteur should have done a more thorough research. In fact, the Sri Lankan Government had a zero tolerance policy for the funding of terrorist groups and was very grateful for countries that had helped them in that regard.

ALICIA MARTIN GALLEGOS (Nicaragua) said Nicaragua welcomed the approach taken by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of indigenous peoples in his report, based on what was today an axiom - that there should be interdependence between development and human rights. It was the indigenous peoples that continued to live in the lowest levels of economic, social and human development. There was a unique opportunity to bridge that gap. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples gave a clear framework for action in designing development policies in the context of self-determination, allowing those peoples full participation and autonomy. The rights of indigenous peoples were an integral part of Nicaragua's society.

The recommendations put forth by the Special Rapporteur should be food for thought for Governments in designing inclusive policies in order to attain true sustainable development. Living in dignity and with justice should be a reality for all. The new Declaration should contribute to improving the situation of the indigenous peoples, and should be fully implemented. Nicaragua was confident the Council could create an appropriate mechanism to gather the thematic experience required and would thus meet the need of indigenous peoples.

IDRISS JAZA RY (Algeria) noted that the reports of the Special Rapporteurs had been presented to the General Assembly in advance of their being presented to the Human Rights Council. Clarification was requested on this erosion of the mandate of the Human Rights Council in that regard.

Algeria noted comments in the report by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism regarding the negative effects of the fight against terrorism on the economic, social and cultural rights. Algeria agreed that local terrorism was often linked to unresolved local economic, social, and cultural problems. An international convention on the prevention of and fight against terrorism was called for, with a clearly defined scope in order to prevent any blurring of the lines between terrorism and legitimate action by local people against foreign occupation.

VUN CHHEANG (Cambodia) said that, with regard to consideration for ethnic minorities, Cambodia was more advanced than others in its region. Laws served to protect minority communities. Community land ownership was also inscribed in Cambodian law. That work was at the heart of the Cambodian Government. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people contained untrue affirmations about the situation in Cambodia. Cambodia requested the Special Rapporteur to draft a report that reflected the actual situation.

PHAM QUOC TRU (Viet Nam) said the Vietnamese State attached special importance to the policy of ensuring the equal rights of all ethnic groups, and considered it a decisive factor for the country's sustainable development. Protection of the fundamental rights of ethnic people was guaranteed by a variety of Vietnamese legislation, particularly as it was stated in the Constitution that the State pursued the policy of equality, unity, and mutual support among all peoples, and the strict prohibition of all acts of ethnic discrimination and division. In reality, the

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

international community had increasingly recognized the tremendous achievements and efforts made by Viet Nam in respecting and guaranteeing human rights.

It was Viet Nam's view that the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people was ill-informed on the real situation in Viet Nam. In fact, the information contained in the report was sheer fabrication from unreliable sources that aimed at smearing the State, causing instability, dividing the Central Highlands ethnic minorities and undermining the great national unity bloc and integrity. The Government of Viet Nam was committed to being constructively engaged with the United Nations mechanisms, human rights mechanisms and the international community as a whole to ensure the protection of human rights and freedoms. As far as the Special Rapporteur was concerned, Viet Nam had serious concerns about the relevance of the working methods he had used, which damage his credibility in the future.

ENZO BITETTO GAVILANES (Venezuela) said that Venezuela's constitution recognized the rights of indigenous people, who were able to fully enjoy their individual and collective rights. The Government had guaranteed that any extraction of natural resources in indigenous areas would not affect the economic, social or cultural rights of the people.

It was important to continue to monitor infringements of human rights and international humanitarian law, and Venezuela acknowledged the impact counter-terrorism measures could have on the economic, social and cultural rights. In that respect, the construction of the barrier in Israel was having a great detrimental effect on the socio-economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory and prevented the Palestinian people from realizing their economic, social and cultural rights.

VEBJORN HEINES (Norway) said that the report by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people was a substantive and important contribution to Norway's own national process on those issues. Norway had reiterated on several occasions that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as adopted by the General Assembly, represented a framework for improved partnership.

On the issue of terrorism and the listing of individuals and entities as terrorists, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism was asked to elaborate on concrete measures in that regard.

Rights of Reply

ITZHAK LEVANON (Israel), speaking in an right to reply, said Israel was touched by the interest expressed by Cuba, Egypt and Algeria, among others, and hoped that those countries would respond favourably to the request by Mr. Scheinin to visit their countries. The observer of Palestine had revealed his true nature in his statement - his words were words of hatred, and his comments an utter disrespect to Holocaust survivors and cheap demagoguery. His words were evocative of George Orwell's in 1984 - that the past had been erased.

MOHAMMED ABU-KOASH, (Palestine), speaking in an right to reply, said Palestine wished to remind the distinguished representative of Israel that his problem was not with a delegation, it was that Israel was the occupier of Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese territories. The speaker's statement had been very clear, and he wished to remind the representative of Israel, that if he liked poetry, Israel had made subjugation and occupation its motto. Palestinians, like their brethren in South Africa, would overcome, like those in Soweto. Those who suffered in Europe, those who came from concentration camps, from the ghettos, should not act as Palestine's masters - they should know the meaning of suffering. They should draw lessons from the peaceful solution, the compromise based on the withdrawal of Israel from all Occupied Arab Territories. Only then would Israel be treating the Palestinians as equal.

ITZHAK LEVANON (Israel), speaking in a second right to reply, said this was cheap demagoguery, and Israel would not lower itself to the level of responding to it.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN
FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

MOHAMMED ABU-KOASH, (Palestine), speaking in a second right to reply, said the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Scheinin, had asked Israel to abide by international law. If that was cheap talk, it was up to the delegation of Israel to consider.

For use of the information media; not an official record

Load-Date: December 12, 2007

End of Document

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

States News Service

March 12, 2007 Monday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 6943 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

The Human Rights Council opened its fourth session this morning, hearing a video message from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and an address by High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour before starting its high-level segment and hearing from a number of dignitaries.

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said in his video message that the world was watching to see if the Council would live up to its promise. He hoped that the Council's members would work together to promote an objective and universal approach to human rights. In the weeks and months ahead, this would be put to the test time and again, and acute crises and long-simmering human rights issues would demand scrutiny and remedy. It was crucial that the Council had the components in place to pass this test. By the first anniversary of the Council in June, the wheels of the Council should be in full motion, including the Universal Periodic Review.

Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said poverty and discrimination were both the causes and the consequences of the most egregious violations of human rights and attacks on human dignity. Armed conflict, whether internal or international, inevitably increased the threats to life and the vulnerability of civilians. Yet, poverty and war were often perceived as akin to natural disasters, unfortunate and deplorable things that happened, but that were essentially unavoidable and for which no one could really be held responsible.

Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico, President of the Council, said while significant progress had been made in building the Council's institutions, progress remained to be made on points as to what the new system would be for the protection and promotion of human rights in the world. This meant that in negotiations, there was a need for a constructive spirit and dialogue. This was the only way of overcoming differences and avoiding polarisation. The best possible result should be sought, and the lowest common denominator should not be accepted.

Thirteen speakers took the floor under the high-level segment. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Confederation of Switzerland, said it was necessary to overcome the divisions of the past and demonstrate creativity and capacity for innovation in order to adopt new solutions that would benefit everyone. The success of the Council depended primarily on cooperation between States. Switzerland attached overriding importance to the fact that rights to life, liberty and security should remain absolutely valid in all circumstances.

Paul Mba Abessole, Vice Prime Minister of Gabon, said Gabon was firmly committed to put in place all the necessary institutions to consolidate the rule of law. The Constitution of Gabon affirmed the country's attachment to

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

human rights and fundamental freedoms. Gabon recognized that it fell short in some areas, and it was not afraid to present the situation of human rights in the country. Gabon needed help to improve the conditions in its prisons and to fight trafficking in children. At the same time, the result of Gabon's efforts could be seen in the good conditions of its institutions, in the consolidation of the rule of law, and in matters dealing with democracy and good governance.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said it had been shown time and again that human rights could only be implemented and protected effectively if the world adhered strictly to the following fundamental principles: that human rights were universal, indivisible and interdependent, that civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights were of equal importance, that the respect and protection of human rights were only possible in an environment where security was organised and guaranteed, and that these values should not be sacrificed in the fight against terrorism.

Jean Asselborn, Vice Prime Minister of Luxembourg, said Luxembourg believed that the system of Special Procedures should be maintained and strengthened, thematically, and by country. The Universal Periodic Review was an ambitious project and should have great influence on the credibility and future statute of the Human Rights Council. Close cooperation between States and civil society in the Council should continue and the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be maintained as Luxembourg considered that it was key to ensure efficient work.

Hamid Awaluddin, Minister of Law and Human Rights of Indonesia, said the Council had a dual role; on one hand forging ahead its normative work, remaining vigilant and innovative in respect of the societal issues, and on the other hand continuing to attend to the major existing issues that had not yet been resolved. Economic, social and cultural rights had a big part to play as there was a close correlation between development and poverty. Indonesia was looking forward to expanding and strengthening its cooperation and dialogue with the Council's various human rights mechanisms.

Abdelelah Al-Khatib, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Jordan, said the international community had cooperated to provide the enabling environment to allow most groups to enjoy their rights and fundamental freedoms, and to practice these rights in a natural way. The gap between theory and practice was increasing, which was why the Member States had created the Council, accompanied by great hopes. The Council should be rid of the impediments of the past, and attention should be paid to eliminating conflicts, whilst preserving the independence of States.

Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, said the constant interest expressed by the international community to spread and strengthen human rights in the different regions of the world had to be reinforced by the conviction of the universality, interdependence and complementarity of all human rights, including civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development. In its efforts to promote and protect human rights, Tunisia was strongly convinced that democracy and development were interdependent and necessary to ensure a free and responsible society.

Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, said to turn the tide, the Council should translate respect and protection for human rights from abstractions into a defined, accepted and verifiable reality. The decisions of the Council on the need for action against extreme poverty, on the right to development, on regional cooperation, and on the effective implementation of international human rights instruments would serve to reinforce these efforts.

Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights of Sri Lanka, said the Council should be primarily focused on institution building to meet expectations stipulated in the founding resolution. Sri Lanka was committed to provide all necessary assistance to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry and to the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons to carry out its tasks and inquire into alleged violations of human rights.

Maxime Verhagen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, said there was a definite link between freedom, prosperity and security. Respect for human rights would therefore be an integral part of his Government's foreign policy. The Council was still under construction but the promises made should be kept. The Council could not be expected to work miracles, but it was the responsibility of the international community to make it do so. Human

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

rights situations should be regularly assessed in every country and followed up, requiring thus a strong Universal Periodic Review mechanism. In addition, unbiased information from independent sources should guide the members in their deliberations.

Carl Bildt, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, said the protection and promotion of human rights was one of the central duties of the international community in these times. Not only was it a question of protecting the rights of individuals, but it was also a matter of protecting peace and stability across the globe. It was up to the Council itself through its actions to disprove those that feared that it would not live up to the high expectations placed on it, and this could only be done by vigorously and objectively addressing all the different human rights challenges of today.

Ekmelledin Ihsanoglu, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said there was now an historic opportunity to put in place the building blocks for the new structure, agenda and working methods of the Council. The humanitarian situation of Muslim minorities was being closely followed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Violations of human rights in Palestine and the Arab Territories were a matter of deep concern. The Human Rights Council could make an important contribution to alleviating the difficulties. The Human Rights Council should not stand idle in the face of rising incidents of Islamophobia, but should take action to combat defamation of religion and enhance understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions

Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, speaking on behalf of the Community of Democracies which includes Cape Verde, Chile, Czech Republic, El Salvador, India, Italy, Republic of Korea, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, United States, and special guests Peru and Romania, said while emphasising the primary responsibility that each country had for its own economic and social development and the role of national policies and development strategies, the importance of international cooperation and of a democratic, transparent and enabling economic environment was underlined. Much work remained to be done during the closing months of the inaugural year, and many new challenges would surely present themselves in the year ahead.

Also speaking in right of reply were Cuba, India and China.

The Council is scheduled to resume its work at 3 p.m. this afternoon, when it will continue its high-level segment.

Opening Statements

LUIS ALFONSO DE ALBA (Mexico), President of the Human Rights Council, said this fourth session of the Council was taking place at a key moment. While significant progress had been made in building the Council's institutions, progress remained to be made on points as to what the new system would be for the protection and promotion of human rights in the world. This meant that in negotiations, there was a need for a constructive spirit and dialogue. This was the only way of overcoming differences and avoiding polarisation. The best possible result should be sought, and the lowest common denominator should not be accepted. The task was to overcome the deficiencies of the Commission, and to strengthen, rather than renewing or revising the system.

The Council, the President said, should ensure an effective system of universal protection and promotion of all human rights, and thus guarantee all rights for all persons. In the course of the session, the members would review the progress made during the inter-sessional period on the creation of the Universal Periodic Review, the review of the mandates of the Special Procedures, and the Council's rules and methods of work, among others, in order to provide the Council with the tools essential to fulfil the task entrusted to it. This exercise should be concluded promptly. Politicisation, selectivity and the use of double standards should be avoided. Application of the principle of universality was a way for the Council to eliminate one of the elements which so discredited the Commission. Cooperation, likewise, should permeate all the Council's work. The work should be based on cooperation and genuine dialogue, and strengthen Member States capacity for ensuring human rights for all. If this new institution were to be efficient and fair, a practice should be developed which showed genuine commitment of all to the Human Rights Council.

So far, four missions had been established by the Council, but three had not been fully carried out, due to a lack of cooperation. This was regrettable, Mr. de Alba said, that at this formative stage, a lack of will to cooperate in

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

implementing the decisions of the Council appeared to call into question the legitimacy of its decisions. The Council should seek means of ensuring compliance with all decisions of the Council. It could only work on the basis of a truly renewed institution which was committed to its decisions. The Council had major challenges before it, and a great responsibility. The session should move forward on establishing the system and establishing the Council's new practices.

BAN KI-MOON, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said in a video message that as the Human rights Council opened this fourth session, a vast responsibility rested on its shoulders. The pursuit of human rights lay at the heart of the mission of the United Nations, underpinning the hopes of millions of people for a life in freedom, security and prosperity. The world was watching to see if the young Council would live up to its promise. He hoped that the Council's members would work together to promote an objective and universal approach to human rights. In the weeks and months ahead, this would be put to the test time and again, and acute crises and long-simmering human rights issues would demand scrutiny and remedy. It was crucial that the Council had the components in place to pass this test. By the first anniversary of the Council in June, the wheels of the Council should be in full motion, including the Universal Periodic Review. This mechanism had great potential to promote and protect human rights in the darkest corners of the world. Once the Review was in place, the Council would be able to examine the record and performance of all countries on all human rights at regular intervals. This would also require the help of independent experts, the resources of civil society, and fully using the mandate holders of Special Procedures.

The Secretary-General hoped that the Council would ensure that all States opened their doors to all of them and that it would strive to ensure that Governments cooperated with the Council's decisions. The High Commissioner and her Office should also be cooperated with fully. All victims of human rights abuses should be able to look to the Human Rights Council as a forum and springboard for action. This was the essence of its mandate, and how it would be judged. Mr. Ban wished the Council strength and conviction in its mission.

LOUISE ARBOUR, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the Council's permanent architecture and its most important procedures should be in place shortly. Institution building had been the dominant and constant preoccupation of Council members and of the broader human rights community this year. At the same time, special sessions had highlighted pressing human rights issues, reminding all that institutional and procedural concerns should not overshadow the substantive human rights agenda. Poverty and discrimination were both the causes and the consequences of the most egregious violations of human rights and attacks on human dignity. Armed conflict, whether internal or international, inevitably increased the threats to life and the vulnerability of civilians. Yet, poverty and war were often perceived as akin to natural disasters, unfortunate and deplorable things that happened, but that were essentially unavoidable and for which no one could really be held responsible.

As the human rights institutions deployed resources to train and assist Government officials in meeting their treaty reporting obligations, the purpose of the exercise should not be lost sight of. The object was not, in and of itself, to document and expose efforts and shortcomings; it was to make something stop or something happen. It was the professional collective responsibility to articulate unambiguously the true nature of the severe deprivations of rights, to provide redress and to call to account those who bore responsibility. The momentum of engagement, and the spirit of compromise which had characterised the work done so far, should be maintained. All Member States should consider their candidacy to the upcoming elections to the Council in the light of the spirit of the founding resolution, Ms. Arbour concluded.

High-Level Segment

MICHELINE CALMY-REY (President of Switzerland) said, although the Council had responded to numerous emergencies, efforts would have to be actively pursued if they were to match ambitions. It was necessary to overcome the divisions of the past and demonstrate creativity and capacity for innovation in order to adopt new solutions that would benefit everyone. The Universal Periodic Review mechanisms should serve to strengthen dialogue within the Human Rights Council. Breaches of human rights occurred in every country and the mechanism needed to be created to enable debate leading to improvements. Special Procedures were also necessary to defend human rights. The success of the Council depended primarily on cooperation between States. Switzerland

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

attached overriding importance to the fact that rights to life, liberty and security should remain absolutely valid in all circumstances.

Ms. Calmy-Rey said Switzerland was concerned about the situation in Darfur and the deteriorating conflict there. History has taught that violence offered no lasting solution. It was regrettable that the Council mission could not take place as envisaged. Switzerland was also worried about the situation in Sri Lanka, calling for an intensification of bilateral cooperation between the United Nations High Commissioner for Rights and Sri Lanka. In the Near East, Switzerland called for immediate cessation of acts of violence against civilians and the resumption of economic activity in the Occupied Territory, with support for the international community. In Nepal, substantial improvements had been brought about by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Switzerland called on the Nepal Government to confirm extension of the mandate of this office in areas of respect for human rights and peacebuilding in Nepal. Also of concern was the situation in Myanmar and Switzerland called on the Myanmar authorities to allow the International Red Cross to resume activities there.

PAUL MBA ABESSOLE, Vice Prime Minister of Gabon, said under its President, El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, Gabon was firmly committed to put in place all the necessary institutions to consolidate the rule of law. The Constitution of Gabon affirmed the country's attachment to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Gabon recognized that it fell short in some areas, and it was not afraid to present the situation of human rights in the country. Gabon needed help to improve the conditions in its prisons and to fight trafficking in children. At the same time, the result of Gabon's efforts could be seen in the good conditions of its institutions, in the consolidation of the rule of law, and in matters dealing with democracy and good governance.

In February 2007, Gabon decided to offer free medical treatment for all. At the same time, the free treatment of HIV/AIDS showed the commitment of Gabon to fight the unacceptable prejudices and exclusion as a result of this disease. The Government of Gabon was seeking to improve the housing situation of its population. Regarding the rights of children, Gabon said that it was as much a victim of trafficking in children and exploiting them as the children were, and it had planned an ambitious programme concerning reforms in the judiciary in favour of minors. In order to underline the importance accorded to human rights, Gabon had created the National Day of Human Rights which was commemorated on 30 May every year. Gabon reaffirmed its firm will to promote peace, democracy and the universal respect of human rights

FRANK WALTER STEINMEIER, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said it was clear last June when the Human Rights Council was established, that this was merely the first step in a complex and ambitious undertaking. After all, the Council had been called on by the General Assembly to review and improve, within a one-year time frame, existing United Nations instruments and procedures for protecting and promoting human rights. This process had not yet been completed. The protection and promotion of human rights was a pillar of the United Nations, just as important as ensuring security and peace, and promoting sustainable development. Human rights could only be implemented and protected effectively if they adhered strictly to the following fundamental principles: that human rights were universal, indivisible and interdependent, that civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights were of equal importance, that the respect and protection of human rights were only possible in an environment where security was organised and guaranteed, and that these values should not be sacrificed in the fight against terrorism.

The European Union had four priorities for negotiations over the coming weeks and months. There should be a credible and effective Universal Periodic Review. The system of Special Rapporteurs should not be weakened in any way. A Human Rights Council which was vibrant and made a difference should also be a forum for the voices of those who defended human rights and often spoke for the victims of human rights violations. When there were extreme violations of human rights, it was owed to the people affected and to the international community not to remain silent and look away. If the Council were to be successful, it required cooperation and support from all States, including those who were not currently members.

JEAN ASSELBORN, Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Luxembourg, said that Luxembourg believed that the system of Special Procedures should be maintained and strengthened, thematically, and by country. The Universal Periodic Review was an ambitious project and should have great influence on the

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

credibility and future statute of the Human Rights Council. Close cooperation between States and civil society in the Council should continue and the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be maintained as Luxembourg considered that it was key to ensure efficient work.

Luxembourg remained concerned about Darfur; denounced the dramatic humanitarian situation marked by the displacement of thousands of persons, persistent insecurity, attacks against humanitarian actors, and acts of violence against all, especially women and children; and regretted that the Sudanese Government had not shown cooperation and had refused to issue entry visas. In reviewing the report of the mission to Darfur, the Council should take concrete measures to end the grave and systematic violations of human rights. In the Middle East, the work done by the Council showed the serious human rights situation in the region, especially the Occupied Territories, and Luxembourg encouraged all countries, in particular Israel, to cooperate with the Council's institutions. Luxembourg supported the abolition of death penalty, and noted several countries where abolition had taken place. Luxembourg welcomed action taken by the International Criminal Court in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Sudan. It also called for reinforced efforts against discrimination against women and for the protection of human rights in the struggle against terrorism. Luxembourg supported the signature of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights remained a major challenge and that the Council should convey the importance of these issues.

HAMID AWALUDDIN, Minister of Law and Human Rights of Indonesia, recalled the long-time importance of Geneva as a source of inspiration on the promotion and protection of human rights. Indonesia was heartened by the decision taken by the international community within the wider context of the reform of the United Nations to improve the status of human rights as one of the three main pillars of the United Nations together with development and peace and security. The Council was expected to provide new human rights norms and standards and to provide enhanced support, assistance and technical cooperation. Although the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action were universally accepted, there were still frequent contentions on the way they were applied, including the indivisibility of all human rights. Another important conceptual notion was that of non-derogable rights, which should continue to be at the heart of the Council's philosophy and work through its mechanisms.

The Council had a dual role; on one hand forging ahead its normative work, remaining vigilant and innovative in respect of the societal issues, and on the other hand continuing to attend to the major existing issues that had not yet been resolved. Economic, social and cultural rights had a big part to play as there was a close correlation between development and poverty. Indonesia was looking forward to expanding and strengthening its cooperation and dialogue with the Council's various human rights mechanisms. He trusted that the governments, the civil society and all those who composed the international community would maximise the vision of a credible, impartial and effective Human Rights Council.

ABDELELAH AL-KHATIB, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Jordan, said the world family of nations had made headway in the field of human rights since the adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Vulnerable groups should be given special attention. The international community had cooperated to provide the enabling environment to allow most groups to enjoy their rights and fundamental freedoms, and to practice these rights in a natural way. The problems of unemployment, lack of development, impunity, rule of law and freedom of belief remained problematic with regards to implementation. More than once the Council had had pangs of conscience when viewing practices in the recent past such as genocide, war crimes, massacres and the targeting of civilians such as in Israel.

The humanitarian dimension of international security and the developmental dimension of human rights should be an integrated whole. There was a need for an adequate number of human rights observers. The gap between theory and practice was increasing, which was why the Member States had created the Council, accompanied by great hopes. The Council should be rid of the impediments of the past, and attention should be paid to eliminating conflicts, whilst preserving the independence of States. Human rights mechanisms should protect those who were deprived of their rights, as well as protecting those rights. The establishment of human rights was an important step in order to give effectiveness to the system of human rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

ABDELWAHEB ABDALLAH, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, emphasized how important the work of the Council was. Thanks to the efforts undertaken by all the members of the Council, the latter had been able to overcome some decisive steps on its way concerning the consolidation of its structures and the reinforcement of its role within the international system of promotion and protection of human rights. This needed to continue this way in order to perfect the mechanisms of the Council. Tunisia had always brought different views together. The constant interest expressed by the international community to spread and strengthen human rights in the different regions of the world had to be reinforced by the conviction of the universality, interdependence and complementarity of all human rights, including civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development.

In its efforts to promote and protect human rights, Tunisia was strongly convinced that democracy and development were interdependent and necessary to ensure a free and responsible society. Tunisia reaffirmed its engagement, along with Member States and non-Member States of the Council, to consolidate the foundations of an efficient Human Rights Council.

Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, said when the Council was created, a bold and historic step had been taken towards giving new life to the words of an old sage: that all humanity was one undivided and indivisible family, in which all should care and be responsible for each other. With the new Council, this commitment was renewed and the global momentum behind human rights amplified, at a time when many new and great challenges were being faced. At the heart of a nation's soul were its people: the sanctity of the life of the individual was of paramount value, and the protection of human rights was a sacred commitment.

But even as the commitment to human rights was renewed, Mr. Romulo said, the world was confronted by continued assaults on freedom of conscience and faith, on the expression of peaceful ideals and aspirations, and on the right to pursue dignified and productive lives. To turn the tide, the Council should translate respect and protection for human rights from abstractions into a defined, accepted, and verifiable reality. The decisions of the Council on the need for action against extreme poverty, on the right to development, on regional cooperation, and on the effective implementation of international human rights instruments would serve to reinforce these efforts. The Council should address the human rights of vulnerable groups, particularly migrants and their families and the women and children preyed upon by those who engaged in human trafficking. To turn the tide, a strong Council should be built; human rights were never meant to foster division, but rather should be a unifying force, regardless of race, gender, creed, level of development or political inclination.

MAHINDA SAMARASINGHE, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights of Sri Lanka, said the Council should be primarily focused on institution building to meet expectations stipulated in the founding resolution. Sri Lanka was committed to provide all necessary assistance to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry and to the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons to carry out its tasks and inquire into alleged violations of human rights. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was to be thanked, in particular its Rule of Law Division, for its support.

The Government of Sri Lanka continued to find short- and long-term solutions to internally displaced persons affected by the conflict and natural disaster. Resettlement of these internally displaced persons was under way, and infrastructure and services were being restored. The Government continued to ensure food supplies to the North and acknowledged the valuable assistance of the international community and United Nations agencies. Sri Lanka remained committed to finding a political settlement to the conflict with the LTTE. The Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights were to visit Sri Lanka this year. Measures were under way to combat terrorism and to monitor specific allegations of human rights violations. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' technical cooperation and capacity building division was a fundamental pillar of the Office which needed to be promoted as both development-friendly and for sustainable orientation.

MAXIME VERHAGEN, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, said that governments needed to be morally courageous in order to address human rights violations in any part of the world, including their own countries. The respect of human rights was an important end in itself and national policies should reflect this standpoint. The

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

Netherlands believed in human rights, both at home and abroad. There was a definite link between freedom, prosperity and security. Respect for human rights would therefore be an integral part of his Government's foreign policy. The Council was still under construction but the promises made should be kept.

The Netherlands was committed to continuing their collective investment and that was why they had decided to present their candidacy for membership in the Council for the next three years. Expectations were high. The Council could not be expected to work miracles, but it was the responsibility of the international community to make it do so. Human rights situations should be regularly assessed in every country and followed up, requiring thus a strong Universal Periodic Review mechanism. In addition, unbiased information from independent sources should guide the members in their deliberations. Active involvement by non-governmental organizations should continue to be supported. The attention the Council gave to human rights situations should always be proportionate to the violations committed. The tragedy in Darfur had claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and it was vital that the Council speak against such atrocities, lest it be judged irrelevant. The Netherlands had welcomed the Council's unanimous decision to send an assessment mission to Sudan. However, the Netherlands deplored the way in which the decision had been implemented, especially the lack of cooperation from the Sudanese Government that kept the mission from visiting Darfur. Follow-up of the recommendations would be considered a matter of high priority. Ultimately, the Council's success would be judged by the impact it had on the lives of ordinary people worldwide.

CARL BILDT, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, said the protection and promotion of human rights was one of the central duties of the international community in these times. Not only was it a question of protecting the rights of individuals, but it was also a matter of protecting peace and stability across the globe. Regimes that violated the rights of their citizens were often the regimes that threatened the international system as well. For that reason, it should be evident that the protection of one individual was the protection of all individuals. The past decade and a half had seen important progress in the respect for human rights and the commitment to democracy and the rule of law; but in recent years the pace of progress seemed to be slowing down. This should be a cause for concern.

It was up to the Council itself through its actions to disprove those that feared that it would not live up to the high expectations placed on it, and this could only be done by vigorously and objectively addressing all the different human rights challenges of today. It was all too obvious that there were many human rights violations in addition to those obvious ones in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. These included the situation in Darfur, and those in countries like Burma, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Belarus, Cuba, Uzbekistan and Iran. It was also highly important to move forward with the work to abandon the death penalty all over the world: the right to life should never be violated and the death penalty should be universally abolished.

EKMELLEDIN IHSANOGLU, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said there was now an historic opportunity to put in place the building blocks for the new structure, agenda and working methods of the Human Rights Council. OIC Foreign Ministers had called for strengthening the capacity of States to comply with human rights obligations through cooperation and genuine dialogue among cultures and religions. The stage was set for the establishment of an OIC Permanent Commission of Human Rights to call on Member States to guarantee full respect for human rights.

The humanitarian situation of Muslim minorities was being closely followed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Violations of human rights in Palestine and the Arab Territories were a matter of deep concern. The Human Rights Council could make an important contribution to alleviating the difficulties. The OIC opposed terrorism and the killing of innocent civilians, which were a crime against humanity. Resolutions on the human rights situation in Palestine should be urgently implemented. The promotion and protection of human rights of the people of Darfur should be intensified. The Human Rights Council should not stand idle in the face of rising incidents of Islamophobia, but should take action to combat defamation of religion and enhance understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions

ALBERTO G ROMULO, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, speaking on behalf of the Community of Democracies which includes Cape Verde, Chile, Czech Republic, El Salvador, India, Italy, Republic of Korea, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, United States, and special guests Peru

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OPENS FOURTH SESSION

and Romania, said the Community comprised States from all regional groups. These were States that differed in various respects, such as historic heritage, political and religious traditions or the level of economic development. However, they shared a set of common core values, the crucial one being the belief that democratic governance was a key element for development, security as well as for the protection and promotion of human rights. The Community welcomed the establishment of the Human Rights Council with the responsibility for promoting universal respect for the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner.

The Community reaffirmed its commitment to the protection and promotion of the freedoms of expression, of the press, and of religion and conscience. It recognised the importance of the progressive realisation, in all countries of the economic, social and cultural rights as constituting a solid basis for the economic and political empowerment of all individuals. While emphasising the primary responsibility that each country had for its own economic and social development and the role of national policies and development strategies, the importance of international cooperation and of a democratic, transparent and enabling economic environment was underlined. Much work remained to be done during the closing months of the inaugural year, and many new challenges would surely present themselves in the year ahead.

Right of Reply

RODOLFO REYES RODRIGUEZ, (Cuba), speaking in a right to reply, said with regards to the statement of the representative of Sweden and the confrontational nature of that statement, it had taken the Council back to the time of imperialism, when neighbouring countries had been subjected to slavery under the conquering boot. The complicity of Sweden's statement was amazing. It was not possible to speak of the situation of human rights in the world without referring to the situation in Guantanamo, in Iraq, the secret flights and torture centers established in several European countries, in which the Government of Sweden had been complicit, as had others. In Cuba, which was a country of justice and inclusion, migrants were not persecuted, nor was there ethnic cleansing of those who did not fit in with the racial patterns of the former conquerors. The representative of Sweden should remember that Cuba was a member of the Council, unlike Sweden, who had not merited this rank. In the future it would be difficult to become a member of the Council, as it was based on dialogue and cooperation. It would have been better for the representative of Sweden to stay home rather than coming here and entering into hatred and discrimination.

MUNU MAHAWAR, (India), speaking in a right to reply, said with regards to the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, in the statement made by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, this statement had made an unacceptable reference to an integral part of India. All the rights of the inhabitants of that state were, and would continue to be guaranteed by India, and those inhabitants continued to enjoy them fully.

LA YIFAN, (China), speaking in a right to reply, said with regards to the death penalty, there were different views among the members of the international community. In this matter, there was no agreed consensus. China was open to having a discussion on the matter, but was categorically opposed to the practice of imposing one view upon others, as had been done by the representative of Sweden, whose reference to the numbers of those who had been touched by the death penalty and the linking of this to the Olympic Movement was unacceptable. The Olympic games were a chance for the whole world to meet, and no country should take the opportunity to politicise those games. China was a country with a rule of law, where the death penalty only applied to the worst crimes, and this was in agreement with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The death penalty's scope of application was to be reviewed shortly, and it was expected that this scope would be reduced, with the final aim of abolishment.

Load-Date: April 17, 2007

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

States News Service

September 13, 2007 Thursday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 7532 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

The Human Rights Council this morning discussed the reports of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity.

Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, presenting her report, said there were many issues of concern for the mandate, including that in some countries, believers belonging to religious minorities were not allowed to worship or conduct any religious activities without State approval or prior registration. On the one hand, the freedom of pursuing one's religion or belief should be protected and respected. On the other hand, the rights of individuals also had to be protected from being violated on the premise of religion or belief. The mandate had noted, time and again, that victims of religious intolerance belonged to all religions and beliefs. If mutual tolerance, understanding and interest at the grassroots levels were established, then it could be possible to ultimately prevent many incidents of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief.

Rudi Muhammad Rizki, Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, said the three focus areas in his report were international cooperation, global response to natural disasters, diseases and agricultural pests and third generation rights. On international cooperation, it was of essential importance to the realization of the right to development and in contributing to equality in development. The benefits and burdens of this global world were not evenly distributed and the world needed a fairer distribution of the benefits of globalisation.

On the second area of focus, with an increase in the impact of natural disasters in recent years, this had created a growing recognition of international solidarity and the sustainable development and related efforts needed to prevent and reduce the effect of natural disasters. The third area of focus included the right to development, already mentioned in the context of international cooperation.

In the course of the interactive debate, delegations raised a number of issues, including that inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue was crucial for the prevention of intolerance and discrimination, and for promoting respect for religions and beliefs. There was deep concern for discriminatory practices against religious minorities and incitement to violence in the name of religion. Many further efforts were needed to eliminate intolerance based on religion or belief, and many delegations mentioned the importance of education in this regard.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

In the context of human rights and international solidarity, delegations pointed out that in this world, international cooperation and international solidarity were more necessary than ever. International relations should be based on international law and the principle of solidarity and cooperation between peoples, for the good of mankind. It was also noted that it was important to consider international solidarity as a right of peoples and a responsibility of the international community.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Council also heard a statement by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the institution-building process of the Council.

Speaking this morning were the representatives of India, Portugal for the European Union, Belgium, Canada, Philippines, Armenia, Australia, Egypt for the African Group, Ethiopia, Pakistan for the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Brazil, Indonesia, Spain, Azerbaijan, China, Russian Federation, Italy, Albania, Norway, Republic of Korea, Bangladesh, Netherlands, Venezuela, New Zealand, Jordan, Cuba, Thailand, Chile, Tunisia, Pakistan and Malaysia.

Also speaking were the representatives of Baha'i International Community; Association for World Education (speaking on behalf of Association of World Citizens); International Humanist and Ethical Union; Pax Romana (speaking on behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, International Movement against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism, and Asian Legal Resource Centre); International Service for Human Rights (speaking on behalf of Friends World Committee for Consultation - QUAKERS); Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples (speaking on behalf of several NGOs¹); Association of World Citizens; New Humanity; and Federacion de Asociaciones de Defensa y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos.

The next meeting of the Council will be at 3 p.m. this afternoon, when it will conclude the debate on the reports on freedom of religion or belief and human rights and international solidarity before hearing a statement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, followed by a general debate. It will then take up issues under item 9 on the agenda, namely racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.

General Statement

JUAN ANTONIO FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said the main priority of the Council's sixth session should be completion of the institution-building process and review and rationalization of mandates. Members of the Non-Aligned Movement had engaged in informal consultations during the week. The elaboration of technical and objective requirements for members of the Advisory Committee must not hamper the right of Member States to submit the candidate of their election, especially in the case of developing countries. It was vital to agree on a balanced programme of work for the coming year, to ensure predictability, transparency and preparedness of all delegations. Clarity of timing was required, and the right of Member States to decide on the appropriate moment to present initiatives or take up issues should be observed. The Non-Aligned Movement considered that there must be time before the Universal Periodic Review in 2008 for States to make adequate preparations. It was requested that the Council begin the process after March 2008. It was hoped the institution-building package agreed on in June would be preserved in its integrity.

Report of Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

The Council has before it the report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir (A/HRC/6/5). The report highlights worrying situations where the freedom to adopt, change or renounce a religion or belief has been infringed, for example when State agents try to convert, reconvert or prevent the conversion of persons. Vulnerable groups include persons deprived of their liberty, refugees, children, minorities and migrant workers. There have also been cases of killings and arbitrary detention for reasons of religion or belief. States should devise proactive strategies in order to prevent such violations, and foster understanding, tolerance, dialogue and pluralism. The report outlines the scope of the mandate, which includes freedom to adopt, change or renounce a belief, freedom to manifest it, and freedom from coercion, as well as freedom to follow religious holidays, appoint clergy, and in matters of moral education. It stipulates the right to free and peaceful communication across borders with other minorities and communities. States should pay increased attention to attacks on places of worship and

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

prosecute those who perpetrate these acts. Intersection of freedom of religion or belief with other human rights is illustrated by the relationship to freedom of expression. Freedom of religion or belief is protected as one of the essential rights by article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Respect for the right to freedom of expression, as articulated in article 19 of Covenant, constitutes a pillar of democracy and reflects a country's standard of justice and fairness. Peaceful expression of opinions and ideas should always be tolerated. Other intersecting mandates are those on prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the rights to life and liberty. Crosscutting issues include national legislative issues, the rights of defenders of freedom of religion or belief and non-governmental organizations.

Presentation of Report of Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, presenting her report, said she had focused her thematic report on the substantive questions involved, rather than providing an overview of the mandate's activities. There were many issues of concern for the mandate, including that in some countries, believers belonging to religious minorities were not allowed to worship or conduct any religious activities without State approval or prior registration. Furthermore, places of worship or religious properties had been attacked or otherwise subjected to restrictions, and also misused by non-State actors for illegitimate purposes. Some States encroached on the appointment procedure of religious leaders or required approval by the authorities for certain promotions within religious groups. Girls and women were in a particularly vulnerable situation: many of them suffered from aggravated discrimination. Further vulnerable groups included persons deprived of their liberty, refugees, children, minorities and migrant workers.

The mandate had several areas of concern, Ms. Jahangir said, but it had two main strands which should get equal attention. On the one hand, the freedom of pursuing one's religion or belief should be protected and respected. On the other hand, the rights of individuals had also to be protected from being violated on the premise of religion or belief. The mandate had noted, time and again, that victims of religious intolerance belonged to all religions and beliefs. At the same time, the perpetrators were also not confined to one or a few identified religious or belief communities. Freedom of religion or belief was a multifaceted human right. The mandate practice showed that the effective protection and promotion of the right to freedom of religion or belief posed serious challenges to all States. Wise and balanced decision-making at all governmental levels as well as non-discriminatory legislation were crucial for addressing the delicate issues involved.

Ms. Jahangir said protection needed to be complemented by prevention efforts. States should devise pro-active strategies in order to prevent acts of intolerance and discrimination. States needed to review policies and administrative approaches in all issues involving freedom of religion or belief. Education could play an important preventive role, especially when it ensured respect for and acceptance of pluralism and diversity. Inter-religious and intra-religious exchanges should be encouraged; this could also include exchanges of views with believers who were dispassionate about their faith, as well as with atheistic and non-theistic believers. Such a dialogue would also greatly benefit from the perspectives of women and of young people. If mutual tolerance, understanding and interest at the grassroots levels were established, then it could be possible to ultimately prevent many incidents of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief.

Report of Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity

The Council has before it the report of the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, Rudi Muhammad Rizki (A/HRC/4/8), which provides an overview of the evolution of international solidarity, followed by sections on the three areas of focus he identified in his first report: international cooperation; global response to natural disasters, diseases and agricultural pests; and third-generation rights, providing some practical suggestions for action in each area. In conclusion, the Independent Expert emphasizes the need for international solidarity in the present-day globalised society, and argues for recognition of international solidarity as a right of peoples.

Presentation of Report of Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

RUDI MUHAMMAD RIZKI, Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, said that the three focus areas in his report that developed the human rights of people through international solidarity were: international cooperation, global response to natural disasters, diseases and agricultural pests and third generation rights. On the focus of international cooperation, it was of essential importance to the realization of the right to development and in contributing to equality in development. The benefits and burdens of this global world were not evenly distributed and the world needed a fairer distribution of the benefits of globalisation. It was only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future that globalisation could be made fully inclusive and equitable

Mr. Rizki said that he saw the duty of solidarity as an imperative prerequisite of globalisation. International cooperation could ensure that globalisation was made fully inclusive and equitable and also led to achieving sustained growth, to ensure that people in all developing countries could benefit from globalisation. The spirit of international cooperation as an approach to globalisation was reflected in Millennium Development Goal 8, where the concept of solidarity was closely related to the partnership aspect. He suggested a number of practical steps including endorsement of regional initiatives for monitoring the realization of human rights, especially the right to development.

Mr. Rizki noted that the second area of focus was the global response to natural disasters, diseases and agricultural pests. With an increase in the impact of natural disasters in recent years, this had created a growing recognition of international solidarity and the sustainable development and related efforts needed to prevent and reduce the effect of natural disasters. These could include providing assistance and cooperation in developing and implementing measures for disaster relief and emergency response, and through exchange of information and technology based on mutual assistance. On diseases, promoting health and fighting pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and the emerging avian influenza, would improve the lives of many people and resonate with Millennium Development Goal 6 and only accentuated the need for international solidarity in this area. On agricultural pests, any disruption of the agricultural sector could lead to adverse consequences and also lead to a slowdown in poverty eradication and could seriously impede bio-security and fighting hunger. There was a need for international solidarity in helping development countries develop analytical, scientific, and administrative and infrastructure capacities in agriculture.

The third area of focus would be what was referred to as third-generation rights . These included the right to development, already mentioned in the context of international cooperation. More broadly, these rights could be seen as rights of solidarity.

Interactive Dialogue on Reports

SWASHPAWAN SINGH (India) said that despite the wide recognition of the right to freedom of belief as a fundamental human right, implementation was far from a reality. True respect for all religions would come only with respect for tolerance and pluralism. States should ensure their constitutional systems and laws provided adequate guarantees for freedom of thought, religion and belief. They should also devise strategies to counter violations of these rights. The emphasis on education and inter- or intra-religious dialogue was rightly emphasized in the report. There was a need for a detailed analysis of the intersection between rights to freedom of belief with other human rights in order to address contemporary issues such as incitement to religious hatred.

FRANCISCO XAVIER ESTEVES (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the European Union had always supported the work of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and considered it to be a very important instrument in ensuring that one of the fundamental human rights was upheld in the core human rights instruments. Combating all forms of discrimination based on religion or belief was a particularly important task, and the European Union would continue to devote its attention to this issue.

Ms. Jahangir had identified in her report a number of groups that were particularly vulnerable with regard to their freedom of religion or belief, and called on States to ensure that their constitutional and legislative systems provided adequate and effective guarantee of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief to all without distinction. What measures did the Special Rapporteur think that States should promote in order to ensure that these rights

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

were fully protected, as well as what could be done by the Council to protect persons cooperating with the mandate. The European Union was particularly concerned about the rights of minorities who faced discrimination and persecution in a number of countries, and welcomed the Special Rapporteur's views on how States could honour their obligations as to how to ensure that the persons on their territories and under their jurisdiction could practice the religion or belief of their choice free of coercion and fear.

NATHALIE RONDEUX (Belgium) said the report by Ms. Jahangir gave a global view on her mandate. Belgium asked how States could best encourage the dialogue between religions and dialogue between believers and non-believers as suggested by the Special Rapporteur.

JOHN VON KAUFMANN (Canada) said the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of religion or belief had visited a number of countries and been able to focus on substantive issues as part of her mandate and asked whether she could speak about some of the challenges and how they could be alleviated. Canada was deeply concerned by discriminatory practices against religious minorities and incitement to violence in the name of religion. Many further efforts were needed to eliminate intolerance based on religion or belief. How could the international community help the Special Rapporteur in fulfilling her mandate?

JESUS ENRIQUE GARCIA (Philippines) said education served as an essential tool for promoting peace and understanding in society, and more work needed to be done to enhance cooperation in this regard. Inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue was vital for cooperation among religions. This was an official policy in the development plan of the Philippines, and a core aspect of the peace initiatives. Inter-faith dialogue was promoted in the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines shared the Special Rapporteur's concern about vulnerable groups, in particular migrant workers, and urged that their right to express their freedom of religion or belief be respected in all States.

ARTAK APITONIAN (Armenia) said that the issue of freedom of religion was of much importance to Armenia. In the era of globalisation, everyone should really try to reach out to others. Living at the crossroads of civilization for millennia, Armenia was used to the respect of other cultures and religions. Armenia further welcomed the observations and remarks of the Special Rapporteur and fully endorsed her view that attacks against places of worship were a direct violation of the right of individuals to freedom of religion and belief. Armenia welcomed the highlighting in the report of the interaction between freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

GUY O'BRIEN (Australia) said the right to freedom of religion or belief was an essential right. Australia was committed to fostering mutual respect and tolerance across the region and was particularly involved in the regional inter-faith dialogue process that had been taking place. Australia looked forward to further enhancements in the process at the next dialogue in Cambodia in 2008. Youth inter-faith forums had also been set up to promote personal links and understanding. Australia invited the Special Rapporteur to comment on the impact of similar initiatives elsewhere.

IHAB GAMALELDIN (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said the report on human rights and international solidarity managed to accurately address the inter-relation among the three generations of human rights. It highlighted the fact that international cooperation was a pre-requisite to achieve not only partial but also international interests. This vindicated the long-standing call by developing countries to address the issue of international development with a solidarity-based approach.

In an absence of a true feeling of the unity of origin and destination of mankind, most of the human rights instruments would be rendered meaningless. The role of the international community could not be confined to criticism, accusations or finger pointing. The Independent Expert should explain the ways and means he viewed necessary to further deepen the concept of international solidarity in the United Nations human rights instruments.

ALLEHONE MULUGETA ABEBE (Ethiopia) said Ethiopia particularly welcomed the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity's remarks to financially support developing countries to help them meet the Millennium Development Goals. Ethiopia asked whether the Rapporteur saw a need for a joint study by mandate holders to look at the Millennium Development Goals for development and for human rights and to see how developing countries could benefit from resources which were made available.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

MARGHOOB SALEEM BUTT (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said the report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief called for stronger denunciation of violence by Muslim leaders in order to de-link Islam from terrorism. There had been many such denunciations and a matching response had not been forthcoming. The ever-growing incidents of religious intolerance and xenophobia in the west were taking the world far from its aim of religious and cultural harmony. The OIC condemned forced religious conversions by majority religious groups, attacks of places of worship, restriction on the display of religious symbols and erosion of rights of parents to ensure moral education for their children. The OIC deplored States that linked freedom of belief with freedom of expression and opinion in order to shrug off responsibility. Unrestricted and disrespectful enjoyment of freedom of expression was contrary to the spirit of peaceful dialogue. Equating religions with extremist terrorism was dangerous and it was essential to de-link terrorist acts from the right to peacefully follow one's faith. Further efforts were needed to eliminate intolerance and discrimination, including through education and interfaith dialogue.

SERGIO ABREU E LIMA FLORENCIO (Brazil) said the work of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief had been carried out with great competence. In Brazil, the multicultural, multiethnic society embraced many religions and creeds within a syncretic environment that was a distinctive feature of that society. Education could help to enhance respect for pluralism and diversity, as well as avoiding acts of intolerance and discrimination. A constructive approach was contained in the Special Rapporteur's description of the situation with regards to women and children and other groups who were denied the freedom of religion or belief.

On the work of the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, the issue of international solidarity, including the areas of focus in the report, were of great importance. International solidarity and cooperation was the basis of Brazil's external policy. The Government had established a social and economic council in order to enhance dialogue in this regard. A number of local phenomena menaced the destiny of mankind, and they were also a threat to human rights. In this world, international cooperation and international solidarity were more necessary than ever.

JOSE ANTONIO TAVARES (Indonesia) said freedom of religion or belief had a rather particular and interlinking impact on the social, cultural and political structure of a country, mainly because it had the capacity to affect the way in which the inhabitants of a country interacted in those three very different areas. With regards to religious awareness or education, Indonesia for its part remained committed to inter-faith dialogue, which was believed to constitute one of the most critical ways in which knowledge and understanding could be shared. With regard to the human rights and international cooperation report, Indonesia appreciated the concrete examples of what countries could do to meet some of the global economic challenges and asked if these examples were sufficient and would have enough impact to readjust the imbalance noted in the report and in order to promote a more inclusive society.

MARIA DE LOS REYES FERNANDEZ BULNES (Spain) said the report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief had identified a series of educational and school-based measures or initiatives that governments were advised to employ to promote religious harmony and tolerance. These measures would go a long way to encouraging and facilitating exchange between pupils and teachers and motivating academic research in terms of freedom of religion and belief. Spain asked if the Special Rapporteur could indicate the progress made in this issue over the last six years, or comment on similar good-practice examples.

ELCHIN AMIRBAYOV (Azerbaijan) said the international community continued to witness, maybe with even more intensity, in the stances of religious and cultural prejudice, misunderstanding, intolerance and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. The Special Rapporteur had touched upon a broad range of manifestations of religious intolerance. It was Azerbaijan's conviction that national authorities should respect the religious communities' right to freedom of religion or belief, and should abide by national legislation by rejecting all forms of intolerance which spread radicalism and extremism. Only through balance and mutual respect would it be possible to strengthen genuine religious harmony in society.

Inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue was crucial for the prevention of intolerance and discrimination, and for promoting respect for religions and beliefs. The minimum prerequisite for harmonious coexistence was that different

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

civilisations and traditions recognised and mutually respected each other's cultural differences. There was a need for an approach that understood the importance of preserving and respecting differences as enriching elements, instead of abandoning them to create fertile ground for enmity and hatred.

LA YIFAN (China) said that the promotion of dialogue between different civilizations and different religions was very important and China supported the work done in this sector by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. China also noted that the work of the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity was in the spirit of this Council. It was important to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and China believed it was important to promote global solidarity to achieve the Goals in time. At halfway point to the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals, progress was far from satisfactory. Could the Independent Expert comment on this fact and elaborate on what he believed could be done in order to promote the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in time.

GALINA KHVAN (Russian Federation) said the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief's report was trying to be as balanced and objective as possible. Her framework had helped promote productive cooperation between the Special Rapporteur and States and civil society. The report mentioned violations of rights of minorities committed by non-state actors. The issue of the responsibility of non-state actors required further analysis. On the balance between religious freedom and abuses of these freedoms, there was a need to make a distinction. It was important to de-link religions and terrorism. Extremist groups exploited beliefs and religions for their own purposes. Some even created pseudo religious doctrines that had nothing to do with real religions. The abuse of freedom of religion and belief must be strictly suppressed.

PASQUALE D'AVINO (Italy) said the issue of dialogue among religions, cultures and civilisations was indeed one of the most important and challenging questions to be addressed by the Human Rights Council. It involved a wide category of civil and political rights, deeply interlinked among themselves, ranging from freedom of religion and belief to freedom of expression and of association, and from social and cultural rights to the rights of minorities. Such important issues should be dealt with in an atmosphere of openness, mutual respect, and privileging the attitude in which the views of all were listened to.

SEJDI QERIMAJ (Albania) agreed with the conclusions made by the Special Rapporteur on freedom or belief in her report, saying that the violation of this human right continued to be at the origin of wars. On the elimination of intolerance and discrimination based on religion, Albania noted with satisfaction the many efforts carried out to eradicate intolerance by various parties. The discussion of these issues in this Council should aim at bringing religions and cultures closer together. Albanian society had never suffered from discrimination inside the society as the legislative system incorporated the necessary guarantees to assure the defence of all religious communities.

ANNE MERCHANT (Norway) said the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief had provided a very informative overview. Norway concurred with the conclusion that States must ensure their constitutional and legislative systems safeguarded rights to freedom of religion and belief. Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights protected theistic and non-theistic beliefs as well as the right to practice no belief or religion. Education and inter- and intra-religious dialogue were important tools for tolerance and pluralism. Respect for the right to freedom of expression as articulated in the Covenant was a pillar of democracy. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were fundamental rights and interdependent with the right to freedom of religion and belief. How freedom of expression should be respected while protecting freedom of belief was a basic challenge.

JANG JAE-BOK (Republic of Korea) said inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue was vital for the prevention of conflicts. In the Republic of Korea, inter-religious associations had promoted inter-religious reconciliation and peace. There should be inter-religious events worldwide. In the meantime, international efforts such as the Alliance of Civilisations were expected to make meaningful contributions to promote the dialogue and cooperation among religions.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN (Bangladesh) agreed with the observation in the report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief that minorities, women and children were often the first victims of discrimination. Bangladesh shared that it was largely the role of the State to protect its citizens from violations. Further, Bangladesh condemned acts such as the cartoon cases that, in their opinion were generating hatred. Freedom could not be infinite and must be exercised with respect. Inter-religious dialogue was a necessary factor. On the report on international solidarity, international cooperation towards solidarity was needed to protect human rights. Countries had primary responsibility for economic development, but transparency in the international monetary and funding system was also necessary. Help for development was particularly needed by the developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

JORIS J.H. GEEVEN (Netherlands) said the Netherlands shared concern over State interference in the appointment of religious leaders. The attention given to discrimination against women on the grounds of religious, ethnic or sexual identity, and to female genital mutilation, was welcome. Which countries had recently improved legislation to protect individual freedom to adopt, change or renounce religion or belief, and what measures could be taken to create a free environment where tolerance of all faiths was self-evident. The Netherlands agreed with the view that free expression should only be curbed under article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (i.e. in the prohibition of hate propaganda). For this issue an independent court was the only institution.

GABRIEL SALAZAR (Venezuela) said solidarity was, inter alia, one of the highest values of the legal order of the State, and international relations should be based on international law and the principle of solidarity and cooperation between peoples, for the good of mankind. Venezuela had drawn up a model of solidarity, aimed at meeting the needs of the most vulnerable of the continent. The Independent Expert should take into account resolution 26/25 of the United Nations on relations of friendship and cooperation among States in accordance with the United Nations Charter, as well as others. Venezuela acknowledged the conceptual progress made in the report with regards to generational rights, in particular with regards to the Independent Expert's avoidance of hierarchies of rights.

WENDY HINTON (New Zealand), commenting on the report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, said that New Zealand attached a great deal of importance to the protection of religious rights and endorsed the concerns highlighted in the report. New Zealand had hosted a symposium on inter- and intra-religious dialogue earlier this year and the Government fully supported efforts in this area.

MUSA BURAYZAT (Jordan) said Jordan wished to reiterate the question regarding ways and means of promoting the right to development that was raised by China. Jordan also asked whether paragraph 38 of the report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief implied that defamation of religious symbols was an act of freedom of expression. Was a hostile and abusive act, in speech, art or other form, to be considered a form of freedom of expression? How had this association of two freedoms become so prevalent in the discussion? Was it possible to look at the inter-relationship again?

RAFAEL GARCIA COLLADA (Cuba) said with regards to the report on human rights and international solidarity, it was very important to consider international solidarity as a right of peoples, and a responsibility of the international community, in particular of the States that had benefited the most from historical development. The discrepancy between the rich and poor countries of the North and South showed that there were human rights violations everywhere. Cooperation was becoming vital not only for development, but also to assist the human species.

There was a need to carry out work in the three spheres of action identified in the report. All peoples should receive international solidarity and assistance from the international community when affected by a natural disaster, among other things. There was a need to consolidate political will to overcome international injustices that caused scourges such as sub-development. International solidarity should not be understood as an act of charity, but as an act to contribute to the realisation of all human rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

SIHASAK PHUANGKET KEOW (Thailand) said that Thailand shared the conclusions expressed in the report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief which emphasized the efforts against the use of religion as a reason for the use of violence and the importance of the promotion of education against intolerance and strengthening inter-religious dialogue. It was important to address the root causes. The advancement of economic and social status would also help to fight the religious problems of concern. On human rights and international solidarity, Thailand welcomed the recommendations made by the Independent Expert and emphasized the concerns on global health security, especially HIV/AIDS.

JUAN MARTABIT (Chile) said the report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief was a serious one. It was very useful to promote better understanding between religions, and Chile had supported all international initiatives to do so. The basis of better religious understanding was based on individual and collective rights to religious freedom. There could be no better personal act than that of religious faith, something that was deeply rooted in human nature. Expressions of faith through ritual and religion could not obey any order other than respect for public order, morals and good customs.

ALI CHERIF (Tunisia) said the subject of human rights and international solidarity was of particular importance, as the latter was not an option, it was a requirement for the survival of the international community as a whole. In a shrinking world, all faced many trans-boundary challenges in an inter-connected world, and without solidarity, these challenges would not be met. Solidarity should be a fundamental value, guiding cooperation at the national and international levels. The definition proposed by the Independent Expert was accepted. The value of international solidarity had been included in many international instruments, and in the Millennium Development Goals. The Independent Expert should clarify the emergence of the new right to international solidarity.

MARGHOOB SALEEM BUTT (Pakistan) said that international solidarity was not a recommendation but an obligation. The issue of the development of the poor was neither unknown nor new, and the world should not blind itself to the stark realities faced today. Negotiations at the World Trade Organization faced hard challenges in the field of agriculture, and the digital divide was an additional barrier. How could the Millennium Development Goals be achieved in this context? International solidarity was a good concept to help the betterment of the world, however, such an enabling environment would need further resources. Further collaboration at the international level was needed.

MOHAMED ZIN AMRAN (Malaysia) shared concern over religious intolerance since the 11 September attacks. Given the multi-racial and multi-faith character of Malaysian society, the country had always promoted tolerance in its constitution. Each religious group was free to manage its own affairs, subject only to limitations prescribed by law, public safety or to preserve rights and freedoms of others. States should promote open dialogue and education in order to bring people into harmonious coexistence.

DIANE ALA'I, of Baha'i International Community, said there were particular concerns over the situation of the Baha'is in Iran and Egypt. There was concern about systematic and organised persecution of members of that faith in Iran, where the Government had strengthened the implementation of a memorandum which outlined how to deal with the members of the faith, depriving them of most of the rights of ordinary Iranian citizens, whether civil, economic, social or cultural. Baha'is were being arbitrarily arrested, their properties confiscated, they were denied employment and were not allowed to carry on business activities. The Special Rapporteur should explain what was her view on recent developments in this regard.

DAVID G. LITTMAN, of Association for World Education, speaking on behalf of Association of World Citizens, said with regard to vulnerable groups, particularly women, the Special Rapporteur's report referred to some harmful practices such as genital mutilation practiced in the name of religion. Reports showed that over 300 million victims were alive today and 3 million were mutilated each day in 32 countries, of which 29 were Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Special Rapporteur also said in her report that terrorists acts which were carried out by non-State actors in the name of religion should be delinked from religion. What did the Special Rapporteur feel should be done about the shameful constant propagation of a Judeophobic/anti-Semitic culture of hate throughout the Arab world.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

ROY W. BROWN, of International Humanist and Ethical Union, in a joint statement, said that, rightly understood, there was no conflict between freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief. All should be free to express beliefs, practice their religion and follow their conscience subject only to the constraint that they did not impede others to do the same. But a major concern was that the term defamation of religion was not well defined, and this meant some were stifling criticism of human rights abuses carried out in the name of religion.

BUDJI TJAHONO, of Pax Romana, speaking on behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, International Movement against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism, and Asian Legal Resource Centre, said the Council should take note of the trend of attacks on religious leaders and places of worship in Sri Lanka, due to their involvement in protecting and assisting victims of ongoing hostilities between the Government and the LTTE. This violence was part of a wider humanitarian and human rights crisis in Sri Lanka, and showed the increasing disregard of the main armed actors towards international humanitarian law. The Special Rapporteur should explain what actions she recommended to the Sri Lankan Government, other armed actors, the Human Rights Council and the international community to ensure the safety of religious leaders and places of religious worship.

RACHEL BRETT, of International Service for Human Rights, speaking on behalf of Friends World Committee for Consultation (QUAKERS), stressed that all forms of discrimination based on religion or belief were equally prohibited by several international treaties. These international standards recognized the rights of individuals to freedom of religion or belief that could be practised alone or in community with others. Furthermore, focussing on only some religions failed to take account of the discrimination and religious intolerance that occurred within faiths.

GIANFRANCO FATTORINI, of Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, speaking on behalf of several NGOs¹, commented on the freedom of religious groups to choose their own religious leaders. China had begun measures to strip all religious rights and authority from the Tibetan Buddhist faith in the future confirmation of reincarnations. China had intensified its defamation campaign against the Dalai Lama. Ms. Jahangir was urged to put pressure on China over these matters.

GENEVIEVE JOURDAN, of Association of World Citizens, said economic development should not be carried out to the detriment of social development. International solidarity, which should be the backbone of the United Nations, was a question of coherence. There were several specific factors, including that there was a need for solidarity in action, with visible implementation now. There was a particular need for solidarity with regards to indigenous peoples. All countries should realise that without solidarity, people would no longer be able to trust organizations such as the United Nations.

ESTHER SALAMANCE, of New Humanity, speaking on the subject of international solidarity, noted that in a globalised world there was more growing interaction between individuals and groups. Also, the report recalled that the principles of fraternity and subsidiarity were universal precepts applying to all cultures and created an obligation to respect and protect human rights. The Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity should take up these notions in his next report.

DAVID FERNANDEZ, of Federacion de Asociaciones de Defensa y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos, said the right to peace should be seen as part of international solidarity, and a necessary right in order to develop a culture of peace. The human right to peace should be developed as a component of international solidarity, and intercultural dialogue, peace, and disarmament promoted as part of the Council's work in this area. Consultations of experts should be promoted and a task force set up within the secretariat of the Council.

1Joint statement on behalf of : Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, Society for Threatened Peoples, Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network, Pax Romana, International Educational Development, France Libertes Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, Interfaith International, and International Movement against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism,

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DISCUSSES REPORTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF, AND
HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Load-Date: September 14, 2007

End of Document

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

States News Service

December 11, 2007 Tuesday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 7997 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

Louise Arbour, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, today briefed the Human Rights Council on her activities since last September, which included visits to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Ireland and Brazil. She also talked about the situation of human rights in Pakistan, Sudan and Somalia, among other issues.

Ms. Arbour said during her visit to Sri Lanka, she paid special attention to the issue of abductions and disappearances, which had been reported in alarming numbers over the past two years. More than two years after her first visit to Afghanistan, Ms. Arbour said was concerned to learn how little the women's rights agenda had progressed. The transitional justice agenda also remained stalled.

On Pakistan, Ms. Arbour was concerned that emergency rule and actions taken under it had inflicted severe, long-term injury to the judiciary and to civil society.

In Ireland last month, Ms. Arbour said she had addressed a forum of human rights defenders, and took the opportunity to discuss international human rights issues, as well as domestic questions, such as migration and counter-terrorism, with executive and legislative officials. In Brazil, she had had an opportunity to discuss with the President as well as with a wide range of national actors, issues of current concern, and she welcomed the Government's efforts to implement the constitutionally protected rights of indigenous people, and the social programmes that Brazil put in place to reach millions of poor families.

The situations in Sudan and in Somalia remained of deep concern, Ms. Arbour said. Grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law continued to be committed in Sudan, for the most part with total impunity. More needed to be done urgently by the Government and the international community to extend adequate protection to civilians. In Somalia, the situation of human rights, particularly in Mogadishu, continued to deteriorate.

Speaking as concerned countries were Afghanistan, Brazil, Gabon, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

During the debate, some speakers expressed concern that this resumed sixth session of the Council was being used to debate country-specific issues, rather than focusing on the review, rationalization and improvement of the Special Procedures, as agreed.

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

Participating in the debate on the High Commissioner's statement were Portugal on behalf of the European Union, Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Pakistan in its national capacity, Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Egypt on behalf of the African Group, Canada, China, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Netherlands, France, Senegal, Switzerland, Indonesia, Japan, Norway, New Zealand, Algeria, United States, Morocco and Sweden.

Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations also took the floor: North-South XXI, in a joint statement with the Union of Arab Jurists, International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development, International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, Interfaith International, Amnesty International, International Commission of Jurists, Asian Legal Resource Centre, and Human Rights Watch.

Sri Lanka, Iraq and the Netherlands spoke in right of reply.

During the meeting, Doru Romulus Costea, President of the Human Rights Council, said that he wished to interrupt the schedule to inform the Council that two terrorist attacks had taken place in Algiers, the capital of Algeria this morning, with casualties reportedly very high, with as many as 40 killed. One of the attacks had reportedly been close to the United Nations headquarters in the capital, Algiers. In consultation with and in agreement with the Council and the room at large, he wished to express sincere condolences to the Permanent Representative of Algeria for this event, as well as to convey their support to the victims and their families. He also conveyed sympathy to the High Commissioner for Human Rights in light of reports that at least 10 United Nations staffers were missing.

The Council is holding three back-to-back meetings today from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. When the Council concluded its midday meeting at 3 p.m., it immediately started its afternoon meeting to hear the final report of the Group of Experts on Darfur.

Statement by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

LOUISE ARBOUR, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said with regard to her activities since last September, she had visited Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Ireland and Brazil. During her visit to Sri Lanka, she paid special attention to the issue of abductions and disappearances, which had been reported in alarming numbers over the past two years. Regrettably, the various national institutions and mechanisms that could be expected to safeguard human rights had failed to deliver adequate protection. In particular, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka had had its independence compromised, and the credibility of its work had suffered. Ms. Arbour had suggested that the Government would benefit from the support of a presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country, with a full mandate incorporating technical assistance and public reporting.

More than two years after her first visit to Afghanistan, Ms. Arbour said she was pleased to see the continued active role being played by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and by civil society. At the same time, she was concerned to learn how little the women's rights agenda had progressed. The transitional justice agenda also remained stalled. The security situation remained very grave, with severe consequences for human rights.

On Pakistan, Ms. Arbour welcomed the release of detainees, including Special Rapporteur Asma Jahangir, and the President's commitment to lifting the state of emergency and to holding elections early in the New Year. However, she was concerned that emergency rule and actions taken under it had inflicted severe, long-term injury to the judiciary and to civil society. In Ireland last month, Ms. Arbour had addressed a forum of human rights defenders, and took the opportunity to discuss international human rights issues, as well as domestic questions, such as migration and counter-terrorism, with executive and legislative officials.

Ms. Arbour said she had just returned from a visit to Brazil where she had an opportunity to discuss with the President as well as with a wide range of national actors issues of current concern. She welcomed the Government's efforts to implement the constitutionally protected rights of indigenous people, and the social programmes that Brazil put in place to reach millions of poor families.

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

The situations in Sudan and in Somalia remained of deep concern, Ms. Arbour said. Grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law continued to be committed in Sudan, for the most part with total impunity. More needed to be done urgently by the Government and the international community to extend adequate protection to civilians. The rule of law needed to be strengthened, especially in Darfur. In Somalia, the situation of human rights, particularly in Mogadishu, continued to deteriorate.

In positive developments, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Regional Office for West Africa would be opened soon. There was also broad cross-regional agreement on a General Assembly initiative in support of a moratorium on the application of the death penalty. Another positive development was the adoption of the ASEAN Charter, and its commitment to develop an human rights body. In Bali at this moment, a momentous effort was taking place to address pressing issues related to climate change; the international community should not lose sight of the human rights dimension of environmental degradation.

Ms. Arbour said she was very pleased with the endorsement by the General Assembly of the Human Rights Council's institution-building package. The Universal Periodic Review process represented potentially the first universal and comprehensive tool for overseeing the application of the principles of the Declaration in a consistent, comprehensive and meaningful manner. A commitment from all States to cooperate with the Special Procedures system and to extend standing invitations to all mandate holders was vital to the realisation of the objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Statements by Concerned Countries

DAOUD HACHEMI (Afghanistan), speaking as a concerned country, said that over the last six years Afghanistan had made strong efforts to respect international human rights standards and its Constitution made explicit reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year, 2007, was a difficult year for Afghanistan's goals regarding human rights, with problems of armed conflict, poverty and immature institutions. Nevertheless women were still able and encouraged to participate fully in society and could now be found at the head of businesses, institutions, hospitals, schools, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. Despite a resurgence of violence, efforts were being maintained but required military, political and humanitarian aid and technical assistance from the international community.

SERGIO ABREU E LIMA FLORENCIO (Brazil), speaking as a concerned country, said the efforts of the High Commissioner were welcomed. Brazil was committed to tightening the relationship with the United Nations human rights system, and in particular with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It was Brazil's firm belief that the basis of such a relationship should be fostered by open, transparent dialogue and cooperation. The High Commissioner's visit, which was in response to an official invitation, was greatly appreciated by Brazil. Brazil believed the High Commissioner could share views and experience with both the Government and civil society, in an absolutely transparent manner. The High Commissioner had a fruitful, frank, transparent and constructive dialogue with President Lula, as well as with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice, and the Special Secretary for Human Rights.

The High Commissioner had witnessed the difficulties Brazil faced in the field of human rights, but also viewed deeply the determination of both the Government and civil society to overcome these. Her visit also gave Brazil the opportunity to provide her with a clear view of the diversity of the Brazilian culture. An expression of this diversity was that she visited both the Brazilian stock exchange in Sao Paulo and a poor slum in Rio de Janeiro, which made her aware of how the culture of Brazil was linked to the African cultural heritage. Brazil was grateful for the mission to Brazil, which was useful, both for the country, as it provided the Government and civil society with a clearer sense of the importance of human rights in providing solid sustainable development in a country which still faced difficulties, and for the High Commissioner in showing her the situation.

PATRICE TONDA (Gabon), speaking as a concerned country, said that Gabon had been very struck by a passage in the High Commissioner's statement, referring to Gabon's accession to the United Nations family as one of the countries that had abolished the death penalty. Following governmental reform in the 1980s, a number of measures had been taken, including the appointment of a Minister for Human Rights, directly responsible to the President.

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

Those reforms emphasized the paramount and strategic importance of human rights for Gabon. No political prisoner or prisoner of conscience was being held in Gabon, and the media operated freely to work in the country.

Gabon welcomed that it would be subject to the Council's Universal Periodic Review in 2008, and wished to reiterate its full support for the Council and the promotion of peace and security within the context of the United Nations.

DAYAN JAYATILLEKA (Sri Lanka), speaking as a concerned country, said that there had been recent terrorist attacks on elected individuals and the civilian population in Sri Lanka. The Government was currently in negotiations with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on two issues - the privacy of the nation and the need for international scrutiny. Sri Lanka had agreed to visits and remained open to scrutiny. However, it was proud of its national institutions. In the aftermath of the recent attacks, the judiciary ruled that roadblocks in the capital city had to be dismantled as they were not fully in keeping with international human rights. Negotiations would always be informed by the principle that national institutions may be supported by international mechanisms but not supplanted by them.

IBRAHIM MARGANI MOHAMMED KHEIR (Sudan), speaking as a concerned country, said the High Commissioner was to be thanked for her commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. The Government of Sudan had always established a sincere dialogue with the different human rights mechanisms, and had done so in order to promote human rights protection in the country. The situation in Sudan was improving, and everyone who had been there could see this. Sudan had been encouraged by the peace agreements. The situation in Darfur was improving now, as compared to the situation at the beginning of the armed conflict, and efforts had been made to implement the Abuja Agreements. Despite all of this, the situation of human rights in Darfur was one of great concern to the Government. There were many factors that influenced this situation, and this was why the international community should help to find solutions.

The Government had been highly patient in determining an end to the armed groupings and revolution, through peace agreements that did away with the causes of the conflict. Some armed groupings had not, however, wished to sign these agreements, and the situation was conducive to ongoing violations of human rights. Some States, particularly those with weight in the international community, had sent messages to the armed groupings. The armed movements could be pushed into signing the peace agreements in this way. Armed movements could not be given free reign, as this undermined the efforts of the Government to find solutions to the conflict. The Government of Sudan called upon international organizations concerned by the situation, as well as to civil society organizations, to redouble their efforts to ensure that the perpetrators of crimes be brought before the courts.

Debate on the High Commissioner's Statement

FRANCISCO XAVIER ESTEVES (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union strongly supported a wider field presence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The European Union valued the existing partnerships developed by the Office worldwide and welcomed the newly established Regional Office for West Africa, in Senegal. Regarding Sri Lanka, while the European Union welcomed the invitation by Sri Lanka to the High Commissioner to visit the country, it remained concerned with the lack of adequate investigation of serious violations of human rights concerning abductions and enforced disappearances there. The European Union called on the authorities to cooperate with all relevant United Nations mechanisms, including through the support of a field office of the OHCHR in Sri Lanka.

The European Union continued to follow closely developments in the field of human rights in Afghanistan, welcomed measures taken by the Government in that regard, and stressed that the development of Afghan civil society groups was essential for highlighting human rights violations. In Pakistan, the European Union believed that stability and development could only be achieved through respect for democracy, and reiterated the importance of holding free and fair elections on schedule, among others. The European Union also reiterated its serious concerns over the continued violence and grave human rights violations in Sudan, and expressed its deep concern with the worsening human rights and humanitarian situation in Somalia. With regard to the latter situation, reports of targeted killings and the inability of journalists to carry out their work were of particular concern.

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, agreed that the Universal Periodic Review process would represent the first universal and comprehensive tool for overseeing the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the format and modalities needed to be well defined to avoid multiple interpretations.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference expressed concern that the December session of the Human Rights Council was being used to debate country-specific issues, rather than focusing on the review, rationalization and improvement of Special Procedures, as agreed. The relationship between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council was a wider issue with long-term implications. A new relationship needed to be explored since the Council had been elevated to the primary human rights law making body in the United Nations system. Two key areas were budgetary oversight and the growing network of field presences, on which the Council ought to have a say.

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan), speaking in its national capacity, said that civil society in Pakistan had emerged even stronger, and the Government was giving it the necessary space to grow. Civil society was actively engaged in the current process. The European Union was thanked for its concerns.

MARCOS GABRIEL LLUNCH (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, wished to take advantage of the presence of the High Commissioner to highlight some issues of concern to the Non-Aligned Movement. The Council had adopted in June the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures mandate holders. However, a lack of enthusiasm towards that important document had been noted. The Non-Aligned Movement troika held a meeting with the Chairperson of the Special Procedures Coordinating Committee, in which they had been informed that the Special Procedures were studying the Code of Conduct in order to improve the Manual for Special Procedures, taking into account the provisions of the Code. The Movement took note of those efforts, but it was their firm view that the Code of Conduct had not been adopted to serve as a basis for the improvement neither of the Manual, nor of any other document. The Code was an intergovernmentally agreed document, designed to be the main basis for the work of the Special Procedures, and the Non-Aligned Movement expected nothing less than full compliance with its provisions.

The Non-Aligned Movement also regretted some recent incidents that compromised the atmosphere of cooperation, dialogue and good faith in the relations between States and some Special Procedure mandate holders. It was unacceptable for a Special Procedure mandate-holder to make a presentation on his/her visit to a country in the framework of an intergovernmental body of the United Nations without having prepared a written report or shared it first with the concerned Government. They were embarking on a new era in the promotion and protection of human rights, but actions of that kind contributed to undermining the principles of impartiality, independence, objectivity and non-selectivity, and international dialogue and cooperation, on which the foundations of the Council's new institutions lay.

OMAR SHALABY (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the African Group, recognized the importance of regional offices of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It had been hoped that the High Commissioner for Human Rights would acknowledge the efforts made by Sudan in the area of human rights. Sudan had taken steps to implement the recommendations of the Group of Experts appointed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The African Group hoped that the regional office would continue to provide support and technical assistance for this process. It also called on the international community to assist in providing resources for the implementation of the recommendations.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights was thanked for taking note of the events in Chad where a non-governmental organization had committed human rights abuses.

MARIUS GRINIUS (Canada) said that Canada was encouraged by the visit of the High Commissioner to Sri Lanka and strongly supported a presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country. The Sri Lankan Government was urged to accept this support. Of grave concern was the escalation of violence in Sri Lanka. It was believed that the only way to achieve a sustainable solution was through a political process. Sri Lanka should create the conditions for this political process to resume. On Sudan, implementation of the

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

recommendations made by the Expert Group and the Special Rapporteur would serve to increase transparency and stop violence. The continued engagement in Afghanistan was welcomed. The seriousness of the humanitarian situation on Somalia was underscored and the Security Council resolution was supported.

BO QIAN (China) began by expressing shock over the terrorist attack in Algiers, condemned that attack, and expressed sympathy to the victims and their families. China approved the statement made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and appreciated the briefing on a proposed strategic management programme. It was China's hope that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) could solicit input from Member States before proceeding to finalize such a programme. Similarly, OHCHR should seek agreement from countries in the region when setting up regional field offices.

On other mechanisms, China hoped that OHCHR could set up a strict internal mechanism to ensure objectivity and non-selectivity in preparing reports for the Universal Periodic Review process. Moreover, China was committed to the issue of improving the geographical composition of the OHCHR. Prolonged deliberations should lead to tangible results. China called on OHCHR to immediately put in place concrete plans to implement the suggestions of the Joint Inspection Unit in that regard.

SWASHPAWAN SINGH (India) said that there was now a clear mandate to implement the institution-building package and the priority was an early operationalization of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. The process of review, rationalization and improvement of mandates should also be continued.

A sovereign, democratic and pluralistic Afghanistan was strongly supported and commitment was reaffirmed in stabilization, rebuilding and development efforts. Afghanistan was welcomed into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation earlier this year and should benefit immensely from greater regional integration and connectivity.

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN (Bangladesh) thanked the High Commissioner for sharing her views on human rights situations in countries that she had visited recently. While recognising that the situation was not fully satisfactory in some cases, Bangladesh would suggest seeking solutions from within the country, through strengthening national mechanisms. Cooperation and engagement of States were essential to improve human rights. A better coordination between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Universal Periodic Review should be espoused. The support and guidance by the Council would have added value for the High Commissioner's Office to carry out its mandated activities. On the Universal Periodic Review, high hopes were expressed that this mechanism would make a positive contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights.

KING BEE HSU (Malaysia) said Malaysia associated itself with the statements made by Cuba and Pakistan, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively. Malaysia appreciated some of the suggestions made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in her update to the Council. At the same time, Malaysia recognized that Governments had also to take into account broader national interests, including that of the integrity and stability of their countries. Thus, Malaysia underlined the need for appropriate balance. Constructive engagement with Governments was fundamental for the effectiveness and success of such efforts.

Malaysia was pleased, too, that the Third Committee of the General Assembly had endorsed the Council's institution-building package, including the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures for mandate holders. In that connection, the importance of trust and confidence in the mechanism of Special Procedures if they were to function effectively had to be underlined. In her update, the High Commissioner had highlighted the relationship between the Council and her Office. Given the enhanced status and broader mandate of the Council, it was incumbent upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that went beyond reporting on human rights thematic issues and country situations to issues such as the Office's programme activities and its strategic management plan.

DENIS CEPATAN (Philippines) said the Philippines had supported the cross-regional initiative in the General Assembly in support of a moratorium on the death penalty, and had now abolished the death penalty. Also, the ASEAN Charter had been signed, which committed the organization to create a human rights body.

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

It was noted that the High Commissioner for Human Rights was invited and given broad access to Sri Lanka this year, allowing broad consultation with government, political and civil society representatives. It was important to show the human rights violations committed by non-state actors in Sri Lanka. The Government had shown great good will in engaging constructively with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and needed the constructive support of the international community in its national endeavours, and the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should work towards this end.

LEE SUK-TAE (Republic of Korea) said that the Republic of Korea supported a broader field presence as a crucial element to strengthen the Office of the High Commissioner. The future opening of the Regional Office for West Africa in Dakar was welcomed. The view that the human rights situations around the world called for the establishment of additional field presences was shared. The adoption of the ASEAN Charter was another remarkable step forward. Particular attention was paid to the High Commissioner's visit to Sri Lanka and the cooperation with the Government was welcomed.

ROBERT JAN SIEBEN (Netherlands) said the Netherlands aligned itself with the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union. Regarding the High Commissioner's observations on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, the Netherlands had listened carefully to the intervention made by Sri Lanka. It understood the difficult situation in the country, but shared the opinion of the High Commissioner on the need for a strengthened field presence in that country.

The High Commissioner's recommendation was particularly important as the independent Group of Eminent Persons had handed in its resignation last week. That Group had been the last impartial, independent institution providing advice to Sri Lanka. The Netherlands regretted that the Group's recommendations had been rejected by the Sri Lankan Government, and that the Group had subsequently resigned. It was incumbent on the Government to ensure independent, public reporting in Sri Lanka by strengthening the presence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country.

DANIEL VOSGIEN (France) said that France fully supported the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union. The worsening situation and persistent human rights violations in Sri Lanka included the recruitment of child soldiers, kidnapping, forced disappearances and extra-judicial killings. It was deplorable that the Group of Eminent Persons had shed no light on the disappearances and assassinations, in particular the murder of 17 Sri Lankans who were working for the non-governmental organization, Action against Hunger.

The situation in Darfur was also of concern, and with the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and the Group of Experts on Darfur it was hoped that the Human Rights Council would have the means to act in the interests of the country and its population. The Zoe's Ark incident would be established and dealt with through legal process, and should not be allowed to affect the actions of humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations in support of populations in need.

ABDOUL WAHAB HAIDARA (Senegal) welcomed the choice of the High Commissioner for hosting the Regional West African Office in Senegal. It was hoped that its activities would contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation in the region.

BLAISE GODET (Switzerland), speaking as the host State, expressed Switzerland's sincere condolences to the delegation of Algeria. Switzerland thanked the High Commissioner for Human Rights for her excellent report, and for the detailed information contained therein. On Sri Lanka, Switzerland would appreciate additional clarification from the High Commissioner, in particular with regard to the difference between the High Commissioner's proposals and those submitted by the Government, and what were the conditions necessary for a future presence of her Office to be set up there.

GUSTI AGUNG WESAKA PUJA (Indonesia) said that the High Commissioner's report was an important barometer of the state of human rights around the world and provided valuable insight into the progress of countries in meeting their obligations to promote and protect human rights at all times. The High Commissioner was thanked for her visits to various countries and her dedication in this process. Efforts had been made by Sri Lanka to institute a

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

constructive dialogue and the creation of a national protection system and support for this system from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights would no doubt pay off.

The Universal Periodic Review was ready to be finalized and at this crucial stage it was important to take advantage of the consultation process so that all aspects were fully aired and addressed. The Code of Conduct should contain all safeguards in order to preclude any error that might jeopardize the work of the Special Procedures.

HIROSHI MINAMI (Japan) said on the situation in Sri Lanka, the President of Japan had reiterated yesterday to the Government of Sri Lanka the importance of making efforts towards improvement of the human rights situation in the country. It was hoped that collaboration would continue between the Office of the High Commissioner and Sri Lanka. On Afghanistan, Japan had continued supporting the process of democratisation in that country.

BEATE STIRO (Norway) said that Norway remained concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, and particularly about the indiscriminate attacks on civilians by insurgent groups. Norway deplored the attack in Baghlan which had killed 54 and injured over 80. While insurgent activities remained the most dangerous threat to Afghan civilians, the responsibility for upholding human rights in Afghanistan rested with the Government. The Afghan authorities had to treat detainees in accordance with international human rights standards. Norway had followed that up by entering into a bilateral agreement with the Afghan authorities on the treatment of detainees.

It was with deep regret that Norway learned about the execution of 15 Afghan nationals on 7 October. Norway opposed the death penalty in all cases, and had appealed to the Government of Afghanistan to halt any possible further executions. Support for national human rights institutions was crucial, and there was a continuous need to build Afghan national capacity to ensure that the Government could fulfil its responsibilities. The police and the justice system were obvious examples. The international community should assist with providing adequate training and funding for those institutions.

JOAN MOSLEY (New Zealand) welcomed the High Commissioner's report on her visit to Sri Lanka, and shared her concern about the issue of abductions and disappearances and the inadequate investigation into the majority of these cases. The current status of the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission and its failure to investigate adequately allegations of human rights abuses was a matter of concern, and it should return to operating in accordance with the Paris Principles for National Human Rights Institutions. It was no less important that the Commission of Inquiry be allowed to carry out its task effectively in order to ensure that there was no impunity for the individuals it was investigating. New Zealand was also pleased about the endorsement by the General Assembly of the institution-building package for the Human Rights Council. The Universal Periodic Review held the potential for an equitable assessment of the country human rights situations.

IDRISS JAZA RY (Algeria) thanked the delegations for their kind words on today's terrorist attacks in Algeria. The use of terrorism by groups that said they were fighting in the name of human rights and were killing innocent victims was horrific. On the High Commissioner's update, Algeria looked forward to have an opportunity to address the issues she had raised. It was noted that this update did not mention the situation in Iraq. And what about Palestine? Was there really no human right problem in those countries? It was wondered whether the opening of national and regional offices was also planned in developed countries. The readiness of the High Commissioner to accept, in her words, "the leadership" of the President of the Council in defining in a more transparent manner the relationship of the Council with her Office was welcomed.

MICHAEL S. KLECHESKI (United States) thanked High Commissioner Louise Arbour for her statement and emphasized the importance the United States placed on maintaining the independent activities of her Office. The United States welcomed the High Commissioner's comments on the grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law occurring in Sudan. The Council had the opportunity during this session to speak directly on the issues there. The United States hoped that the Council would renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Sudan and continue the work of the independent experts.

The United States also shared the High Commissioner's increasing concern about growing violence in Sri Lanka on all sides. The United States supported the Government of Sri Lanka as it grappled with a terrorist group, but had expressed its concerns about human rights violations and the lack of justice and accountability of the Government,

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

emphasizing its deep concern about the rise in forced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings. The United States encouraged the Government to reconsider its rejection of an expanded mandate and staff for the Office of the High Commissioner in Colombo. Lastly, on the death penalty, the United States did not share the view that there was a "broad cross-regional agreement" on eliminating it. Rather, recent debate and action on the subject had been characterized by extraordinary acrimony and division. The United States hoped that future debate on this issue would avoid such divisiveness and focus on the need for countries to adhere to international legal standards.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco) said the High Commissioner's presentation reflected her constant concern to report to the Human Rights Council on her activities in carrying out her mandate, and this interaction was of great significance, and should be consolidated and reinforced. The adoption of the institution-building package should ensure that this historical document kept its relevance. Morocco paid great attention to these mechanisms, in particular the Universal Periodic Review, which was the jewel in its crown, and would be one of the first countries to submit to the Review. Morocco was involved in two initiatives in this context, including an event on good practices in drafting country reports, with the aim of raising awareness in different States. The High Commissioner was thanked for her commitment in pursuing the process and continuing her interaction with the Council.

HANS DALHGREN (Sweden) welcomed the fact that the Government of Sri Lanka had facilitated the visit of the High Commissioner to the country. What was clear today was that the report confirmed that the situation in Sri Lanka was deteriorating. This needed urgent action to make sure that human rights were respected. Sri Lanka was urged to explore all possible ways to strengthen the respect of human rights in the present, difficult situation.

CURTIS DOEBBER, of North-South XXI, in a joint statement with the Union of Arab Jurists, said that, while they welcomed the report of the High Commissioner, and her attention to human rights around the world, they would like to draw attention to concerns that they hoped would be highlighted in the High Commissioner's activities during the coming months and which appeared to have received inadequate attention despite their serious nature. Iraq was the most serious human rights disaster in the world. Through a combination of use of massive military force, foreign occupation, and domestic neglect, more than 1 million Iraqis had been killed, an estimated 3 million had been internally displaced and an estimated 20 per cent of Iraqis - more than 4 million - could not live in their country. In addition, North South XXI hoped that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Human Rights Council would prioritize making an effective contribution to protecting the human rights of Palestinians - the longest-standing human rights tragedy which the OHCHR and the UN human rights mechanisms had ever confronted.

EMERLYNE GIL, of International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development, said the visit of the High Commissioner to Sri Lanka was welcomed. There was an urgent need for a strong presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sri Lanka, considering that the existing institutions and mechanisms established by the Government had failed in their mandate to protect and promote human rights in the country. The Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission, for one, had been ineffective in protecting human rights defenders and had not been in compliance with the Paris Principles.

IQBAL HAIDER, of International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, expressed their deepest concern about the situation in Pakistan, which had witnessed a dramatic setback in the field of human rights. Several judges, journalists, lawyers, students and trade union leaders have been and still were detained, tortured or put under pressure. Also, several restrictions on the print media persisted. Several cases of enforced disappearances that had been pending before the Supreme Court were now not being heard. The planned elections could not be free and fair as long as the requests of the Pakistani civil society were not implemented. The Council was urged to take action.

SHAUKAT ALI-KASHMIRI, of Interfaith International, with reference to the situation in Pakistan, said that democracy activists there were suffering detention, persecution and torture in various prisons and many hundreds, if not thousands, of lawyers, political leaders, human rights activists, and even judges of the highest courts, were facing sedition charges. The Constitution had been suspended and the country placed under a state of emergency. Pakistan had become an epicentre of Islamic extremism, with various militant and terrorist groups finding not only shelter, but also enjoying the active support of the Pakistan Army and its intelligence agencies. Given the prevailing

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

situation and the climate of instability in Pakistan, Interfaith International demanded the intervention of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Court of Justice and other United Nations bodies to establish an impartial tribunal to investigate and expose the extent of Dr. Qadeer Khan's illegal nuclear network.

PETER SPLINTER, of Amnesty International, said Amnesty International was deeply concerned that the arbitrary replacement of judges of the Superior Courts in Pakistan removed crucial safeguards against human rights violations and impunity for perpetrators at a time when they were needed most. Amnesty International shared the concern of the High Commissioner that even once the state of emergency was lifted, safeguards critical for the future protection of human rights in Pakistan had been seriously undermined for a long time to come. The Government of Sri Lanka appeared to lack the political will to enable Sri Lanka's national mechanisms to meet the dire need of the people for the protection of their human rights.

LUKAS MACHON, of International Commission of Jurists, welcomed the discussions that had taken place between the High Commissioner and the Government of Sri Lanka about the options for establishing a field presence. National mechanisms in Sri Lanka were very weak. On Pakistan, grave concern was expressed about the attacks on the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. The dismissal of Supreme Court judges was deplored. Free and fair elections would not be possible in the current situation. The electoral process had to be overseen by an independent entity.

BASEER NAWAEEED, of Asian Legal Resource Centre, welcomed the statement made by High Commissioner Louise Arbour on the human rights situation in Pakistan. The Asian Legal Resource Centre was particularly shocked by the fact that a member of the Human Rights Council, notably one that was on the Consultative Group that would select future Special Procedures mandate holders, had arbitrarily detained Special Rapporteur Asma Jahangir and threatened Special Representative Hina Jilani with arrest if she returned to Pakistan. Furthermore, massive attacks on the independence and members of the judiciary would lead to grave longstanding damage to the enjoyment of democracy and human rights in the country. Currently, some 46 judges from the higher judiciary remained under house arrest; over 8,000 persons had been arrested following the state of emergency - including over 3,500 lawyers - and re-arrests continued. Many had been subject to torture in detention. The Asian Legal Resource Centre was of the view that Pakistan's actions required strong condemnation by the Council, that it should send a team of experts to look into the human rights violations in the country, that Pakistan should immediately be removed from the Special Procedures mandate-holders selection process, and that Pakistan be suspended from the Council.

JULIE DE RIVERO, of Human Rights Watch, said with the return of heavy fighting between the LTTE and Government forces, lack of protection for civilians remained a main concern in Sri Lanka. There were around 208,000 internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka. The High Commissioner had mentioned the failures and weakness of the national human rights mechanisms - and it was regretted that the Government had not accepted the establishment of a United Nations office with monitoring capabilities. The Council should indicate its support for the creation of a United Nations human rights monitoring mission, and encourage Sri Lanka to accept its establishment. The situation in Pakistan was also of concern. The Human Rights Council could not continue to ignore the situation.

Concluding Remarks

LOUISE ARBOUR, High Commissioner on Human Rights in concluding remarks, thanked speakers and the President of the Council for the condolences conveyed by the Council. Clarifying some points discussed today, she said that the update she had presented today had been a brief update of issues which her team had worked on since her last update. No references were made on Iraq, as there was already a quarterly report on the human rights situation in the country that was publicised by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, with the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Right of Reply

RAJIVA WIJESINGHE (Sri Lanka), speaking in a right of reply, thanked delegations for the concern they had displayed concerning the situation in Sri Lanka. However, what they had here was perhaps a failure to understand the problems posed by terrorism. It should be stressed that, despite terrorism, Sri Lanka had done its best to

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON HER ACTIVITIES

cooperate. Indeed, it would welcome strengthened cooperation with international organizations. It was hoped that, following High Commissioner Arbour's visit, Sri Lanka would receive the technical assistance that it had been asking for for a long time now.

It was not true, as had been asserted by the Netherlands, that Sri Lanka had dissolved the Group of Eminent Persons, it had extended the mandate of that body a month ago. The progress of the Sri Lankan Government in trying to resolve problems should be recognized. Also, while there had been many civilian deaths, a close investigation would show that the vast majority of them were owing to terrorist actions. To work effectively with the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen its national human rights institutions, it was important that there be an accurate understanding of the situation, to do so effectively.

SAAD FATHALLAH (Iraq), speaking in a right of reply, said Iraq thanked the High Commissioner for her concern, and wished to assure her that Iraq was continuing to seek to improve the human rights situation. The Minister for Human Rights had invited Ms. Arbour to visit Iraq and see for herself the situation of human rights. The Ministry had cooperated with all other Ministries in order to celebrate the fifty-ninth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and was working to spread a culture of human rights among all citizens. By next year, Iraq would sign the Convention against Torture, and the Special Rapporteur on Torture would visit the country, proof of the improvement of the situation of human rights, and the Government's determination to continue this. An independent Commission on Human Rights would be set up in 2008, in accordance with the Paris Principles, to monitor the state of human rights.

ROBERT JAN SIEBEN (Netherlands), speaking in a right of reply, on the Group of Eminent Persons, said that the Government of the Netherlands had received a copy of a letter sent by the Group of Eminent Persons to the President of Sri Lanka. This latter said that the members of the Group would resign by early 2008, feeling that they were not able to contribute to Sri Lanka's policy making.

DAYAN JAYATILLEKA (Sri Lanka), speaking in a right of reply, said that the spin had to stop somewhere. He read out a letter signed by the Chairman of the Group of Eminent Persons. "After careful deliberation ... on 16 November the [Group] is of the opinion that it is approaching the end of its useful work", he read. In the letter, the Group said that its two previous reports had already highlighted a number of shortcomings of the investigation commission, and these were listed. The letter ended by saying that "it is in the interest of [the Group] to conclude the mandate at the end of March 2008". It was hardly an abrupt resignation.

For use of the information media; not an official record

Load-Date: December 12, 2007

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

States News Service

March 22, 2007 Thursday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 8918 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: GENEVA, Switzerland

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

The Human Rights Council this morning concluded its discussion of the report of the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances and then debated various thematic issues raised earlier in the week including freedom of religion and the rights of children, women, minorities, migrants, indigenous peoples and internally displaced persons.

In the context of the discussion of the report of the Working Group, delegates raised such issues as the responsibility of the State in protecting and promoting the human rights of all its citizens, but noted it should be taken into account that countries normally contended with a complex situation involving a variety of perpetrators of disappearances, which sometimes ended in killings. As many countries emerged from conflict, delegates suggested it would be useful for the Council to revisit the situation in its broader context in light of recent experience, for no legal argument could justify the maintenance of circumstances wherein the killing of innocents would continue, if there was an alternative option to stop the killing.

Under thematic issues discussed earlier, delegates raised a wide range of issues, including freedom of religion, and the human rights of children, women, minorities, migrants, indigenous peoples and internally displaced persons. The principles of universality and non-discrimination required that these issues be addressed, delegates said. On the rights of the child, the Council was urged to seek to promote increased advocacy and accountability through its procedures, deliberations and resolutions in this regard, and in particular the human rights system should continue to play a strong role in efforts on the ground to protect the rights of children affected by war. On violence against women, delegations strongly condemned the practice of honour killings, and legislation favouring those guilty of such heinous crimes, urging that this practice should be actively discouraged. There was also deep concern for the situation of women in armed conflict; the use of rape as a tool of war was totally unacceptable and no amount of humanitarian assistance could overcome the serious after-effects of such cruel treatment.

Delegations also urged the adoption of conventions, including the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which, they said, would be a great instrument to enhance the rights of indigenous peoples. Other delegations raised the issue of the Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and their Families, saying that it was important to include a human rights perspective in all migrant issues dealt with at a global level.

The discussion on thematic issues was scheduled to be taken up again on Wednesday, 28 March in the afternoon.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

Speaking this morning were Algeria, the Russian Federation, Yemen, Nepal, Philippines, Mexico, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Canada, Argentina, Peru, Thailand, Germany for the European Union, the Netherlands, Finland, Mexico, Peru, Holy See, Sovereign Order of Malta, Tanzania, Chile, Australia, Norway, Armenia, Spain, and Colombia.

Speaking in right of reply were Morocco, Japan, Algeria, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Thailand, Iran, Turkey, and the Philippines.

Also speaking were : Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, Interfaith International, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Asian Legal Resource Centre, Baha'i International Community, World Population Foundation, Center for ***Women's*** Global Leadership, Indian Movement Tupaj Amaru, Indian Council of South America, Franciscans International, Human Rights Watch, Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples, Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action, International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, International Buddhist Foundation, International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, Amnesty International, Colombian Commission of Jurists, and Union de l'action feminine.

The next meeting of the Council will be at 3 p.m. this afternoon, when the Council is scheduled to take up the agenda item on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006 entitled Human Rights Council , under which it will hear the presentation of reports by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, by a member of the high-level fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun, and by the Special Rapporteur on the situation on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which will be followed by an interactive debate.

Interactive Dialogue on Report of Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

IDRISS JAZAIRY (Algeria) said the report indicated 31 newly-reported cases in Algeria, and this could give the false impression that lawlessness prevailed today in Algeria: these were in fact new indications on alleged disappearances during the Dark Decade of the nineties, when tens of thousands of individuals disappeared at the hands of terrorist groups, who were successful in presenting themselves as the innocent victims of human rights violations by State agents. There was no amnesty in Algeria as people, whomever they were, found guilty of rape, bombing in public places, or assassination would not escape the rigours of the law.

The wound inflicted by terror attacks could not be left bleeding indefinitely. As many countries emerged from conflict, it would be useful for the Council to revisit the situation in its broader context in light of recent experience from Algeria to Uganda, Afghanistan, and, some would say, Iraq, for no legal argument could justify the maintenance of circumstances wherein the killing of innocents would continue if there was an alternative option to stop the killing. Not all situations of civil strife and violence were similar, there were at least two broad categories: where violence had erupted as a result of the State oppressing its people; and where Nations came under attack by terrorist groups. Ultimately, the responsibility of States was to their people; they, and none other than they, had to make hard choices to save lives, regardless of the clamour beyond their borders.

NATALIA ZOLOTOVA (Russian Federation) said this area of work of the Council was of great significance and the Russian Federation was cooperating with the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances. Law enforcement in Russia was looking at disappearances there but there were a number of objective factors that impeded progress. Significant decreases were reported in the Caucasus. In 2000 the Working Group said 147 cases had been recorded, and in 2006 there were only five. The Working Group had asked to visit the Russian Federation and timing would be agreed upon later. Mass media reports suggested there were disappearances in Iraq and Afghanistan and mass burials had been detected, yet the past year Working Group did not study enforced disappearances in these countries. Was it because there were no non-government organizations or civil society to inform the Working Group of cases? Did this indicate that the countries were in a difficult situation that escaped any law enforcement monitoring. What would the Working Group propose with regard to these countries.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

MANAF AL SALAHI (Yemen) thanked the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances. Yemen had worked with transparency and seriousness with the Working Group. It had met the mission of the group to find means of solving this humanitarian matter. Yemen had carried out efforts to set up a committee to study and work on every case it heard of and it had reached satisfactory results. The Government had then sent those results to the Working Group. Yemen affirmed that it would continue to cooperate with the Working Group on enforced disappearances and also other Working Groups to enhance the protection of human rights.

BHARAT RAJ PAUDYAL (Nepal) said that cases referred to in the report dated from before the political change in the country and there were no disappearances after April 2006. The report of the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances did not reflect this changed situation. The Government was working to resolve cases of disappeared persons and both the Government and the Nepal Communist Party had committed to make public the status of those missing. A taskforce constituted by the Supreme Court was investigating some of the alleged cases and a report would be delivered soon. Many cases seemed to be due to improper recording of releases and detentions. Systematic efforts had been made to inculcate human rights values within the security services. Clear directives had been issued to them and their training included a human rights package. Any individual aberrations were taken very seriously. Nepal had viewed the merit of the report in the light of the changed context and new allegations of disappearance had ceased to exist.

NOEL E. SERVIGOV (Philippines) said the report's format, which presented the roots of the phenomenon of disappearances in particular countries, as well as what these countries were doing to address the issue, could lend itself well to identifying and exchanging best practices among States in their efforts to solve the problem of disappearances. The State had the primary role in protecting and promoting the human rights of all its citizens, but it should be taken into account that countries normally contended with a complex situation involving a variety of perpetrators of disappearances, which sometimes ended in killings.

The Government of the Philippines was committed to addressing the cases presented in the Working Group's report, and was exerting its best efforts to ascertain the fate and whereabouts of the persons listed as disappeared. Urgency would be given to recent reports, as fresh information could yield greater chances of tracing the concerned person's whereabouts, however, the majority of the cases reported in the Philippines occurred three and almost four decades ago. The Working Group would be furnished with current information on the bills in the Philippine Congress on disappearance.

JOSE GUEVARA (Mexico) welcomed the report of the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances. Mexico recognized the excellent work carried out by the Working Group. The clarification of nearly 3,000 cases in November 2005 and 2006 was evidence of the importance of that mechanism for the relatives and the victims of enforced disappearance. Mexico also welcomed the opening for signature of the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Mexico asked if the Special Rapporteur could share some thoughts on how the mechanisms could be implemented.

CHOE MYONG NAM (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said the report of the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances was regrettable, as the positions and concerns of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were not reflected therein, despite its efforts to fulfil its obligations under the Japan-Democratic People's Republic of Korea agreement. This case was unfortunately being described as outstanding in the report, as Japan was abusing it for political purposes, as part of its hostility towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This was an obstacle to the work of the Working Group, and the delegation hoped the Working Group would see beyond the Japanese purposes on the abduction case, and formally reject it.

JOANNE LEVASSEUR (Canada) said those responsible for enforced disappearances should not go unpunished. The Working Group had for a long time been interested in amnesty laws in some countries, and Canada noted that the report referred to the circumstances in which these laws were violations of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Forced Disappearance. In last year's report, the Working Group had said that certain post-conflict situations led to the adoption of these amnesty laws and other measures that permitted impunity, and these concerns over amnesties were reiterated in this report. Canada asked for further elaboration on these concerns.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

Had the Working Group received a response concerning the request to visit Sudan, Canada asked. In Sri Lanka there were still over 5,000 cases outstanding. The report also mentioned more recent cases in the north east of the country. How could the international community assist the Working Group in investigations, enforcement and justice, and what role could it play in support of the National Commission of Enquiry

ALBERTO J. DUMONT (Argentina) expressed its satisfaction with the adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in December 2006 by the General Assembly. Argentina signed the Convention in February this year. It affirmed its permanent cooperation with the Working Group and wanted to repeat the invitation for the Working Group's regular session to take place in 2008 in Buenos Aires. The Working Group report mentioned the case of the intimidation of human rights defenders in Argentina. The country wanted to announce that a systematic search had been made by the judicial police and that a joint committee had been established. A public reward of 200,000 pesos increased to 400,000 had been announced as well. Nobody had been charged in this connection yet. The Government had also adopted a programme for the protection of witnesses. A national plan was established to provide assistance to victims, to remedy the effect on witnesses and to strengthen the struggle against impunity.

EYNARD ZEVALLOS AGUILAR (Peru) said for almost twenty years, Peru had suffered a serious internal conflict, of which it was still suffering the consequences. With the return of democracy, Peruvian society felt the need to overcome the past, and had set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with the objective of building up a broad picture of the events of the past. The identity of those disappeared was now known, with a real possibility of knowing their fate. There was no amnesty law in Peru today, and those who were responsible for the acts of disappearance were prosecuted, and reparation was given to the relatives.

The Government was committed to submitting cases to the Working Group and cooperating fully with it, and to ensure that cases of disappearance did not result in impunity or in neglect.

PITCHAYAPHANT CHARNBHUMIDOL (Thailand) said that the Government of Thailand had investigated every case of suspected disappearance that had been reported to the Thai authorities, without delay or exception, transparently and in accordance with the law. Thai authorities were ready to offer necessary assistance to any relatives of disappeared persons affected by alleged intimidation including special protection if required to ensure their safety.

GIANFRANCO FATTORINI, of Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, in a joint statement on behalf of Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Society for Threatened Peoples, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Interfaith International, France Libertés-Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, Pax Romana, International Educational Development, International Federation for the protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and other Minorities, Transnational Radical party, nonviolence International, Women's International league for peace and Freedom, Femmes Africa Solidarites and Commission africaine des promoteurs de la sante et des droits de l'homme, said that the enforced disappearance since 1995 of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the eleventh Panchen Lama of Tibet, was a continuous crime. Tibetans and followers of Tibetan Buddhism remained deeply concerned about the whereabouts, well-being and fate of this boy. Therefore, the organization wished to know why the report of the Working Group failed to consider a renewed urgent intervention on this case.

LAILA KARIMI, of International Commission of Jurists, said in Sri Lanka, allegations of disappearances in Colombo and the north and east of Sri Lanka continued to be received, and the Government should invite the Working Group to visit the country. In Thailand, allegations of disappearances in the three southern border provinces and in the north and northeast also continued to be received. The Working Group should visit Nepal to assist in dealing with past disappearances. The Colombian Government should comply with the recommendations of the Working Group following their visit in July 2005. All Member States of the United Nations should ratify and adopt the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, reaffirming their commitment to eradicate this heinous crime.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

PETER SPLINTER, of Amnesty International, asked what, in light of the large number of unresolved cases in Sri Lanka and the limited capacity of the National Commission of Enquiry there, could be done to protect the Sri Lankan population from disappearances and to investigate those disappearances and human rights abuses that had taken place. Amnesty International welcomed the Sri Lankan Government's readiness to host a visit by the Working Group but hoped the visit would take place sooner than planned. The Working Group had noted that the Government needed to do more to clarify past cases and ensure a strong system of rule of law for the pursuit of truth and justice. Were there examples of measures that could be taken in this regard? Amnesty International asked what the Human Rights Council could do to deal effectively with intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders, legal counsel and witnesses and relatives of disappeared persons.

VISUVALINGHAM KIRUPAHARAN, of Interfaith International, said that since the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances had been established in 1980, it had been doing valuable work in countries in conflict, under dictatorship and in other situations. The Working Group was undertaking an important task in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka had once again reached the position of the country with the second highest rate of disappearances, exceeded only by Iraq. Interfaith International asked what immediate remedies was the Working Group proposing for Sri Lanka to stop the ongoing abductions and disappearances happening there.

General Debate on Related Issues

MARTIN HUTH (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said both the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons and the Chair of the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances had said they wished to visit Sri Lanka, and the Government of that country should allow this, so that they could improve the situation through cooperative dialogue. The European Union was also concerned about the situation of the Baha'i. With regards to violence against women, the European Union strongly condemned the practice of honour killings, and legislation favouring those guilty of such heinous crimes. This practice should be actively discouraged. There was also concern for the treatment of women's rights activists in Iran, and the arrest of women taking place during peaceful demonstrations. Iran should respect its human rights obligations under international human rights treaties.

SUZANNE DE GROOT (Netherlands) said the situation of women in Afghanistan was a concern. Discrimination and violence against them continued and early enforced marriage and bartering of young girls was also ongoing. The Netherlands called on the Government of Afghanistan to implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The Netherlands was also concerned by ongoing intolerance towards lesbians, gays and transgender individuals. Human rights violations based on sexual orientation, including rights to life and freedom, and prohibitions of torture, continued. The principles of universality and non-discrimination required that these issues be addressed.

LASSE KEISALO (Finland), in a joint statement with Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, said that the Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People would be a great instrument to enhance the rights of indigenous people. A significant step was taken with it. It would hopefully be regarded as a turning point. The Declaration was a political document and the result of more than ten years of hard work. The effective participation of governments and indigenous people made it possible. Many compromises had to be made. The Special Rapporteur on the situation on human rights and fundamental freedoms on indigenous people was thanked for his efforts.

He had contributed to the improvement of the rights of indigenous people. The Nordic countries also viewed the role of the High Commissioner as crucial for the protection of indigenous people worldwide. Finland affirmed that the Nordic countries attached great importance to the rights of indigenous people. Indigenous issues should continue to be a major concern of the Human Rights Council and its machinery. The effective participation of indigenous people at the work of the Human Rights Council must be ensured.

JOSE GUEVARA (Mexico) said Mexico attached great importance to the rights of indigenous peoples, and attached even more importance to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People which had been adopted by the Council. Mexico had projects, as suggested by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, and was

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

running these under the auspices of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the implementation of the actions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur. A dialogue would be launched between the Government and civil society on the implementation of these recommendations.

A study put forward recommendations on how to improve the administration of justice for indigenous peoples in Mexico, including the application of indigenous norms, due defence, and the right to an interpreter. Mexico also attached prime importance to the human rights of migrants and their family members, and recognised the contribution of the United Nations agencies on backing up Mexican work on defending the rights of migrants. All States which were not Party to the Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families should accede to this document. It was important to include a human rights perspective in all migrant issues dealt with at a global level.

ALEJANDRO NEYRA (Peru) said Peru supported the remarks of Finland and Mexico concerning the commitment to approving the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the General Assembly. The Declaration was an obligatory reference point in the system and the issue deserved to be followed through and remain firmly on the agenda. This was a priority for many Latin American countries and also for the overall system. Mechanisms and mandates for the Special Rapporteur on indigenous peoples should be maintained and strengthened.

SILVANO TOMASI (Holy See) said the Holy See appreciated and fully supported the openness of the new Council to uphold the universal vision of human rights protection. A major contribution of the Council was an approach that was inclusive and consistent with existent provisions in human rights instruments and declarations that clearly supported, among other rights, freedom of religion, of expression, of conscience, of worship in private and in public, and respect of religious convictions for believers of all faiths and for non-believers alike. Respect of the rights and dignity of others should mark the limit of any right, even that of the free expression and manifestation of one's opinions, religious ones included.

Respect for the human person and his or her dignity implied respect of his freedom in religious matters to profess, practice and publicly manifest one's religion without being mocked, injured or discriminated against. A really democratic state valued religious freedom as a fundamental element of the common good, worthy of respect and protection, and created the conditions to allow its citizens to live and act freely. A comprehensive approach, that saw respect of religion rooted in the freedom that every human person was entitled to enjoy in a balance of rights with others and with society, appeared as a reasonable way forward.

MARIE THERESE PICTET- ALTHANN (Sovereign Order of Malta) said the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women provided the Council with a welcome opportunity to focus on the widespread violations of women's rights. The elimination of poverty was important in relation to human rights and human dignity. There was deep concern for the situation of women in armed conflict; the use of rape as a tool of war was totally unacceptable and no amount of humanitarian assistance could overcome the serious after-effects of such cruel treatment. Legislation that foresaw the punishment of violence against women and children needed to be followed up, and it was hoped the Special Rapporteur would encourage the authorities to give their full attention to this issue.

The High Commissioner was also thanked for her report on Palestinian women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints; when the movement of civilians was seriously impeded and access to the hospital became difficult due to roadblocks and checkpoints, the patients' health was in danger. The annual reporting cycle in respect of this issue should be upheld by the Council.

MWENDWA MALECELA (Tanzania) said the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples had misrepresented the situation in Tanzania. Tanzania refuted claims that it had plundered ancestral lands of the most marginalized and vulnerable in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. It had tried to balance rights of inhabitants and environmental preservation, and natural resources and wildlife facing threats due to uncontrolled activities. National land policy was based on certain principles: recognition of land rights of marginalized communities; fair and prompt compensation; and adjudication in special land tribunals. These principles supported minority rights. In addition, the Government had introduced affirmative action in secondary and higher education, economic generation

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

programmes such as cultural tourism, a commission for human rights and good governance with powers to redress concerns and compensate victims of human rights violation, and improved social services close to nomadic areas, all of which supported the rights of the indigenous people.

XIMENA VERDUGO (Chile) thanked the Special Rapporteur on violence against women for her report. The Secretary-General's report was also welcomed. Treaty bodies had made numerous recommendations to States to ensure the non-discrimination of women and to protect their rights. Those recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible. Countries should apply policies nationally to promote and protect the rights of women. Girls and women must be given all opportunities to live their lives in dignity and enjoy all of their freedoms. Concerning the Human Rights Council, Chile believed that it was vital to adopt a gender-perspective. Chile would promote the adoption of a draft resolution on the rights of women to become an integrative part of human rights within the United Nations system.

BRIGID RICE (Australia) welcomed the recognition of the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons of the complexities of recognizing how and when internally displaced persons were no longer considered in need of assistance and protection. These had important operational implications for the UN Refugee Agency and others. Australia also felt the report by the Special Rapporteur on the sale and exploitation of children and child pornography provided useful sources of information on tried and tested approaches. It welcomed further ratifications of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and developments aimed at tackling child sex tourism such as that supported by the United Nations Children's Agency in Sri Lanka. Australia said it would be interested in the Special Rapporteur's assessment of the existing range of legislation to address child sex tourism and his views on gaps and weaknesses.

JONAS JOLLE (Norway) said Norway firmly supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General's study on violence against children, and this had inspired the Nordic countries to strengthen their efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children, in partnership with civil society. The human rights system should continue to play a strong role in efforts on the ground to protect the rights of children affected by war. The Council should seek to promote increased advocacy and accountability through its procedures, deliberations and resolutions.

There was an increasing awareness of the need for the Council to examine how it dealt with the rights of the child. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had alerted the Council to this need; non-governmental organizations were calling for a more holistic approach to promoting and protecting the rights of the child. The ongoing review of the Special Procedures provided an opportunity to strengthen the procedures in this regard, with the aim of filling any protection gaps that affected children.

ZOHRAB MNATSAKIAN (Armenia) said that Armenia attached significant importance to the issue of the promotion of the rights of minorities. Protection of minority rights should constitute one of the fundamental elements for prevention of crimes on a massive scale. For Armenians, the protection of minority rights was far beyond the merely political and legal context, it had been an issue of security and identity. Following the break up of the Soviet Union, Armenia had witnessed a significant decrease of its own minority population. Sensitive to the issue of minority rights and eager to promote effective domestic mechanisms through international cooperation, Armenia had joined the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minority Rights well before becoming a member of the Council of Europe in 2001.

Armenia was one of the few countries to have signed the Convention without reservations. At present Kurds, Assyrians, Greeks, Russians and Ukrainians enjoyed the status of national minorities in the country with all deriving rights and benefits. Armenia hoped that effective measures would be taken to address the feelings of insecurity among the Armenian population in Turkey and ensure protection of their community institutions, leaders and intellectuals. The country remained committed to initiating a genuine and sincere dialogue on all contentious issues between Armenia and Turkey in order to promote normal neighbourly relations between the two countries for the benefit of their peoples.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

MARIA DE LOS REYES FERNANDEZ BULNES (Spain) said with regards to migration, this was a complex issue, which was a multidisciplinary phenomenon, which impacted on a wide range of areas, including education, legislation and inter-cultural dialogue. Spain was currently a country of transit and of destination, and this unprecedented fact required a joint effort from Spanish society as well as from immigrants who sought to integrate. The necessary adjustments should be made to make public systems, including health, able to cope, whilst meeting social needs. Spain was making numerous efforts in this area.

On indigenous issues, Spain hoped the General Assembly would adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People during the current session, as it resulted from compromise efforts over a prolonged length of time. The Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance were issued from similar efforts, and should be widely adopted by Member States.

TOMAS CONCHA (Colombia) said the National Commission for Missing Persons in Colombia consisted of departments of the State and of victims' relatives and civil groups. They had made possible the adoption of standards and a single registry of persons, as well as the training for law enforcement officials, armed forces, and staff of the Prosecutor's office. It had been funded through budgetary provisions for the National Institute on Forensic Medicine. A search-and-locate plan had been set up with the aim of finding the whereabouts of missing persons through systematising information, identification of the disappeared, and locating the whereabouts of their remains and relatives.

MOHAMMED BESSEDIK (Algeria) said Algeria wanted to come back to the report on internally displaced persons. Algeria stressed the need for consistency in texts written in English and French. This matter had been discussed in the United Nations Refugee Agency. In English the problem was less strong with the term of internally displaced persons, but in French only the term displaced persons was used. A distinction between those two concepts must be made. Algeria wanted clarification about the paragraph stating the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees concerning displaced persons. Algeria wanted to know what was understood by this paragraph.

Concerning the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in field activities, this had been discussed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees already. Algeria wanted to stress that that approach should undergo a review by the end of the year and the need was emphasized to make a distinction between the protection of refugees and displaced persons. In this connection, the clarification of another term was asked, concerning one of the emergency situations. Algeria wanted to know more about the precise complexity of those situations.

JEREMIE DWIGHT SMITH, of Cairo Institute of Human Rights, said the Special Rapporteur on violence against women had reported eloquently on the horrific impact of violence against women in conflict, and as the debate continued, thousands of women in Darfur faced continuous threats of sexual violence. The Council should not delay in addressing the suffering of the people in Darfur: the world was watching as the Council took up the issue. The Council should adopt a strong resolution which took note of the high-level mission report, and take action on the recommendations therein. This would be a small but much-needed step towards addressing grave human rights abuses in Darfur, and the failure of the Government to meet its obligation to protect its citizens.

PHILIPPE LEBLANC, of Dominicans for Peace and Justice, said there were approximately 1.8 million internally displaced persons in Iraq. There were an estimated 100,000 Iraqis leaving the country each month. Syria and Jordan had shown openness in welcoming refugees, but services were becoming overwhelmed. The international community through the United Nations should seek ways to provide food clothing and shelter, as well as medical and educational provisions, to Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. Western countries should open their doors to Iraqis seeking security abroad, and UN refugee services should seek support from the international community to provide basic services for displaced Iraqis living in other regions of Iraq. The long-term reconstruction of Iraq should be tackled with the utmost seriousness.

MICHAEL ANTHONY, of Asian Legal Resource Center, said in a joint statement that it was concerned in particular by the lack of cooperation of States with the work of the Special Procedures. Asia was the scene of many of the

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

world's forced disappearances. Of particular concern here was that several leading violators represented Asia in this Council, which seriously undermined this body in its infancy. The Member States of the Council must cease their practice and denial of disappearances, and accept and act upon their responsibility to investigate and prosecute all perpetrators, and ensure adequate reparation to the victims and their families.

SUSANNE TAMAS, of Baha'i International Community, said last year an Egyptian Administrative Court had adopted a landmark ruling in favour of Baha'i plaintiffs, upholding their right to obtain identity cards that did not misrepresent their religious affiliation. This was part of an ongoing crisis over efforts to deny identity cards to the minority in Egypt, and was a tribute to the independence of the judges of that Court, and Egyptian human rights groups immediately hailed the decision. But ultimately it did not lead to the issue being resolved. The Government appealed the ruling, and the Supreme Court upheld the Government's position, once more denying the Baha'i their legitimate rights.

BABU GOGINENI, of World Population Foundation, said the practice of child marriage was all too prevalent. Pregnancy and childbirth in young girls posed great risks to their physical and psychological health and welfare and thousands of young girls were dying as a result. The World Population Foundation called on all States to implement fully all human rights conventions, rectify legislative loopholes between civil, customary and religious marriages, raise awareness on child marriage, raise the legal age of marriage to 18 and promote gender equality and the rights of girls and young women to education.

CHARLOTTE BUNCH, of Centre for Women's Global Leadership, said that the Centre had always worked for the full integration of gender in the United Nations system. The work of achieving human rights for all had always meant making changes to existing cultural systems. Cultural was a factor in violence against women and must be investigated. The gun-culture in the United States was often a cause for domestic violence against women. The Human Rights Council should discuss by 2008 the question of violence against women. A firm commitment from the Council for gender questions was asked.

KIM WOO KI, of Indian Movement Tupaj Amaru, said with regards to the reports and resolutions adopted by the Council, including on violence against women and the related military sexual slavery by Japan, the Government of Japan had said that although the recommendations stressed the need for the Government to acknowledge responsibility, the Government did not do so. It had also refused to disclose information. It had refused to make a public apology, and had rejected legal responsibility and the liability to make compensation. It had not punished perpetrators, nor had it identified them. The Council should adopt a resolution, urging the Government of Japan to implement these recommendations.

RONALD BARNES, of Indian Council of South America, encouraged the Human Rights Council to continue institution building without selectivity. A Canadian elder who died while under arrest in Western Canada was honoured by the Indian Council and Canada should honour its obligations with indigenous peoples. There should be recognition in good faith of all such agreements. Alaska was never de-colonised and the United States committed crimes against humanity in its treatment of the peoples there. The Human Rights Council recently called on the United States to address the discriminatory application of law in Alaska and resolve the issue of permanent trusteeship for Alaska, where the United States still evoked discovery title in its claims over the territory. The term best practice tended to signify insignificant and incomplete standards and in many cases the Special Rapporteur, in his report, found not best practices but only good intentions .

LILANA URIBE, of Franciscans International, said that in Colombia more than three million were internally displaced persons. They did not enjoy a proper status because the Government denied it to them and the authorities considered themselves not responsible for the displacement. The displacements were often caused by military activities. Military intervention was given priority. In Mr. Kalin's visit to Colombia, he observed a discrepancy, which was mentioned in his report. The scale of displacement showed that the problem of internally displaced persons was still not properly addressed. There was a discrepancy between legislation and practice. There was no guarantee of truth justice either.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

SEBASTIEN GILLIOZ, of Human Rights Watch, said culture was often disingenuously used as a justification for inadequate government policies, laws and programmes for the prevention and punishment of violence against women. Cultural expressions were no less static than violence against women was inevitable. There was particular concern for the worsening human rights situation in Iran, and the Human Rights Council should consider how to intensify its efforts to address the situation. Gender mainstreaming and integrating the human rights of women into all human rights work had become a priority in most United Nations processes, and the Council should be part of this important process, and consider how it could best integrate a substantive concern for the human rights of women into all its work, and how it could most effectively address the human rights violations that happened mostly or exclusively to women and girls.

RITOLDA DALARY, of the Netherlands Center for Indigenous Peoples, said the Centre fully supported the recommendations of Professor Stavenhagen, and noted deficiencies in collaboration from the Philippine Government, which had manifestly displayed discrimination against the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. The Human Security Act of the Philippines would further undermine the rights of the indigenous peoples of the country. The Centre appealed to the Human Rights Council to establish a country Rapporteur to ensure follow-up to the various recommendations of Special Rapporteurs' in the Philippines, and to review the participation of the Philippines in the Council taking into account its human rights record in relation to indigenous peoples.

LES MALEZER, of Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action, said that the situation of human rights of indigenous people continued to be extensively violated despite over two decades of consideration in the United Nations. It was unfortunate that the United Nations had this year failed to introduce a General Assembly resolution calling for States to address the breaches of human rights of indigenous peoples and action through the various programmes and mechanisms of the United Nations. The Human Rights Council was called upon to continue to emphasize the need to address abuses of human rights against indigenous peoples.

UZERA SHAN, of International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, said more than one million Indian soldiers were involved in Kashmir in order to suppress the basic human rights of the Kashmiri people, including the right to life, liberty, and freedom of expression. The security forces used wide powers, and laws contrary to all international human rights standards which allowed long-term detention of civilians, without any right to representation. There were also countless cases of disappearances and killings committed by the security forces, causing irreparable losses to thousands of Kashmiri families. These inhuman practices should cease, in conformity with international humanitarian law.

DOUGLAS WICK RAMARAINÉ, of International Buddhist Federation, said the Federation was pleased that a Special Rapporteur would be visiting Sri Lanka. It was hoped that all internally displaced persons would return to their homes once the Tamil Tiger terrorists were driven out of the area. Already, internally displaced persons were starting to return in the east. The plight of kidnap victims of the LTTE was not receiving attention. They were subjected to inhuman and barbaric treatment. There were also thousands of Sinhalese and Muslim Sri Lankans expelled by a policy of ethnic cleansing in parts of the country and they were prevented from returning. Sri Lanka should be supported in her attempts to eradicate terrorism, which was the root cause of internal displacement in Sri Lanka.

SABA KOURAB W., of International Islamic Federation of Students Organizations, said that violence against women constituted a great crime. All crimes and forms of violence against women were committed with impunity. The women of Kashmir were looking up to the Human Rights Council so that the abuses committed in the region could be highlighted. The international community was asked for their support for the rights of women in Kashmir.

PATRIZIA SCANNELLA, of Amnesty International, said in the report on the mission of the Special Rapporteur on internally displaced persons to Colombia, one of the reasons for displacement of children was said to be paramilitary groups. The demobilisation of the latter had been deemed by the international community to be successful, but Amnesty International had determined that they had resumed abducting children for military and sometimes sexual purposes. There should be further investigation of this serious phenomenon. The issue of culture in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women was important, and this should be

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

mainstreamed throughout the United Nations system, and the wider understanding between culture and violence against women should be mainstreamed throughout the United Nations.

GUSTAVO GALLON, of the Colombian Commission of Jurists, said promotion and protection of human rights should be based on cooperation and dialogue. The Colombian Government's willingness to be open to scrutiny on human rights had been commended as a positive step forward by the international community. However, the Working Group on arbitrary detention stated in its report of 2007 that the Government had not responded to its request to visit, nor to those from the Working Groups on minorities and mercenaries. The urgency of the situation should be reviewed. Repeated silence in the face of these requests showed a systematic flouting of the principle of cooperation.

MALIKA KRITI, of Union de l'action feminine, said that she wanted to give a testimony of what she and her siblings had gone through after her father had disappeared. She hoped that the international community could hear her voice. She wanted to know about the fate of her father who had been abducted in the Sahara. He had been fighting Spanish occupation and had been abducted then. Thirty years had passed and her family wanted to know about his whereabouts. Neither Morocco nor various non-governmental organizations had answered her inquiries.

Right of Reply

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco), speaking in a right of reply, said Algeria had responded yesterday to a non-governmental organizations which had referred to the treatment undergone by women and girls in the camps in the Tinduf, giving inadvertent evidence that his country was part of the dispute in the area, and not a simple observer. Whilst recognising that the issue of the Sahara was a matter for the Security Council and the General Assembly, the representative of Algeria began his usual demonstration, which no longer fooled anybody, forgetting that this was the Human Rights Council and not the Security Council.

United Nations texts and practice were clear that self-determination was applied on the internal level by the association of all citizens in political decisions, the recognising of their cultural specificities, and their direct inclusion in the management of local affairs. Algeria spoke only of independence, synonymous to the infringement of the territorial integrity of Morocco. The population of the camps were held in an isolated desert area, and the Convention made Algeria responsible.

MAKIO MIYAGAWA (Japan), speaking in a right of reply in response to the statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said that Japan had dedicated itself to international peace and prosperity out of remorse for its historical record. Concerning victims of abduction, no satisfactory explanation had been given by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the issue was not considered resolved. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should ensure the safety of detainees, return them, and provide a full account of the circumstances of their abductions.

MOHAMMED BESSEDIK (Algeria), speaking in a right of reply, said that he wanted to reply to the Representative of Morocco that self-determination did not mean autonomy. The reference had been concerning the sharing of the territory. Algeria had always been in favour of implementing the United Nations settlement plan. Concerning the number of refugees, the country wanted to state that a diversion had been made to this regard. About the lifting of the embargo, no member of the press had been permitted to visit the Western Sahara.

CHOE MYONG NAM (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in a right of reply, said the Japanese allegations were rejected. If the remorse of Japan was true or sincere, then they would not be reluctant to acknowledge their crimes against humanity. The issue of abduction had been fully resolved. Japan should acknowledge the ulterior political reasons behind its claims, and should recognise its responsibilities for the genocidal killings and sexual slavery of the past, as well as recognising the discrimination undergone by Koreans in Japan. The Japanese Prime Minister had repeatedly refused to apologise for the military sexual slavery. Japan should acknowledge its past, as had Germany, and make reparations.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DISCUSSION ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES, TAKES UP THEMATIC ISSUES

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco), speaking in a right of reply, said the Representative of Algeria appeared to have a problem with the concepts of autonomy and self-determination. The concept of autonomy appeared to be a source of irritation to him. He talked of a UN plan but there was no UN plan as it had been superseded by events. The Security Council was calling on all parties to step back and resolve their issues. Detailed inquiries had been carried out and refuted Algeria's figures concerning the beneficiaries of aid. Parliamentary delegations would be welcome to visit, but Morocco was opposed to delegations that would like to foment disorder in the southern areas.

MAKIO MIYAGAWA (Japan), speaking in a right of reply, said the President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had presented excuses for the abduction of a Japanese citizen. Japan urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to respond to the demands of the international society. The numbers that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea mentioned were groundless and Japan could not accept them.

PITCHAYAPHANT CHARNBHUMIDOL (Thailand), speaking in a right of reply, said with regards to the comments made by Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists on the concern about the Emergency Decree - this was promulgated to enable the Government to deal with the situation in a more effective, integrated and expeditious way to keep law and order, and it contained the necessary safeguards to protect human rights. It did not provide for impunity. Officials would receive protection only as long as they could prove to the court that their actions were in keeping with the safeguards included in the Decree.

FOROUZANDEH VADIATI (Iran), speaking in a right of reply in response to the German delegation, said the right to assembly and peaceful gathering was constitutionally guaranteed in Iran, but there were laws to obey and groups wishing to demonstrate should obtain a permit. The group in question had not requested a permit and the gathering was therefore illegal and treated as such. The temporary detention following an unauthorized gathering of some women three weeks ago was mainly due to this and their non-compliance with police instructions to disperse. Concerning the reference to the Baha'i community in Iran, the German representative's allegations were baseless. Rights of Baha'i communities living in Iran were protected.

ALI ONANER (Turkey), speaking in a right of reply, said Turkey wanted to reply to the statement by Armenia. Armenian citizens rights were safeguarded in Turkey. They exercised their rights the same way as all citizens in Turkey did. The murder of Hrant Dink was an isolated incident. Mr. Dink was a respected Turkish-Armenian journalist and Turkey regretted his loss. His murderer was captured within six hours after the crime.

JESUS ENRIQUE GARCIA (Philippines), speaking in a right of reply, said with regards to the statement of Asian Legal Resource Center, the Government of the Philippines was exerting best efforts to ascertain the fate and whereabouts of those reported as disappeared, and was cooperating with the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances would be provided with information on the bills on this topic that was going through the Congress as they became available. The Government had already invited Mr. Stavenhagen, and was considering his request for a follow-up visit. The Philippines believed the General Assembly should adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Load-Date: April 17, 2007

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

US Fed News

October 24, 2007 Wednesday 2:04 AM EST

Copyright 2007 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 10848 words

Byline: US Fed News

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

The United Nations issued the following press release:

The frequency of the meetings of the new Human Rights Council could help put human rights abusers on notice and allow situations of concern to be scrutinized all year round and in real time, Louise Arbour, High Commissioner for Human Rights told delegations this morning as the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) continued its discussion of human rights issues.

Impunity for gross violations of human rights and grave breaches of humanitarian law continued to be pervasive, she pointed out, noting that, although States had a duty to investigate reports of such violations and bring perpetrators to justice, they often lacked political will or capacity, or both. The "sheer number" of individuals incarcerated without adequate judicial review of their detention was another issue that was high on her agenda, she said.

The Universal Periodic Review was a mechanism through which the Council would review the human rights record of all United Nations Member States, on the basis of fairness and transparency, she said. Now, the challenge was to translate the review project into reality to effectively address human rights situations on the ground. Implementing the Review's recommendations was the responsibility of each State, but dedicated financial support to many developing countries would be crucial for them to meet their obligations.

During the afternoon session, John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said the situation in the Territory had worsened since the time of his last report, and he singled out the issues of self-determination, the consequences of prolonged occupation and the role of the United Nations in the promotion of human rights in the Territory for special attention.

He said the Quartet - consisting of the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations - had paid little attention to the human rights of the Palestinians. And its imposition of sanctions against the Palestinians had led to a serious loss of confidence in the United Nations in the Occupied Territory. In those circumstances, the question must be asked whether the best interests of the United Nations were served by remaining in the Quartet, where the Organization was used to "legitimize the pro-Israeli position of the Quartet?"

In a heated exchange following the Special Rapporteur's presentation, the representative of Israel took the floor to give a detailed reaction to the report, saying that the narrow perspective of the report ignored the terrorism and violence emerging from Palestinian areas.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, said tragic events had been taking place in the country since 15 August. Excessive force was used by security forces in the face of demonstrations, people had been killed, while thousands had been arrested. Alarming reports of death in custody, torture and disappearances continued to be received. There was an urgent need to coordinate the different approaches among Member States who had been trying to find ways to contribute towards the principles of democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar.

In a statement following the Special Rapporteur, the representative of Myanmar said his Government had exercised restraint in dealing with the demonstrators, and that small protests had been "sullied by political activists and rabble rousers". He rejected the "outrageous allegations" of human rights violations, particularly sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers, which he said were false allegations disseminated by remnants of insurgents and their allies.

Statements were also made today by the representatives of Portugal on behalf of the European Union and Suriname, on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

The representatives of Algeria, Sudan and Iraq spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, addressed the Committee on the work of the Department of Political Affairs in providing electoral assistance to Member States.

Johan Scholvinck, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, introduced the report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ngonlardje Mbaidjol, Director of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, introduced nine reports of the Secretary-General on various human rights issues.

The Committee will meet again at 10 a.m. on Thursday to continue its general discussion on human rights.

Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met today to continue its discussion on human rights.

The Committee had before it the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (document A/62/36) - (for background information see Press Release GA/SHC/3892 dated 23 October 2007).

Also before the Committee was a transmittal by the Secretary-General of a Letter dated 21 September 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (document A/62/369) - (for background information see Press Release GA/SHC/3892 dated 23 October 2007).

The Committee also had before it a Letter dated 2 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (document A/62/464) - (for background information see Press Release GA/SHC/3892 dated 23 October 2007).

Before the Committee was the Secretary-General's report on The right to development (document A/62/183). This supplements the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the right to development which was considered by the Human Rights Council at its fourth session (A/HRC/4/55 of 14 February 2007) and provides relevant conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group on the Right to Development at its eighth session.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report titled Globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights (document A/62/222), summarizing views on the issue by the Governments of Croatia, Cuba, Ecuador, Lebanon, Mexico and Tunisia.

Also before the Committee was the Secretary-General's report on Human rights and cultural diversity (document A/62/254) which summarizes comments from 15 Member States, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

the Observatory of Diversity and Cultural Rights. The governments underline the multi-ethnic and multicultural character of their States, and reaffirm their commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as respect for cultural diversity. Very few recommendations address action that might be taken at the international level to promote cultural diversity, the report notes. It also provides an update on the consultation on the mandate of an independent expert on the promotion and enjoyment of cultural rights.

In addition, the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on Human rights and unilateral coercive measures (document A/62/255), with summaries of statements from Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Libya, Mexico, Serbia, Suriname and Syria on the implications and negative effects of such measures on their populations. Cuba states it was "one of hundreds of developing countries" whose populations are victims of unilateral coercive measures imposed by developed countries. It refers to the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba as being "the longest and cruellest in the history of humanity as well as an act of genocide, an act of war and an international crime" that had cost direct economic damage in excess of 89 billion dollars. It was more important than ever, Cuba states, for the international community to pronounce itself against such practices.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (document A/62/287). The Secretary-General notes the increasingly important role of national human rights institutions in promoting and protecting human rights, and enumerates the countries visited by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) during the reporting year. The report concludes that the accreditation procedure for national organizations should be supported because of the increase in the amount of applications, and because of the effective work these organizations do.

The Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General titled Combating defamation of religions (document A/62/288), focusing on activities undertaken by States, OHCHR, human rights mechanisms and national human rights institutions on the topic. It summarizes replies from 16 Member States to a request by OHCHR for information on actions being undertaken vis-?-vis defamation. In its conclusion, the report says that a majority of the respondent States had constitutional provisions guaranteeing the right to freedom of religion and protecting against religious discrimination. "Step by step, issues pertaining to defamation of religions are receiving increased attention," the Secretary-General observes, adding that there was an emerging trend towards amending criminal codes to reflect different strains of defamation.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization (document A/62/293). The report describes how the United Nations has been providing electoral support to Member States in the past two years. Electoral assistance is only given at the request of a Member State, and is provided through a number of electoral components or missions. Requests to organize or observe elections are decreasing substantially while technical advice and assistance to electoral authorities is becoming the norm. The complexity of requests, for technological innovations for example, is increasing. The report recommends that the United Nations continue to work in partnership with relevant governmental and intergovernmental organizations to develop and disseminate electoral standards and best practices.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on Protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (document A/62/298). This gives an overview of the recent developments in the United Nations on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, highlighting the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It also includes the activities of the OHCHR, human rights treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council. According to the report, the High Commissioner for Human Rights expresses serious concern about a number of measures adopted by States which continue to undermine human rights and the rule of law. These include, among many others, secret detention and the irregular transfer of individuals suspected of terrorist activities; ill-treatment; continued detention of suspects without a legal basis; and minimum due process guarantees, including the right to judicial review of detainment.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa (document A/62/317). The report gives an overview of the work carried out by the

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

Centre, and the most significant developments in its operation in the past year. It also describes changes including the change in leadership and strategic direction. Under new leadership, the Centre is focusing on human rights and democracy issues that could bring solid and sustainable results while having a rapid impact in the region. The report recommends that the Centre be provided with additional funds and human resources to enable it to deliver on all its planned work and ensure its continued legitimacy as well as leadership on human rights and democracy issues in the region.

Before the Committee was the Report of the Secretary-General on the Khmer Rouge trials (document A/62/304). The report provides details on the progress achieved, since 2005, by the Extraordinary Chambers for the Prosecution under Cambodian Law of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea. As an example of outreach, the report mentions the over 5,000 rural Cambodians who were brought by the Documentation Centre of Cambodia to visit the court facilities. The report also notes the challenges the Extraordinary Chambers faces with its "unique structure", with the Director of the Office reporting to the Cambodian Government, and the Deputy Director - a United Nations staff member - reporting to the Secretary-General. This type of organization has led to significant shortfalls in staffing and the budget, the report says.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's note on Civil and political rights, including the questions of independence of the judiciary, administration of justice and impunity (document A/62/207). It transmits the report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers. The report details two missions by the Special Rapporteur, Leandro Despouy, to the Maldives and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Having served in his position since 1994, Mr. Despouy concludes that judicial actors in the majority of countries are unable to discharge their functions independently. He also draws attention to the fact that during states of emergency, repeated violations of the right to a fair trial occur, as well as other human rights violations. Mr. Despouy expresses serious concern that individuals are still being executed in Iraq, in particular a man who confessed to having participated in the attack of August 2003 against the United Nations office in Baghdad. This violates the right to the truth by the victims of the attack and frustrates attempts to obtain significant evidence about that attack. He concludes by recommending that the African Union sign a relationship agreement with the International Criminal Court. He also recommends that trials of the Iraqi Supreme Criminal Tribunal be conducted in accordance with international standards, or that an international criminal tribunal be constituted with the cooperation of the United Nations.

The Committee had before it a report of the independent expert on the Effects on economic reform policies and foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights (document A/62/212), which conveys the proceedings of an expert consultation that took place from 9 to 10 July in Geneva. Experts note that human rights create a legal obligation, and are not to be taken into account only when possible or convenient. The challenge for the international community is to agree on how to calculate the cost of upholding minimum human rights standards within the context of debt sustainability. Regarding minimum standards of economic, social and cultural rights, the main concern over lending practices and "conditionality" of international financial institutions is that they are seen as undermining the accountability of States to their citizens, including human rights obligations. The rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups have been negatively affected by economic policies. Debtor States should develop a legal framework to ensure that their human rights obligations are recognized; creditors must take reasonable measures to find out what their loans are being used for, and assume responsibility for the roles that their loans played.

Before the Committee was the Secretary-General's note on the Right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (document A/62/214) which transmits the report of Paul Hunt, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The report suggests that, in order to secure this right for all, human rights should be applied to the difficult process of prioritizing health interventions. Honouring binding commitments to human rights includes providing for the health needs of marginalized groups such as women and persons with disabilities. The report also explores the high efficacy of health impact assessments, and expresses regret at tendencies to devote more attention to medical care at the expense of underlying determinants such as access to safe water and sanitation. On those matters, the report makes a number of recommendations to States and other actors.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

The Secretary-General's note on the Human rights of migrants (document A/62/218) transmits the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Jorge Bustamante. The report focuses on the visits undertaken by the Special Rapporteur to the Republic of Korea, Indonesia and the United States, where various aspects of the lives of migrant workers were explored through interviews with migrants, law enforcement officials and others. The report also highlights border control, expulsion, and conditions for the admission and stay of migrants, which were the main focus of the Special Rapporteur's report to the Human Rights Council at its fourth session. The Special Rapporteur concludes by encouraging Member States to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

A note by the Secretary-General, before the Committee, transmits a report submitted by his Special Representative on the Situation of human rights defenders (document A/62/225). The Special Representative, Hina Jilani, analyses the legal framework for the protection of the right to protest at the international and regional levels and illustrates cases presented to both international and regional mechanisms, showing how the different systems complement and reinforce each other. The report further analyses the work of the Special Representative in her protection role and looks at the issue through analysis of different "groups of protestors" as well as "thematic areas" of protest.

The Committee had before it a report on Protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons (document A/62/227) prepared by the Secretary-General's Representative on the matter, Walter K?lin. He observes that internal displacement, whether caused by natural disasters, conflict situations or large-scale development projects, is now affecting a growing proportion of the world's population. More than 24 million people are displaced due to conflicts in their country, and millions more for other reasons. The Representative recommends that governments ensure that the needs and rights of displaced persons are taken into consideration within the framework of any peace processes, and that they give particular attention to issues relating to community reconciliation and "living together again".

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's note on Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (document A/62/265), transmitting the interim report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston. The issue of this report coincides with the 25th anniversary of the creation of the mandate on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. According to the report, in the past year, the Special Rapporteur conducted visits to Guatemala, Lebanon, the Philippines and Darfur. 27 countries ranging from Security Council members such as China, the Russian Federation and the United States, as well as States like Thailand, Israel and Uzbekistan, did not issue the requested invitations for a visit. This lack of compliance with the Special Rapporteur's requests, as well as the systematic neglect of past recommendations by the Special Rapporteur, is the reason why Mr. Alston has issued this report without any new recommendations. Taking steps to address the problem of States' non-cooperation in response to requests for visits would, therefore, be an important start, the Special Rapporteur concludes.

Before the Committee was a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the interim report of Special Rapporteur Asma Jahangir on the Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (document A/62/280). The report draws attention to the situation of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons, saying that they are in situations of vulnerability that may also have a link to their freedom of religion and belief. Also, the Special Rapporteur notes that atheists and non-theists had made him aware of their concerns vis-?-vis blasphemy laws, education issues, equality legislation and official consultations held only with religious representatives. He reiterates that religious freedom includes the right not to profess any religion or belief.

The Committee had before it the report of Special Rapporteur, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, on The situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples (A/62/286), which includes his views on new challenges with respect to the protection of indigenous peoples' rights throughout the world. It also touches upon the Special Rapporteur's official visit to Kenya, where he says the principal human rights issues faced by indigenous communities like the Elmolu, Yakuu, Sengwer, Maasai and Ogiek related to the loss and environmental degradation of their land, forests and natural resources; in recent decades, their situation has taken a turn for the worse as a result of State attempts to modernize or "sedentarize" such communities. Corruption made circumstances harder.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

The Committee had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the interim report of Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur, on The right to food (document A/62/289), who is "outraged to report that global hunger is still on the rise". Some 854 million people today do not get enough to eat every day, compared with an estimated 800 million in 1996. Every year, more than six million children die from hunger-related illness before their fifth birthday. The Special Rapporteur is also "deeply concerned" by food crises that threatens "millions" across southern Africa, with funding shortfalls forcing the World Food Programme (WFP) to cut operations across the region. Mr. Ziegler also addresses the impact of biofuels (bioethanol and biodiesel) on the right to food. Rushing to turn maize, wheat, sugar and palm oil into fuel for cars, without examining the impact on global hunger, is a recipe for disaster, he says.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on the Situation of human rights in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (document A/62/318). The report outlines activities undertaken by the United Nations, in particular the OHCHR, to promote and protect human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Both the Assembly and the Office continue to express their serious and grave concern at continuing reports of systemic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the report said. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has not accepted the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, and he was not authorized to visit the country, thus forcing him to collect information from other parties that had knowledge of the situation. The report concludes with a number of recommendations, but foremost that the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea extend full and free access to United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors in order for them to be able to carry out their mandates.

The Committee had before it a note by the Secretary General transmitting the report of Akich Okola, the independent expert on the Situation of human rights in Burundi (document A/62/213), which states that the overall human rights situation in the country seems to have improved, although violations relating to cases of ill-treatment and sometimes torture of suspects by police officials and legal procedure violations continue to be reported. The independent expert calls on the international community to support the Government's efforts to reform the justice system, and welcomes the commitment of the President of Burundi not to grant amnesty for major crimes committed during the conflict. The independent expert prompts Burundian authorities to fully investigate incidents of sexual violence and to bring those responsible for such crimes to justice.

The Committee had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Martin Scheinin, Special Rapporteur on Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (document A/62/263), featuring a summary of visits made to South Africa, the United States and Israel, and reflecting upon some of the challenges to refugee law and asylum resulting from global measures to combat terrorism. In many regions, counter-terrorism measures often "disproportionately" affect asylum-seekers, refugees and immigrants. And genuine asylum-seekers may be the group most affected by the post-2001 wave of new counter-terrorism measures. Mr. Scheinin is "troubled" that terrorism and national security are being cited as reasons for more restrictive asylum and immigration regimes. Human rights and refugee law, as developed over decades, did take proper account of the security concerns of States, and the new momentum in addressing terrorism did not justify revamping the standards and principles of international protection. The Special Rapporteur calls upon the United States to close down without delay its military detention facility at Guantanamo Bay and to either try or release its detainees.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's note transmitting the Special Rapporteur's report on the Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (document A/62/264). Although the country declined to allow the Special Rapporteur, Vitit Muntarbhorn, access to the country, the note identifies a myriad of human rights violations, chiefly relating to food access, personal freedom and refugees' rights. The Special Rapporteur calls for international burden-sharing in dealing with the flow of asylum-seekers to ease the pressure on first-asylum countries. He also mentions the severe punishments that potential refugees from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea face at home. He cites a 2006 study that contends that the misdeeds of the authorities are "tantamount to crimes against humanity". The Special Rapporteur concludes with a plea to be allowed access to the country, in order to offer advice and to accurately assess the human rights situation on the ground.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

The Committee had before it note of the Secretary-General transmitting a report titled Situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (document A/62/275) which has been prepared by John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur on the matter. It says the exercise of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination has been threatened by the separation of the West Bank and Gaza due to the seizure of power by Hamas in Gaza in June 2007 and the seizure of power by Fatah in the West Bank. Every effort must therefore be made by the international community to ensure that Palestinian unity is restored.

This year marked the 40th anniversary of the occupation of Palestinian Territory, the report notes. Israel's obligations have not diminished; on the contrary, they have grown. The International Court of Justice should be asked to render an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of prolonged occupation, the Special Rapporteur suggests. In Gaza, Israel has violated important norms of international humanitarian and human rights law by undertaking military action against civilian targets and by creating a humanitarian crisis by closing Gaza's external borders. By law, it has to cease these actions, the Special Rapporteur says, adding that other States party to the siege of Gaza were also in violation of international humanitarian law.

Addressing the West Bank, the Special Rapporteur says the human rights situation there could improve as a result of rapprochement between the emergency Government led by President Abbas, on the one hand, and Israel, the United States and the Quartet (the European Union, Russia, the United States and the United Nations) on the other. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, plus Israel's refusal to transfer tax revenues and the imposition by the United States of banking restrictions, have had a serious impact on life in the West Bank. Poverty and unemployment have reached their highest levels; health and education have been undermined by military incursions, the wall and checkpoints; and the entire social fabric of society has come under threat. Some 10,000 Palestinians are in Israeli jails, treated in an inhuman and degrading manner, and the extrajudicial killing of suspected militants had continued unabated.

Regarding the Quartet, the Special Rapporteur says that serious questions were being asked about the role of the Secretary-General. The Quartet - led in practice by the United States - is largely responsible for furthering the peace process, but it has shown little regard for promoting human rights or international humanitarian law, and it is indirectly responsible for economic sanctions. The Special Rapporteur states that if the Quartet cannot be guided by human rights law, international humanitarian law, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and considerations of fairness and even-handedness in its dealing with the Occupied Palestinian Territory, then the United Nations should withdraw from it.

Also before the Committee is the Secretary-General's note transmitting a progress report submitted by the independent expert, Titinga Frédéric Pacéré, on The situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (document A/62/313). The report says that the situation remains worrying, given the poor security concerns, the serious and widespread human rights and other violations as well as atrocities committed in the eastern part of the country and in northern Katanga, with complete impunity by militias and armed groups. The report documents serious human rights violations committed by the armed forces and police to draw national and international attention to the egregious violations of human rights as well as to the poor security conditions prevailing throughout most of the country. The independent expert concludes with several recommendations, including a call for an end to all abuses, violations and all forms of exploitation and widespread sexual violence. He also recommends the establishment of a special international tribunal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The committee had before it the Secretary-General's note transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur, Sima Samar, on the Situation of human rights in the Sudan (document A/62/354). The report provides an analysis of the human rights situation in Sudan from the angle of sustenance, freedoms, asylum, vulnerability of specific groups, and responsibility of the State authorities to protect human rights. The report includes the Special Rapporteur's findings from her mission to Sudan in July 2007. Protection of human rights in Sudan continues to be an enormous challenge, Ms. Samar says. Many of the concerns highlighted in last year's report remain the same one year on. Violations of civil and political rights continue. In all parts of the country, common patterns of injustice, marginalization and exploitation emerge. Impunity remains a serious concern in all areas, the report says. Protection of civilians - the primary responsibility of the Sudanese State - remains insufficient, the report says.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

The Committee also had before it the Secretary-General's report on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto (document A/62/230). The report provides a brief overview of the status of the Convention.

Statement

LOUISE ARBOUR, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that since she last addressed the Committee, the Human Rights Council had made considerable strides, focusing its efforts on institution-building in order to equip itself for its mandate. The Universal Periodic Review was a mechanism through which the Council would review the human rights record of all United Nations Member States, on the basis of fairness and transparency. The challenge was to translate the review project into reality in order to effectively address human rights situations on the ground. Implementing the Universal Periodic Review's recommendations was the responsibility of each State, but dedicated financial support for many developing countries was crucial for them to meet their obligations.

The Council had held three special sessions in the past year in reaction to unfolding crises in the Middle East, another one on the conflict in Sudan (Darfur) and yet another one, recently, on Myanmar. It decided to convene a group to ensure the effective follow-up to resolutions on Darfur and also decided to establish a new mandate on contemporary forms of slavery. With its framework in place, and with its operative approach "partially road-tested in an intense first working year", the Council was now expected to devote its undivided attention to the many human rights situations that demanded action. The frequency of the Council's meetings would make this task easier and might also help put human rights abusers on notice that situations of concern could be scrutinized all year round and in real time.

The High Commissioner's country visits were a means of strengthening country engagement, and allowed for more direct dialogue with government representatives and others. She had recently addressed the Non-Aligned Movement's ministerial meeting on human rights and cultural diversity in Iran, and had pointed out that the failure to understand or accommodate diversity inevitably led to an erosion of rights. Human rights standards provided guidance for protecting diversity, and human rights law "shields us from the ever-shifting grounds on which cultural identities are defined", she said. Sometimes, cultural identity was exploited by ruling elites in pursuit of political or economic interests, and some groups were marginalized. Economic policies impacted on human rights, so human rights should influence macroeconomic policy-making processes.

Impunity for gross violations of human rights and grave breaches of humanitarian law continued to be pervasive, she said. States had a duty to investigate reports of such violations and to bring perpetrators to justice, but often they lacked political will or the capacity, or both, to fulfill such obligations. The "sheer number" of individuals incarcerated without adequate judicial review of their detention was another issue that had been high on her agenda. That issue would be the subject of the first meeting she was planning with senior judges.

OHCHR had developed 10 rule-of-law tools for conflict and post-conflict States. Complex topics such as the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions had been part of those tools. Looking forward to next year's celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, she urged the Committee to join in efforts to move into the era of universal implementation of the Declaration's principles, and make them a daily reality for all.

Discussion

The High Commissioner then responded to questions from several delegations.

Addressing mainstreaming human rights at the country level and the role of human rights advisers from her Office, Ms. Arbour said that was a form of country engagement that had been welcomed by States that had benefited from the deployment of United Nations country teams. The formula had proven very effective in several countries, and had allowed resident United Nations coordinators in concerned countries to have human rights expertise at hand. Such advisers also provided countries with on-the-ground training in situations where technical cooperation would otherwise be difficult to deliver.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

Responding to questions about the country visits she had conducted, she said that she had conducted different types of visits, all at the invitation of governments. Some visits were to attend a particular event; others were more comprehensive in nature, with substantive dialogue to assess the human rights situation in a given country and to provide some input for future directions. She said that she had visited four Central Asian countries, as well as Nepal, Japan, Indonesia and Colombia (to sign a renewal of a memorandum of understanding with the Government to secure a local presence by her Office for the next four years), the Great Lakes region of Africa and Sri Lanka.

Briefing the Committee on her Sri Lanka visit, she said she had been to Colombo and Jaffna, spoken with the press, and held discussions with the Minister of Human Rights and Disaster Management. Sri Lanka faced many challenges, and many but not all, were linked to the armed conflict in the country. Those challenges included gender issues and minority rights. The most urgent challenges, however, arose from the armed conflict. That was especially so in light of disappearances, abductions and extra-judicial killings. A deficit in credible information on those issues was a major concern, creating a sense of uncertainty about the true scope of the problems. The Government had expressed a desire for more help from her Office, but it was not certain how much was needed, as Sri Lanka is a sophisticated society with a high level of literacy and considerable capacity. What the Office could contribute would be a presence in Sri Lanka, acting under a full mandate, which could offer some technical assistance whilst filling the information gap. That would go a long way to satisfying the desire of Sri Lankans for a proper understanding of the situation in their country.

Several delegations asked Ms. Arbour about the relationship between the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee. She said that was a question for Member States, and that she had no views that she could usefully express on how interaction between those two bodies should be orchestrated. She recalled, however, that the Council was a subsidiary body of the Assembly, and that the question would be raised in two years as to whether the Council should be made a principal organ of the United Nations.

Questioned about treaty body reform, she recalled that, at the request of the former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, her Office had been asked to put forward a vision for that reform. Unfolding events would show the increased urgency to look at the existing complex machinery. The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would be coming into force soon; it was hoped that the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance would also come into force promptly. The International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, a demanding instrument, had already been put in place. Ms. Arbour predicted that the universal periodic review system in the Human Rights Council would likely generate more ratifications, as well as timelier reporting by those countries that had ratified instruments but had defaulted in their reporting obligations. More work for treaty bodies was anticipated. Member States had to take a very sober view of where the treaty body system would be, five or ten years down the road.

The geographical distribution of staff at her Office, she said, had been a recurring question. The concerns of Member States were taken very seriously. As a matter of principle, the OHCHR should be a model of diversity and all rights holders in the world should see themselves reflected in the Office. That said, the Office - being part of the Secretariat - could only recruit according to rules that had been set out by Member States which sometimes set constraints. Where those rules had proven to be an impediment, initiatives had been taken to deviate from them to rectify the imbalance. A first step had been to increase the pool of applicants for positions at the Office. There had been some success there. In 2005 only 8 per cent of candidates had not been previously employed by the United Nations, but now that proportion had gone up to 26 per cent. More rigorous in-house selection through the Galaxy process had also been put in place. Overnight change was not possible, but a trend had been established that was moving in the right direction, albeit slowly; whereas in December 2006, 64 per cent of professional staff at the Office came from the Western group of Member States, the proportion at the end of September 2007 had been 58 per cent. That marked an increase for underrepresented countries.

Responding to questions about giving equal importance to economic, social and cultural rights, she stated that she was personally committed to seeing all rights advanced with equal seriousness and vigour. The Human Rights Council had equipped itself with very strong mandates on economic and social rights, such as health and adequate

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

housing. Those special procedures had been very active and visible. That was one of many ways in which the Office continued to advance economic and social rights in the field.

Responding to a question about her Office's interactions with Member States, she said that regular briefings had been held in Geneva, but that it might be desirable for similar briefings to be conducted in New York as well by herself, her Deputy or the head of her New York Office, in between more formal briefings

The representative of Indonesia asked if the meetings between the High Commissioner and the human rights advisers in Geneva could also be a forum for enhancing transparency in their work.

The representative of Benin asked for the High Commissioner's reaction to Benin's initiative, presented on behalf of the African group, on celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights, and asked how the OHCHR could work with them on that.

The representative of Iraq asked about the role the OHCHR would play, and what its future projects were in Iraq in light of resolution 1770, which requested the extension of functions of international organizations in Iraq.

The representative of Nepal asked Ms. Arbour what her assessment of the impact of the universal periodic review in the work of the Office was, and how the review would be coordinated with Member countries where special procedures were already in place.

Cuba's representative also asked about reform of treaty bodies, and how the High Commissioner thought her office could more directly support the right to development.

The representative of Egypt asked about the move of the gender unit of the Political Affairs Department to Geneva to work under the OHCHR, and expressed concerns that this might affect the prioritization of women and gender issues.

The representative of Canada wanted to know about the High Commissioner's efforts towards mainstreaming human rights through all the work of the United Nations.

Cameroon's representative, following up on Gabon's question about the human rights centre in Cameroon, asked again about the High Commissioner's action to follow up a General Assembly resolution that required her Office to provide funds and additional human resources to the centre.

Colombia's representative thanked the High Commissioner for her work.

The representative of Algeria noted that the High Commissioner had visited Western Sahara but had not presented a mission report. He was curious about the type of mandate that Ms. Arbour had been given to carry out that particular mission. Secondly his delegation had made a proposal to revise the relationship between the OHCHR and other subsidiary organs of the system and he wanted to know what the High Commissioner thought about that.

The representative of Libya asked how the High Commissioner saw the fact that the Human Rights Council was not going to adopt the same measures and standards that the Commission on Human Rights had used. It would not be focusing on dialogue with States. How would the Council avoid politicization of human rights, and thus avoid facing the same criticism that the Commission had faced?

Norway's representative asked if there was a need to further strengthen the process through other measures.

The representative of Morocco referred to Algeria's question and asked if the High Commissioner might clarify the issue, adding that the country regretted the politicization of the issue but that many issues related to "the camp" needed to be addressed.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

Louise Arbour said that human rights advisors would be meeting in her office in the context of their presentations today. She said she would be very happy to give a briefing after they had this global meeting of field representatives.

Answering Benin's question, she said that all initiatives highlighting the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights were most welcome, and that her Office also intended to launch a major awareness campaign in December for the upcoming anniversary.

Addressing the role of her office in Iraq, she noted that it was part of the integrated mission. She also hoped the situation in the country would permit them to work and to address the very challenging situation in Iraq. Increased United Nations involvement would permit increased action on human rights issues.

In response to several questions about the universal periodic review, she welcomed all the interest in it, and added that while much progress had been made on it, the universal periodic review was still a work in progress. While there was a paper concept of how it would function, the practical implementation would require a lot of work and resources. The fundamental concept of the universal periodic review was its universal character, which would go a long way towards addressing questions of selectivity that had crippled the former Commission, she said. At the end of the day, it was in the implementation of the universal periodic review that "we will be put to the test" regarding commitment to human rights, she said.

Addressing the questions related to treaty body reform, she said it was also a work in progress, as particularly the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against **Women** and the Committee on the Rights of the Child were both very concerned with preserving their unique character and mandates. Any effort to streamline that would have to be attuned to these concerns, she observed.

On the right to development, she said what had been seen was a shift towards practical initiatives to measure whether the right to development was being implemented.

Coming back to the question on gender equality and the consequences of the support her Office could offer to the Committee on the elimination of discrimination against **women**, she said all stakeholders were sure that the transition would be smooth, all those involved would maintain their status, and the Committee would continue to be master of its destiny.

Turning to the Cameroon human rights centre, she said she intended to meet her obligations, saying this was a centre that had already received support out of the United Nations' regular budget, which was not the situation for most field offices. She said her Office would comply with the requirement of the General Assembly resolution.

She then addressed the question that was raised about her Office's reports on Uganda and Nepal. "This committee is master of its own proceedings," she observed, adding that her Office would cooperate with all requirements by Member States. The OHCHR had a presence in both Uganda and Nepal as well as in many other countries, all of which were subjects of memorandums of understanding with the governments concerned. Her Office's Memorandums of Understanding stipulated that the OHCHR would present a report to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly. And it was with this understanding that her Office had put forward the reports.

Addressing the questions raised on Western Sahara, she said her Office had held discussions with Algeria and Morocco on the deployment of a small mission. According to the terms of reference, the report of the small team was to be handled by the High Commissioner at her discretion, she said. The report would serve as the basis of confidential discussions with the parties concerned, in accordance with the governments concerned.

As for her interactions with the Human Rights Council, it was proceeding in a very different fashion, she said, and meeting very frequently. In March, her annual report was submitted, and at each subsequent session, she took the floor to update the Council on her activities or any concerns she wished to share.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

Uganda's representative then took the floor to comment on the reports. Regarding the High Commissioner's answer that there was a Memorandum of Understanding between her Office and the Government of Uganda, she said that the Ugandan Government had no prior information that there was a report that would be presented. They had also documented the fact that they did not have any information that there would be a report on Uganda, the representative said, reiterating Uganda's statement at the beginning of the Committee that "it was an ambush".

Statement

B. LYNN PASCOE, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, addressed the Committee on the work of the Department of Political Affairs in providing electoral assistance to Member States. He recalled that his Department was in the process of major reform that would see it become more field-oriented. Its Electoral Assistance Division was a valuable part of that reform. That Division had provided assistance to 107 Member States since its establishment 15 years ago - including 43 Member States in the past two years. Demand for its services remained high.

More and more United Nations offices, programmes and agencies had become involved in electoral assistance, based on assessments by the Division, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) being the primary partner in providing long-term technical assistance. There had also been cooperation with external organizations, such as the European Union, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Mr. PASCOE described several notable trends in electoral assistance in the past two years. More assistance for local elections was being provided. Gender considerations were being incorporated into the planning and conduct of elections. The majority of assistance provided by the United Nations now was technical, rather than electoral observation; the United Nations did not observe elections or issue statements about them. In three cases, the organization had been asked to certify election results, most recently in Timor-Leste. More complex assistance was being provided, as Member States sought advice and help on the latest electoral technologies. Emphasis on national capacity-building meant that electoral assistance had to be sustained over several electoral cycles, rather than being focused on a particular election, because "there is no quick fix".

He said that, as the "focal point" of electoral assistance provision, he planned to work with relevant United Nations departments to streamline and revise administrative, procurement and financial procedures that often inhibited the ability to respond to requests from Member States. Terms of reference for the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance had been revised. To be able to conduct urgent electoral missions in the context of conflict prevention, financial support from Member States had to be ensured. Funding was needed as well to ensure long-term electoral capacity-building. Reference materials were being developed on electoral best practices; lessons learned in the certification of elections should be reviewed. Help also had to go out to Member States to ensure that the necessary political conditions for viable elections were in place before the conduct of elections.

Discussion

Responding to a comment from the representative of Cuba, who questioned the involvement of UNDP in electoral assistance and commented on the United Nations Fund for Democracy, Mr. PASCOE said that the Department of Political Affairs responded either to requests from Member States or to Security Council mandates in the provision of electoral assistance. Throughout its processes, it worked closely with Member States.

Statement

JOHAN SCHOLVINCK, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, then elaborated on the report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Thanks to a strong commitment to the rights of people with disabilities, the Convention - barely six months after its opening for signature - had had no fewer than 118 signatories, and its Optional Protocol 66 signatories. There had been seven ratifications of the Convention so far, and three for the Optional Protocol. The Convention would enter into force on the 30th day after the deposit of the 20th instrument of ratification or accession.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

The recent adoption of the Convention represented a crucial opportunity to consolidate disability-related activities within the United Nations system, he said. Examination of options to improve the "complementarity" and synergy of the three main disability instruments - the Convention, the World Programme of Action and the Standard Rules - could be a first step towards such consolidation. An excellent opportunity for collaboration between his Department and OHCHR had also been provided by the Convention. Close collaboration would continue during the implementation phase of the Convention. It was foreseen that the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would be serviced in Geneva by OHCHR, and the Conference of States Parties would be serviced in New York by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. That would ensure that the Convention could benefit from the expertise of each of those two entities.

NGONLARDJE MBAIDJOL, Director of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, then introduced nine reports from the Secretary-General on globalization; the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa; combating defamation of religions; the right to development; unilateral coercive measures; the protection of human rights while countering terrorism; human rights and cultural diversity; national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights; and the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Statement

JOÃO SALGUEIRO (Portugal), speaking for the European Union, said that responsibility for addressing human rights violations could no longer be ignored. Everyone faced challenges regarding their own human rights record. The European Union was fully committed to promoting and protecting all human rights, and it would continue to address violations. It strongly supported the OHCHR; as for the Human Rights Council, it now had the necessary tools to deal effectively with human rights situations worldwide.

As the main body of the United Nations with universal composition, he said, the General Assembly could not remain silent in the face of human rights violations, even if the Human Rights Council had to address those issues as well. The European Union intended to present draft resolutions on the human rights situations in Myanmar and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; the seriousness of the situation in those two countries warranted the attention and action of the Assembly.

He said the European Union was pleased that more and more countries had abolished the death penalty. However, the number of executions had increased in some States during the last year. In the framework of a cross-regional alliance, the European Union would be introducing a resolution on the death penalty.

Mr. Salgueiro went on to discuss the human rights situation in a number of countries. He said continued violence and grave human rights violations - such as abductions, rape, sex slavery and abuses against children - in Darfur and other parts of Sudan were a serious concern. Impunity for those responsible for abuses in Darfur had to be put to an end by the Government. In Sri Lanka, there had been a disturbing rise in abductions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings and extortion perpetrated by the Government, by the **LTTE** (the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and by the Karuna faction. The use of child soldiers was also extremely worrying, and there had been a lack of protection for human rights defenders.

In Iran, he said, the human rights situation had been deteriorating; the European Union condemned its extended use of capital punishment and the use of stoning, flogging and amputation as sentences. The Government of Iran was urged to end clampdowns and mass arrests of human rights defenders, activists, students and journalists.

Insecurity and impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was still extremely worrying, he said, as were the use of armed violence, arbitrary detentions, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading forms of punishment. Also of concern was the use of child soldiers and widespread use of sexual violence, especially in the east of the country. In Belarus, there had been a deterioration of the situation, with systematic violations of civil and political rights. In Cuba, where civil and political rights had been violated by the Government, the European Union's position was one of concern, with encouragement for a peaceful change to a pluralistic democracy. While the release of a few prisoners in recent months was welcomed, the Cuban authorities were urged to unconditionally release all political prisoners.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

Steps taken by Afghanistan to promote human rights were welcome, he said, but the recent execution of 15 Afghan nationals was to be regretted. The humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe had worsened, bringing misery to millions of its people; the European Union had regularly condemned the use of intimidation, violence, arbitrary arrest and torture in that country. The Union was highly concerned by the deepening humanitarian crisis in Iraq, and followed with great concern the occurrence of human rights violations, lack of public security, reports of torture, continued use of the death penalty, and difficulties in applying due judicial process in that country.

In Somalia, reports of targeted killings, the inability of journalists to carry out their work without interference, and the lack of a free media were causes of particular concern. He said the human rights situation in the Somali region of Ethiopia was also a source of deep concern, with worrying reports of extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, sexual violence and torture. In Guatemala, a decision to establish a commission against impunity was welcome, but there had been a high level of politically motivated violence during the electoral campaign. In Uzbekistan, the European Union was deeply concerned about freedom of expression and assembly, and the grave situation of human rights defenders; that country had to cooperate fully with all relevant United Nations mechanisms. In Eritrea, the detention without charge of members of minority religious groups, journalists, leading political figures and members of civil society had been contraventions of human rights agreements that that country was party to.

Mr. Salgueiro said that the protection of human rights defenders had always been a priority for the European Union, which was gravely concerned by the sentencing on vague accusations of several such defenders in Iran. The situation for human rights defenders was also disturbing in Uzbekistan, Nepal, Iran, Guatemala, Colombia, Yemen, Syria, Cuba, Indonesia, China, Russia, Sri Lanka, Belarus, Myanmar and Zimbabwe. The European Union reiterated its firm stance in favour of the absolute prohibition of torture. He said an institutionalized climate of impunity for acts of torture that existed in many parts of the world had to be rejected, and governments had to make clear to their officials, including the police and military, that torture would never be tolerated.

Statement

HENRY MAC DONALD (Suriname) speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said CARICOM members remained guided by the fundamental principles of good governance, the rule of law and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all. Recognizing the creation by the international community of a wide range of mechanisms, and despite repeated promises never again to allow abhorrent breaches of human rights law, the critical question was whether those commitments were really acted upon, or whether they were merely theoretical concepts.

He said the Community looked forward to discussions with regard to developing human rights guidelines for pharmaceutical companies. Globalization was not merely an economic process; the gap between developed and developing countries posed a threat to global security, stability and prosperity. He hoped that the newly established Human Rights Council would deliver on its expectations of promoting human rights. He thanked all contributors to CARICOM's initiative to erect a permanent memorial at the United Nations in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

Statement

JOHN DUGARD, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory said that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had worsened since his last report. Gaza was still an imprisoned society, with Israel refusing to recognize it as occupied territory. The humanitarian crisis continued and over 80 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line. Some improvements in the West Bank had been offset by a number of issues, including the continued construction of the wall and the continued expansion of settlements.

Today he wanted to address three issues, he said: self-determination; the consequences of prolonged occupation and the role of the United Nations in the promotion of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination was seriously threatened by the dispute between Fatah and Hamas,

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CAN HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE

and unfortunately the Quartet - consisting of the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations - had further divided the Palestinian people by supporting one faction against the other.

The prolonged occupation contained elements of apartheid, he said, with a host of laws and practices that discriminated against Palestinians in favor of settlers. It was suggested that the International Court of Justice be asked for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences for Israel, the occupied Palestinian people and third States due to the prolonged occupation.

Turning to the role of the United Nations, he said it was his responsibility to address the issue of the role of the United Nations in the peace process conducted by the Quartet directly within the United Nations family. Serious questions had been asked about the compatibility of the United Nations role in the Quartet with its responsibility to be the principal protector of human rights. The Quartet, which reported to the Security Council, had not been established by a resolution of either the Security Council or the General Assembly, but despite its dubious legal foundation, it had assumed primary responsibility for the management of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Unfortunately, he said, the Quartet paid little attention to the human rights of the Palestinians. The imposition of sanctions against the Palestinians by the Quartet had led to a serious loss of confidence in the United Nations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he said. In those circumstances, the question must be asked whether the best interests of the United Nations were served by remaining in the Quartet, where it was used to "legitimize the pro-Israeli position of the Quartet".

The rest of the document can be viewed at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/gashc3893.doc.htm>.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: October 25, 2007

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

States News Service

October 24, 2007 Wednesday

Copyright 2007 States News Service

Length: 15328 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: NEW YORK

Body

The following information was released by the United Nations:

The frequency of the meetings of the new Human Rights Council could help put human rights abusers on notice and allow situations of concern to be scrutinized all year round and in real time, Louise Arbour, High Commissioner for Human Rights told delegations this morning as the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) continued its discussion of human rights issues.

Impunity for gross violations of human rights and grave breaches of humanitarian law continued to be pervasive, she pointed out, noting that, although States had a duty to investigate reports of such violations and bring perpetrators to justice, they often lacked political will or capacity, or both. The "sheer number" of individuals incarcerated without adequate judicial review of their detention was another issue that was high on her agenda, she said.

The Universal Periodic Review was a mechanism through which the Council would review the human rights record of all United Nations Member States, on the basis of fairness and transparency, she said. Now, the challenge was to translate the review project into reality to effectively address human rights situations on the ground. Implementing the Review's recommendations was the responsibility of each State, but dedicated financial support to many developing countries would be crucial for them to meet their obligations.

During the afternoon session, John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said the situation in the Territory had worsened since the time of his last report, and he singled out the issues of self-determination, the consequences of prolonged occupation and the role of the United Nations in the promotion of human rights in the Territory for special attention.

He said the Quartet -- consisting of the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations -- had paid little attention to the human rights of the Palestinians. And its imposition of sanctions against the Palestinians had led to a serious loss of confidence in the United Nations in the Occupied Territory. In those circumstances, the question must be asked whether the best interests of the United Nations were served by remaining in the Quartet, where the Organization was used to "legitimize the pro-Israeli position of the Quartet"

In a heated exchange following the Special Rapporteur's presentation, the representative of Israel took the floor to give a detailed reaction to the report, saying that the narrow perspective of the report ignored the terrorism and violence emerging from Palestinian areas.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, said tragic events had been taking place in the country since 15 August. Excessive force was used by security forces in the face of demonstrations, people had been killed, while thousands had been arrested. Alarming reports of death in custody, torture and disappearances continued to be received. There was an urgent need to coordinate the different approaches among Member States who had been trying to find ways to contribute towards the principles of democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar.

In a statement following the Special Rapporteur, the representative of Myanmar said his Government had exercised restraint in dealing with the demonstrators, and that small protests had been "sullied by political activists and rabble rousers". He rejected the "outrageous allegations" of human rights violations, particularly sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers, which he said were false allegations disseminated by remnants of insurgents and their allies.

Statements were also made today by the representatives of Portugal on behalf of the European Union and Suriname, on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

The representatives of Algeria, Sudan and Iraq spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, addressed the Committee on the work of the Department of Political Affairs in providing electoral assistance to Member States.

Johan Scholvinck, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, introduced the report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ngonlardje Mbaidjol, Director of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, introduced nine reports of the Secretary-General on various human rights issues.

The Committee will meet again at 10 a.m. on Thursday to continue its general discussion on human rights.

Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met today to continue its discussion on human rights.

The Committee had before it the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (document A/62/36) - (for background information see Press Release GA/SHC/3892 dated 23 October 2007).

Also before the Committee was a transmittal by the Secretary-General of a Letter dated 21 September 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (document A/62/369) -- (for background information see Press Release GA/SHC/3892 dated 23 October 2007).

The Committee also had before it a Letter dated 2 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (document A/62/464) -- (for background information see Press Release GA/SHC/3892 dated 23 October 2007).

Before the Committee was the Secretary-General's report on The right to development (document A/62/183). This supplements the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the right to development which was considered by the Human Rights Council at its fourth session (A/HRC/4/55 of 14 February 2007) and provides relevant conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group on the Right to Development at its eighth session.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report titled Globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights (document A/62/222), summarizing views on the issue by the Governments of Croatia, Cuba, Ecuador, Lebanon, Mexico and Tunisia.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

Also before the Committee was the Secretary-General's report on Human rights and cultural diversity (document A/62/254) which summarizes comments from 15 Member States, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Observatory of Diversity and Cultural Rights. The governments underline the multi-ethnic and multicultural character of their States, and reaffirm their commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as respect for cultural diversity. Very few recommendations address action that might be taken at the international level to promote cultural diversity, the report notes. It also provides an update on the consultation on the mandate of an independent expert on the promotion and enjoyment of cultural rights.

In addition, the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on Human rights and unilateral coercive measures (document A/62/255), with summaries of statements from Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Libya, Mexico, Serbia, Suriname and Syria on the implications and negative effects of such measures on their populations. Cuba states it was "one of hundreds of developing countries" whose populations are victims of unilateral coercive measures imposed by developed countries. It refers to the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba as being "the longest and cruellest in the history of humanity as well as an act of genocide, an act of war and an international crime" that had cost direct economic damage in excess of 89 billion dollars. It was more important than ever, Cuba states, for the international community to pronounce itself against such practices.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (document A/62/287). The Secretary-General notes the increasingly important role of national human rights institutions in promoting and protecting human rights, and enumerates the countries visited by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) during the reporting year. The report concludes that the accreditation procedure for national organizations should be supported because of the increase in the amount of applications, and because of the effective work these organizations do.

The Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General titled Combating defamation of religions (document A/62/288), focusing on activities undertaken by States, OHCHR, human rights mechanisms and national human rights institutions on the topic. It summarizes replies from 16 Member States to a request by OHCHR for information on actions being undertaken vis--vis defamation. In its conclusion, the report says that a majority of the respondent States had constitutional provisions guaranteeing the right to freedom of religion and protecting against religious discrimination. "Step by step, issues pertaining to defamation of religions are receiving increased attention," the Secretary-General observes, adding that there was an emerging trend towards amending criminal codes to reflect different strains of defamation.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization (document A/62/293). The report describes how the United Nations has been providing electoral support to Member States in the past two years. Electoral assistance is only given at the request of a Member State, and is provided through a number of electoral components or missions. Requests to organize or observe elections are decreasing substantially while technical advice and assistance to electoral authorities is becoming the norm. The complexity of requests, for technological innovations for example, is increasing. The report recommends that the United Nations continue to work in partnership with relevant governmental and intergovernmental organizations to develop and disseminate electoral standards and best practices.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on Protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (document A/62/298). This gives an overview of the recent developments in the United Nations on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, highlighting the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It also includes the activities of the OHCHR, human rights treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council. According to the report, the High Commissioner for Human Rights expresses serious concern about a number of measures adopted by States which continue to undermine human rights and the rule of law. These include, among many others, secret detention and the irregular transfer of individuals suspected of terrorist activities; ill-treatment; continued detention of suspects without a legal basis; and minimum due process guarantees, including the right to judicial review of detainment.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa (document A/62/317). The report gives an overview of the work carried out by the Centre, and the most significant developments in its operation in the past year. It also describes changes including the change in leadership and strategic direction. Under new leadership, the Centre is focusing on human rights and democracy issues that could bring solid and sustainable results while having a rapid impact in the region. The report recommends that the Centre be provided with additional funds and human resources to enable it to deliver on all its planned work and ensure its continued legitimacy as well as leadership on human rights and democracy issues in the region.

Before the Committee was the Report of the Secretary-General on the Khmer Rouge trials (document A/62/304). The report provides details on the progress achieved, since 2005, by the Extraordinary Chambers for the Prosecution under Cambodian Law of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea. As an example of outreach, the report mentions the over 5,000 rural Cambodians who were brought by the Documentation Centre of Cambodia to visit the court facilities. The report also notes the challenges the Extraordinary Chambers faces with its "unique structure", with the Director of the Office reporting to the Cambodian Government, and the Deputy Director -- a United Nations staff member -- reporting to the Secretary-General. This type of organization has led to significant shortfalls in staffing and the budget, the report says.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's note on Civil and political rights, including the questions of independence of the judiciary, administration of justice and impunity (document A/62/207). It transmits the report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers. The report details two missions by the Special Rapporteur, Leandro Despouy, to the Maldives and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Having served in his position since 1994, Mr. Despouy concludes that judicial actors in the majority of countries are unable to discharge their functions independently. He also draws attention to the fact that during states of emergency, repeated violations of the right to a fair trial occur, as well as other human rights violations. Mr. Despouy expresses serious concern that individuals are still being executed in Iraq, in particular a man who confessed to having participated in the attack of August 2003 against the United Nations office in Baghdad. This violates the right to the truth by the victims of the attack and frustrates attempts to obtain significant evidence about that attack. He concludes by recommending that the African Union sign a relationship agreement with the International Criminal Court. He also recommends that trials of the Iraqi Supreme Criminal Tribunal be conducted in accordance with international standards, or that an international criminal tribunal be constituted with the cooperation of the United Nations.

The Committee had before it a report of the independent expert on the Effects on economic reform policies and foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights (document A/62/212), which conveys the proceedings of an expert consultation that took place from 9 to 10 July in Geneva. Experts note that human rights create a legal obligation, and are not to be taken into account only when possible or convenient. The challenge for the international community is to agree on how to calculate the cost of upholding minimum human rights standards within the context of debt sustainability. Regarding minimum standards of economic, social and cultural rights, the main concern over lending practices and "conditionality" of international financial institutions is that they are seen as undermining the accountability of States to their citizens, including human rights obligations. The rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups have been negatively affected by economic policies. Debtor States should develop a legal framework to ensure that their human rights obligations are recognized; creditors must take reasonable measures to find out what their loans are being used for, and assume responsibility for the roles that their loans played.

Before the Committee was the Secretary-General's note on the Right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (document A/62/214) which transmits the report of Paul Hunt, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The report suggests that, in order to secure this right for all, human rights should be applied to the difficult process of prioritizing health interventions. Honouring binding commitments to human rights includes providing for the health needs of marginalized groups such as women and persons with disabilities. The report also explores the high efficacy of health impact assessments, and expresses regret at tendencies to devote more

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

attention to medical care at the expense of underlying determinants such as access to safe water and sanitation. On those matters, the report makes a number of recommendations to States and other actors.

The Secretary-General's note on the Human rights of migrants (document A/62/218) transmits the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Jorge Bustamante. The report focuses on the visits undertaken by the Special Rapporteur to the Republic of Korea, Indonesia and the United States, where various aspects of the lives of migrant workers were explored through interviews with migrants, law enforcement officials and others. The report also highlights border control, expulsion, and conditions for the admission and stay of migrants, which were the main focus of the Special Rapporteur's report to the Human Rights Council at its fourth session. The Special Rapporteur concludes by encouraging Member States to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

A note by the Secretary-General, before the Committee, transmits a report submitted by his Special Representative on the Situation of human rights defenders (document A/62/225). The Special Representative, Hina Jilani, analyses the legal framework for the protection of the right to protest at the international and regional levels and illustrates cases presented to both international and regional mechanisms, showing how the different systems complement and reinforce each other. The report further analyses the work of the Special Representative in her protection role and looks at the issue through analysis of different "groups of protestors" as well as "thematic areas" of protest.

The Committee had before it a report on Protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons (document A/62/227) prepared by the Secretary-General's Representative on the matter, Walter Klin. He observes that internal displacement, whether caused by natural disasters, conflict situations or large-scale development projects, is now affecting a growing proportion of the world's population. More than 24 million people are displaced due to conflicts in their country, and millions more for other reasons. The Representative recommends that governments ensure that the needs and rights of displaced persons are taken into consideration within the framework of any peace processes, and that they give particular attention to issues relating to community reconciliation and "living together again".

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's note on Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (document A/62/265), transmitting the interim report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston. The issue of this report coincides with the 25th anniversary of the creation of the mandate on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. According to the report, in the past year, the Special Rapporteur conducted visits to Guatemala, Lebanon, the Philippines and Darfur. 27 countries ranging from Security Council members such as China, the Russian Federation and the United States, as well as States like Thailand, Israel and Uzbekistan, did not issue the requested invitations for a visit. This lack of compliance with the Special Rapporteur's requests, as well as the systematic neglect of past recommendations by the Special Rapporteur, is the reason why Mr. Alston has issued this report without any new recommendations. Taking steps to address the problem of States' non-cooperation in response to requests for visits would, therefore, be an important start, the Special Rapporteur concludes.

Before the Committee was a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the interim report of Special Rapporteur Asma Jahangir on the Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (document A/62/280). The report draws attention to the situation of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons, saying that they are in situations of vulnerability that may also have a link to their freedom of religion and belief. Also, the Special Rapporteur notes that atheists and non-theists had made him aware of their concerns vis-à-vis blasphemy laws, education issues, equality legislation and official consultations held only with religious representatives. He reiterates that religious freedom includes the right not to profess any religion or belief.

The Committee had before it the report of Special Rapporteur, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, on The situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples (A/62/286), which includes his views on new challenges with respect to the protection of indigenous peoples' rights throughout the world. It also touches upon the Special Rapporteur's official visit to Kenya, where he says the principal human rights issues faced by indigenous communities like the Elmolo, Yakuu, Sengwer, Maasai and Ogiek related to the loss and environmental degradation

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

of their land, forests and natural resources; in recent decades, their situation has taken a turn for the worse as a result of State attempts to modernize or "sedentarize" such communities. Corruption made circumstances harder.

The Committee had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the interim report of Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur, on The right to food (document A/62/289), who is "outraged to report that global hunger is still on the rise". Some 854 million people today do not get enough to eat every day, compared with an estimated 800 million in 1996. Every year, more than six million children die from hunger-related illness before their fifth birthday. The Special Rapporteur is also "deeply concerned" by food crises that threatens "millions" across southern Africa, with funding shortfalls forcing the World Food Programme (WFP) to cut operations across the region. Mr. Ziegler also addresses the impact of biofuels (bioethanol and biodiesel) on the right to food. Rushing to turn maize, wheat, sugar and palm oil into fuel for cars, without examining the impact on global hunger, is a recipe for disaster, he says.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on the Situation of human rights in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (document A/62/318). The report outlines activities undertaken by the United Nations, in particular the OHCHR, to promote and protect human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Both the Assembly and the Office continue to express their serious and grave concern at continuing reports of systemic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the report said. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has not accepted the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, and he was not authorized to visit the country, thus forcing him to collect information from other parties that had knowledge of the situation. The report concludes with a number of recommendations, but foremost that the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea extend full and free access to United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors in order for them to be able to carry out their mandates.

The Committee had before it a note by the Secretary General transmitting the report of Akich Okola, the independent expert on the Situation of human rights in Burundi (document A/62/213), which states that the overall human rights situation in the country seems to have improved, although violations relating to cases of ill-treatment and sometimes torture of suspects by police officials and legal procedure violations continue to be reported. The independent expert calls on the international community to support the Government's efforts to reform the justice system, and welcomes the commitment of the President of Burundi not to grant amnesty for major crimes committed during the conflict. The independent expert prompts Burundian authorities to fully investigate incidents of sexual violence and to bring those responsible for such crimes to justice.

The Committee had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Martin Scheinin, Special Rapporteur on Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (document A/62/263), featuring a summary of visits made to South Africa, the United States and Israel, and reflecting upon some of the challenges to refugee law and asylum resulting from global measures to combat terrorism. In many regions, counter-terrorism measures often "disproportionately" affect asylum-seekers, refugees and immigrants. And genuine asylum-seekers may be the group most affected by the post-2001 wave of new counter-terrorism measures. Mr. Scheinin is "troubled" that terrorism and national security are being cited as reasons for more restrictive asylum and immigration regimes. Human rights and refugee law, as developed over decades, did take proper account of the security concerns of States, and the new momentum in addressing terrorism did not justify revamping the standards and principles of international protection. The Special Rapporteur calls upon the United States to close down without delay its military detention facility at Guantanamo Bay and to either try or release its detainees.

The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's note transmitting the Special Rapporteur's report on the Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (document A/62/264). Although the country declined to allow the Special Rapporteur, Vitit Muntarbhorn, access to the country, the note identifies a myriad of human rights violations, chiefly relating to food access, personal freedom and refugees' rights. The Special Rapporteur calls for international burden-sharing in dealing with the flow of asylum-seekers to ease the pressure on first-asylum countries. He also mentions the severe punishments that potential refugees from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea face at home. He cites a 2006 study that contends that the misdeeds of the authorities

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

are "tantamount to crimes against humanity". The Special Rapporteur concludes with a plea to be allowed access to the country, in order to offer advice and to accurately assess the human rights situation on the ground.

The Committee had before it note of the Secretary-General transmitting a report titled Situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (document A/62/275) which has been prepared by John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur on the matter. It says the exercise of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination has been threatened by the separation of the West Bank and Gaza due to the seizure of power by Hamas in Gaza in June 2007 and the seizure of power by Fatah in the West Bank. Every effort must therefore be made by the international community to ensure that Palestinian unity is restored.

This year marked the 40th anniversary of the occupation of Palestinian Territory, the report notes. Israel's obligations have not diminished; on the contrary, they have grown. The International Court of Justice should be asked to render an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of prolonged occupation, the Special Rapporteur suggests. In Gaza, Israel has violated important norms of international humanitarian and human rights law by undertaking military action against civilian targets and by creating a humanitarian crisis by closing Gaza's external borders. By law, it has to cease these actions, the Special Rapporteur says, adding that other States party to the siege of Gaza were also in violation of international humanitarian law.

Addressing the West Bank, the Special Rapporteur says the human rights situation there could improve as a result of rapprochement between the emergency Government led by President Abbas, on the one hand, and Israel, the United States and the Quartet (the European Union, Russia, the United States and the United Nations) on the other. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, plus Israel's refusal to transfer tax revenues and the imposition by the United States of banking restrictions, have had a serious impact on life in the West Bank. Poverty and unemployment have reached their highest levels; health and education have been undermined by military incursions, the wall and checkpoints; and the entire social fabric of society has come under threat. Some 10,000 Palestinians are in Israeli jails, treated in an inhuman and degrading manner, and the extrajudicial killing of suspected militants had continued unabated.

Regarding the Quartet, the Special Rapporteur says that serious questions were being asked about the role of the Secretary-General. The Quartet -- led in practice by the United States -- is largely responsible for furthering the peace process, but it has shown little regard for promoting human rights or international humanitarian law, and it is indirectly responsible for economic sanctions. The Special Rapporteur states that if the Quartet cannot be guided by human rights law, international humanitarian law, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and considerations of fairness and even-handedness in its dealing with the Occupied Palestinian Territory, then the United Nations should withdraw from it.

Also before the Committee is the Secretary-General's note transmitting a progress report submitted by the independent expert, Titinga Frdric Pacr, on The situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (document A/62/313). The report says that the situation remains worrying, given the poor security concerns, the serious and widespread human rights and other violations as well as atrocities committed in the eastern part of the country and in northern Katanga, with complete impunity by militias and armed groups. The report documents serious human rights violations committed by the armed forces and police to draw national and international attention to the egregious violations of human rights as well as to the poor security conditions prevailing throughout most of the country. The independent expert concludes with several recommendations, including a call for an end to all abuses, violations and all forms of exploitation and widespread sexual violence. He also recommends the establishment of a special international tribunal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The committee had before it the Secretary-General's note transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur, Sima Samar, on the Situation of human rights in the Sudan (document A/62/354). The report provides an analysis of the human rights situation in Sudan from the angle of sustenance, freedoms, asylum, vulnerability of specific groups, and responsibility of the State authorities to protect human rights. The report includes the Special Rapporteur's findings from her mission to Sudan in July 2007. Protection of human rights in Sudan continues to be an enormous challenge, Ms. Samar says. Many of the concerns highlighted in last year's report remain the same one year on.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

Violations of civil and political rights continue. In all parts of the country, common patterns of injustice, marginalization and exploitation emerge. Impunity remains a serious concern in all areas, the report says. Protection of civilians - the primary responsibility of the Sudanese State -- remains insufficient, the report says.

The Committee also had before it the Secretary-General's report on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto (document A/62/230). The report provides a brief overview of the status of the Convention.

Statement

LOUISE ARBOUR, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that since she last addressed the Committee, the Human Rights Council had made considerable strides, focusing its efforts on institution-building in order to equip itself for its mandate. The Universal Periodic Review was a mechanism through which the Council would review the human rights record of all United Nations Member States, on the basis of fairness and transparency. The challenge was to translate the review project into reality in order to effectively address human rights situations on the ground. Implementing the Universal Periodic Review's recommendations was the responsibility of each State, but dedicated financial support for many developing countries was crucial for them to meet their obligations.

The Council had held three special sessions in the past year in reaction to unfolding crises in the Middle East, another one on the conflict in Sudan (Darfur) and yet another one, recently, on Myanmar. It decided to convene a group to ensure the effective follow-up to resolutions on Darfur and also decided to establish a new mandate on contemporary forms of slavery. With its framework in place, and with its operative approach "partially road-tested in an intense first working year", the Council was now expected to devote its undivided attention to the many human rights situations that demanded action. The frequency of the Council's meetings would make this task easier and might also help put human rights abusers on notice that situations of concern could be scrutinized all year round and in real time.

The High Commissioner's country visits were a means of strengthening country engagement, and allowed for more direct dialogue with government representatives and others. She had recently addressed the Non-Aligned Movement's ministerial meeting on human rights and cultural diversity in Iran, and had pointed out that the failure to understand or accommodate diversity inevitably led to an erosion of rights. Human rights standards provided guidance for protecting diversity, and human rights law "shields us from the ever-shifting grounds on which cultural identities are defined", she said. Sometimes, cultural identity was exploited by ruling elites in pursuit of political or economic interests, and some groups were marginalized. Economic policies impacted on human rights, so human rights should influence macroeconomic policy-making processes.

Impunity for gross violations of human rights and grave breaches of humanitarian law continued to be pervasive, she said. States had a duty to investigate reports of such violations and to bring perpetrators to justice, but often they lacked political will or the capacity, or both, to fulfill such obligations. The "sheer number" of individuals incarcerated without adequate judicial review of their detention was another issue that had been high on her agenda. That issue would be the subject of the first meeting she was planning with senior judges.

OHCHR had developed 10 rule-of-law tools for conflict and post-conflict States. Complex topics such as the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions had been part of those tools. Looking forward to next year's celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, she urged the Committee to join in efforts to move into the era of universal implementation of the Declaration's principles, and make them a daily reality for all.

Discussion

The High Commissioner then responded to questions from several delegations.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

Addressing mainstreaming human rights at the country level and the role of human rights advisers from her Office, Ms. Arbour said that was a form of country engagement that had been welcomed by States that had benefited from the deployment of United Nations country teams. The formula had proven very effective in several countries, and had allowed resident United Nations coordinators in concerned countries to have human rights expertise at hand. Such advisers also provided countries with on-the-ground training in situations where technical cooperation would otherwise be difficult to deliver.

Responding to questions about the country visits she had conducted, she said that she had conducted different types of visits, all at the invitation of governments. Some visits were to attend a particular event; others were more comprehensive in nature, with substantive dialogue to assess the human rights situation in a given country and to provide some input for future directions. She said that she had visited four Central Asian countries, as well as Nepal, Japan, Indonesia and Colombia (to sign a renewal of a memorandum of understanding with the Government to secure a local presence by her Office for the next four years), the Great Lakes region of Africa and Sri Lanka.

Briefing the Committee on her Sri Lanka visit, she said she had been to Colombo and Jaffna, spoken with the press, and held discussions with the Minister of Human Rights and Disaster Management. Sri Lanka faced many challenges, and many but not all, were linked to the armed conflict in the country. Those challenges included gender issues and minority rights. The most urgent challenges, however, arose from the armed conflict. That was especially so in light of disappearances, abductions and extra-judicial killings. A deficit in credible information on those issues was a major concern, creating a sense of uncertainty about the true scope of the problems. The Government had expressed a desire for more help from her Office, but it was not certain how much was needed, as Sri Lanka is a sophisticated society with a high level of literacy and considerable capacity. What the Office could contribute would be a presence in Sri Lanka, acting under a full mandate, which could offer some technical assistance whilst filling the information gap. That would go a long way to satisfying the desire of Sri Lankans for a proper understanding of the situation in their country.

Several delegations asked Ms. Arbour about the relationship between the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee. She said that was a question for Member States, and that she had no views that she could usefully express on how interaction between those two bodies should be orchestrated. She recalled, however, that the Council was a subsidiary body of the Assembly, and that the question would be raised in two years as to whether the Council should be made a principal organ of the United Nations.

Questioned about treaty body reform, she recalled that, at the request of the former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, her Office had been asked to put forward a vision for that reform. Unfolding events would show the increased urgency to look at the existing complex machinery. The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would be coming into force soon; it was hoped that the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance would also come into force promptly. The International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, a demanding instrument, had already been put in place. Ms. Arbour predicted that the universal periodic review system in the Human Rights Council would likely generate more ratifications, as well as timelier reporting by those countries that had ratified instruments but had defaulted in their reporting obligations. More work for treaty bodies was anticipated. Member States had to take a very sober view of where the treaty body system would be, five or ten years down the road.

The geographical distribution of staff at her Office, she said, had been a recurring question. The concerns of Member States were taken very seriously. As a matter of principle, the OHCHR should be a model of diversity and all rights holders in the world should see themselves reflected in the Office. That said, the Office - being part of the Secretariat - could only recruit according to rules that had been set out by Member States which sometimes set constraints. Where those rules had proven to be an impediment, initiatives had been taken to deviate from them to rectify the imbalance. A first step had been to increase the pool of applicants for positions at the Office. There had been some success there. In 2005 only 8 per cent of candidates had not been previously employed by the United Nations, but now that proportion had gone up to 26 per cent. More rigorous in-house selection through the Galaxy process had also been put in place. Overnight change was not possible, but a trend had been established that was moving in the right direction, albeit slowly; whereas in December 2006, 64 per cent of professional staff at the Office

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

came from the Western group of Member States, the proportion at the end of September 2007 had been 58 per cent. That marked an increase for underrepresented countries.

Responding to questions about giving equal importance to economic, social and cultural rights, she stated that she was personally committed to seeing all rights advanced with equal seriousness and vigour. The Human Rights Council had equipped itself with very strong mandates on economic and social rights, such as health and adequate housing. Those special procedures had been very active and visible. That was one of many ways in which the Office continued to advance economic and social rights in the field.

Responding to a question about her Office's interactions with Member States, she said that regular briefings had been held in Geneva, but that it might be desirable for similar briefings to be conducted in New York as well by herself, her Deputy or the head of her New York Office, in between more formal briefings

The representative of Indonesia asked if the meetings between the High Commissioner and the human rights advisers in Geneva could also be a forum for enhancing transparency in their work.

The representative of Benin asked for the High Commissioner's reaction to Benin's initiative, presented on behalf of the African group, on celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights, and asked how the OHCHR could work with them on that.

The representative of Iraq asked about the role the OHCHR would play, and what its future projects were in Iraq in light of resolution 1770, which requested the extension of functions of international organizations in Iraq.

The representative of Nepal asked Ms. Arbour what her assessment of the impact of the universal periodic review in the work of the Office was, and how the review would be coordinated with Member countries where special procedures were already in place.

Cuba's representative also asked about reform of treaty bodies, and how the High Commissioner thought her office could more directly support the right to development.

The representative of Egypt asked about the move of the gender unit of the Political Affairs Department to Geneva to work under the OHCHR, and expressed concerns that this might affect the prioritization of women and gender issues.

The representative of Canada wanted to know about the High Commissioner's efforts towards mainstreaming human rights through all the work of the United Nations.

Cameroon's representative, following up on Gabon's question about the human rights centre in Cameroon, asked again about the High Commissioner's action to follow up a General Assembly resolution that required her Office to provide funds and additional human resources to the centre.

Colombia's representative thanked the High Commissioner for her work.

The representative of Algeria noted that the High Commissioner had visited Western Sahara but had not presented a mission report. He was curious about the type of mandate that Ms. Arbour had been given to carry out that particular mission. Secondly his delegation had made a proposal to revise the relationship between the OHCHR and other subsidiary organs of the system and he wanted to know what the High Commissioner thought about that.

The representative of Libya asked how the High Commissioner saw the fact that the Human Rights Council was not going to adopt the same measures and standards that the Commission on Human Rights had used. It would not be focusing on dialogue with States. How would the Council avoid politicization of human rights, and thus avoid facing the same criticism that the Commission had faced'

Norway's representative asked if there was a need to further strengthen the process through other measures.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

The representative of Morocco referred to Algeria's question and asked if the High Commissioner might clarify the issue, adding that the country regretted the politicization of the issue but that many issues related to "the camp" needed to be addressed.

Louise Arbour said that human rights advisors would be meeting in her office in the context of their presentations today. She said she would be very happy to give a briefing after they had this global meeting of field representatives.

Answering Benin's question, she said that all initiatives highlighting the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights were most welcome, and that her Office also intended to launch a major awareness campaign in December for the upcoming anniversary.

Addressing the role of her office in Iraq, she noted that it was part of the integrated mission. She also hoped the situation in the country would permit them to work and to address the very challenging situation in Iraq. Increased United Nations involvement would permit increased action on human rights issues.

In response to several questions about the universal periodic review, she welcomed all the interest in it, and added that while much progress had been made on it, the universal periodic review was still a work in progress. While there was a paper concept of how it would function, the practical implementation would require a lot of work and resources. The fundamental concept of the universal periodic review was its universal character, which would go a long way towards addressing questions of selectivity that had crippled the former Commission, she said. At the end of the day, it was in the implementation of the universal periodic review that "we will be put to the test" regarding commitment to human rights, she said.

Addressing the questions related to treaty body reform, she said it was also a work in progress, as particularly the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against ***Women*** and the Committee on the Rights of the Child were both very concerned with preserving their unique character and mandates. Any effort to streamline that would have to be attuned to these concerns, she observed.

On the right to development, she said what had been seen was a shift towards practical initiatives to measure whether the right to development was being implemented.

Coming back to the question on gender equality and the consequences of the support her Office could offer to the Committee on the elimination of discrimination against ***women***, she said all stakeholders were sure that the transition would be smooth, all those involved would maintain their status, and the Committee would continue to be master of its destiny.

Turning to the Cameroon human rights centre, she said she intended to meet her obligations, saying this was a centre that had already received support out of the United Nations' regular budget, which was not the situation for most field offices. She said her Office would comply with the requirement of the General Assembly resolution.

She then addressed the question that was raised about her Office's reports on Uganda and Nepal. "This committee is master of its own proceedings," she observed, adding that her Office would cooperate with all requirements by Member States. The OHCHR had a presence in both Uganda and Nepal as well as in many other countries, all of which were subjects of memorandums of understanding with the governments concerned. Her Office's Memorandums of Understanding stipulated that the OHCHR would present a report to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly. And it was with this understanding that her Office had put forward the reports.

Addressing the questions raised on Western Sahara, she said her Office had held discussions with Algeria and Morocco on the deployment of a small mission. According to the terms of reference, the report of the small team was to be handled by the High Commissioner at her discretion, she said. The report would serve as the basis of confidential discussions with the parties concerned, in accordance with the governments concerned.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

As for her interactions with the Human Rights Council, it was proceeding in a very different fashion, she said, and meeting very frequently. In March, her annual report was submitted, and at each subsequent session, she took the floor to update the Council on her activities or any concerns she wished to share.

Uganda's representative then took the floor to comment on the reports. Regarding the High Commissioner's answer that there was a Memorandum of Understanding between her Office and the Government of Uganda, she said that the Ugandan Government had no prior information that there was a report that would be presented. They had also documented the fact that they did not have any information that there would be a report on Uganda, the representative said, reiterating Uganda's statement at the beginning of the Committee that "it was an ambush".

Statement

B. LYNN PASCOE, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, addressed the Committee on the work of the Department of Political Affairs in providing electoral assistance to Member States. He recalled that his Department was in the process of major reform that would see it become more field-oriented. Its Electoral Assistance Division was a valuable part of that reform. That Division had provided assistance to 107 Member States since its establishment 15 years ago -- including 43 Member States in the past two years. Demand for its services remained high.

More and more United Nations offices, programmes and agencies had become involved in electoral assistance, based on assessments by the Division, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) being the primary partner in providing long-term technical assistance. There had also been cooperation with external organizations, such as the European Union, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Mr. PASCOE described several notable trends in electoral assistance in the past two years. More assistance for local elections was being provided. Gender considerations were being incorporated into the planning and conduct of elections. The majority of assistance provided by the United Nations now was technical, rather than electoral observation; the United Nations did not observe elections or issue statements about them. In three cases, the organization had been asked to certify election results, most recently in Timor-Leste. More complex assistance was being provided, as Member States sought advice and help on the latest electoral technologies. Emphasis on national capacity-building meant that electoral assistance had to be sustained over several electoral cycles, rather than being focused on a particular election, because "there is no quick fix".

He said that, as the "focal point" of electoral assistance provision, he planned to work with relevant United Nations departments to streamline and revise administrative, procurement and financial procedures that often inhibited the ability to respond to requests from Member States. Terms of reference for the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance had been revised. To be able to conduct urgent electoral missions in the context of conflict prevention, financial support from Member States had to be ensured. Funding was needed as well to ensure long-term electoral capacity-building. Reference materials were being developed on electoral best practices; lessons learned in the certification of elections should be reviewed. Help also had to go out to Member States to ensure that the necessary political conditions for viable elections were in place before the conduct of elections.

Discussion

Responding to a comment from the representative of Cuba, who questioned the involvement of UNDP in electoral assistance and commented on the United Nations Fund for Democracy, Mr. PASCOE said that the Department of Political Affairs responded either to requests from Member States or to Security Council mandates in the provision of electoral assistance. Throughout its processes, it worked closely with Member States.

Statement

JOHAN SCHOLVINCK, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, then elaborated on the report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

Thanks to a strong commitment to the rights of people with disabilities, the Convention - barely six months after its opening for signature had had no fewer than 118 signatories, and its Optional Protocol 66 signatories. There had been seven ratifications of the Convention so far, and three for the Optional Protocol. The Convention would enter into force on the 30th day after the deposit of the 20th instrument of ratification or accession.

The recent adoption of the Convention represented a crucial opportunity to consolidate disability-related activities within the United Nations system, he said. Examination of options to improve the "complementarity" and synergy of the three main disability instruments - the Convention, the World Programme of Action and the Standard Rules - could be a first step towards such consolidation. An excellent opportunity for collaboration between his Department and OHCHR had also been provided by the Convention. Close collaboration would continue during the implementation phase of the Convention. It was foreseen that the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would be serviced in Geneva by OHCHR, and the Conference of States Parties would be serviced in New York by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. That would ensure that the Convention could benefit from the expertise of each of those two entities.

NGONLARDJE MBAIDJOL, Director of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, then introduced nine reports from the Secretary-General on globalization; the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa; combating defamation of religions; the right to development; unilateral coercive measures; the protection of human rights while countering terrorism; human rights and cultural diversity; national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights; and the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Statement

JOO SALGUEIRO (Portugal), speaking for the European Union, said that responsibility for addressing human rights violations could no longer be ignored. Everyone faced challenges regarding their own human rights record. The European Union was fully committed to promoting and protecting all human rights, and it would continue to address violations. It strongly supported the OHCHR; as for the Human Rights Council, it now had the necessary tools to deal effectively with human rights situations worldwide.

As the main body of the United Nations with universal composition, he said, the General Assembly could not remain silent in the face of human rights violations, even if the Human Rights Council had to address those issues as well. The European Union intended to present draft resolutions on the human rights situations in Myanmar and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; the seriousness of the situation in those two countries warranted the attention and action of the Assembly.

He said the European Union was pleased that more and more countries had abolished the death penalty. However, the number of executions had increased in some States during the last year. In the framework of a cross-regional alliance, the European Union would be introducing a resolution on the death penalty.

Mr. Salgueiro went on to discuss the human rights situation in a number of countries. He said continued violence and grave human rights violations - such as abductions, rape, sex slavery and abuses against children - in Darfur and other parts of Sudan were a serious concern. Impunity for those responsible for abuses in Darfur had to be put to an end by the Government. In Sri Lanka, there had been a disturbing rise in abductions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings and extortion perpetrated by the Government, by the LTTE (the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and by the Karuna faction. The use of child soldiers was also extremely worrying, and there had been a lack of protection for human rights defenders.

In Iran, he said, the human rights situation had been deteriorating; the European Union condemned its extended use of capital punishment and the use of stoning, flogging and amputation as sentences. The Government of Iran was urged to end clampdowns and mass arrests of human rights defenders, activists, students and journalists.

Insecurity and impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was still extremely worrying, he said, as were the use of armed violence, arbitrary detentions, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading forms of punishment.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

Also of concern was the use of child soldiers and widespread use of sexual violence, especially in the east of the country. In Belarus, there had been a deterioration of the situation, with systematic violations of civil and political rights. In Cuba, where civil and political rights had been violated by the Government, the European Union's position was one of concern, with encouragement for a peaceful change to a pluralistic democracy. While the release of a few prisoners in recent months was welcomed, the Cuban authorities were urged to unconditionally release all political prisoners.

Steps taken by Afghanistan to promote human rights were welcome, he said, but the recent execution of 15 Afghan nationals was to be regretted. The humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe had worsened, bringing misery to millions of its people; the European Union had regularly condemned the use of intimidation, violence, arbitrary arrest and torture in that country. The Union was highly concerned by the deepening humanitarian crisis in Iraq, and followed with great concern the occurrence of human rights violations, lack of public security, reports of torture, continued use of the death penalty, and difficulties in applying due judicial process in that country.

In Somalia, reports of targeted killings, the inability of journalists to carry out their work without interference, and the lack of a free media were causes of particular concern. He said the human rights situation in the Somali region of Ethiopia was also a source of deep concern, with worrying reports of extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, sexual violence and torture. In Guatemala, a decision to establish a commission against impunity was welcome, but there had been a high level of politically motivated violence during the electoral campaign. In Uzbekistan, the European Union was deeply concerned about freedom of expression and assembly, and the grave situation of human rights defenders; that country had to cooperate fully with all relevant United Nations mechanisms. In Eritrea, the detention without charge of members of minority religious groups, journalists, leading political figures and members of civil society had been contraventions of human rights agreements that that country was party to.

Mr. Salgueiro said that the protection of human rights defenders had always been a priority for the European Union, which was gravely concerned by the sentencing on vague accusations of several such defenders in Iran. The situation for human rights defenders was also disturbing in Uzbekistan, Nepal, Iran, Guatemala, Colombia, Yemen, Syria, Cuba, Indonesia, China, Russia, Sri Lanka, Belarus, Myanmar and Zimbabwe. The European Union reiterated its firm stance in favour of the absolute prohibition of torture. He said an institutionalized climate of impunity for acts of torture that existed in many parts of the world had to be rejected, and governments had to make clear to their officials, including the police and military, that torture would never be tolerated.

Statement

HENRY MAC DONALD (Suriname) speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said CARICOM members remained guided by the fundamental principles of good governance, the rule of law and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all. Recognizing the creation by the international community of a wide range of mechanisms, and despite repeated promises never again to allow abhorrent breaches of human rights law, the critical question was whether those commitments were really acted upon, or whether they were merely theoretical concepts.

He said the Community looked forward to discussions with regard to developing human rights guidelines for pharmaceutical companies. Globalization was not merely an economic process; the gap between developed and developing countries posed a threat to global security, stability and prosperity. He hoped that the newly established Human Rights Council would deliver on its expectations of promoting human rights. He thanked all contributors to CARICOM's initiative to erect a permanent memorial at the United Nations in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

Statement

JOHN DUGARD, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory said that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had worsened since his last report. Gaza was still an imprisoned society, with Israel refusing to recognize it as occupied territory. The humanitarian crisis continued and over 80 per

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

cent of the population was living below the poverty line. Some improvements in the West Bank had been offset by a number of issues, including the continued construction of the wall and the continued expansion of settlements.

Today he wanted to address three issues, he said: self-determination; the consequences of prolonged occupation and the role of the United Nations in the promotion of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination was seriously threatened by the dispute between Fatah and Hamas, and unfortunately the Quartet - consisting of the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations - had further divided the Palestinian people by supporting one faction against the other.

The prolonged occupation contained elements of apartheid, he said, with a host of laws and practices that discriminated against Palestinians in favor of settlers. It was suggested that the International Court of Justice be asked for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences for Israel, the occupied Palestinian people and third States due to the prolonged occupation.

Turning to the role of the United Nations, he said it was his responsibility to address the issue of the role of the United Nations in the peace process conducted by the Quartet directly within the United Nations family. Serious questions had been asked about the compatibility of the United Nations role in the Quartet with its responsibility to be the principal protector of human rights. The Quartet, which reported to the Security Council, had not been established by a resolution of either the Security Council or the General Assembly, but despite its dubious legal foundation, it had assumed primary responsibility for the management of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Unfortunately, he said, the Quartet paid little attention to the human rights of the Palestinians. The imposition of sanctions against the Palestinians by the Quartet had led to a serious loss of confidence in the United Nations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he said. In those circumstances, the question must be asked whether the best interests of the United Nations were served by remaining in the Quartet, where it was used to "legitimize the pro-Israeli position of the Quartet".

If the Secretary-General were unable to persuade the Quartet to adopt an even-handed and impartial approach to the Israel/Palestine dispute, he suggested that the Secretary-General should consider withdrawing the United Nations from the Quartet. This, however, was not an appeal to the Organization to withdraw from the Quartet, he clarified. Instead, it was an appeal to the Secretary-General and his senior staff to consider the United Nations role in the Quartet with special regard to the human rights situation.

Discussion

The Committee then engaged in a discussion with the Special Rapporteur, with some delegations directly concerned by the topic taking the opportunity to make statements.

RIYAD MANSOUR (Palestine) thanked the Special Rapporteur for his report.

ADY SCHONMANN (ISRAEL) said the report viewed a complex situation through the simplest of prisms. In its narrow perspective, terrorism and violence emerging from Palestinian areas simply did not exist. Any measure taken by Israel to protect its citizens was categorically condemned as inadmissible or disproportionate. Moreover, the report brought into clear focus the personal agenda of the current Rapporteur, who had been advancing the view that terrorism was "a relative concept". The Special Rapporteur's staunch opposition to the Quartet far exceeded his mandate, and his report's use of inflammatory language did nothing to contribute to constructive dialogue. At a time when Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams were preparing to discuss the complex issues in dispute, the report undermined any such efforts, and reflected an approach that was potentially more damaging than previous reports.

The representative of Palestine, on a point of order, said the floor had been opened to questions and comments for the Special Rapporteur, and that a three-page statement by Israel could not be accepted. The Chair appealed to

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

delegations to be brief. The representative of Israel said it was the custom of the Committee to allow those parties most directly affected by a Special Rapporteur's report to comment at greater length.

The representative of South Africa asked how the United Nations could play a role in the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State, and also what the role of the United Nations should be with regard to human rights violations. Also, how might a further legal opinion help the Palestinian people express their rights to self-determination? She expressed worry about the arbitrary detention of Palestinians, and asked how the international community could ensure that Israel abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The representative of Portugal asked what could be done to improve the situation. While Portugal was aware of the limits to the Special Rapporteur's mandate, Portugal wanted to know what could be done about impunity, and also asked for more information on the situation regarding the West Bank.

The representative of Kuwait asked what was the best way to end the occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The representative of Egypt said the report of the Special Rapporteur spoke for itself, and asked him to elaborate more on the settlements in the territories.

The Special Rapporteur, JOHN DUGARD, began his response by addressing Israel, noting that he had been criticized for not giving more attention to terrorism, and for suggesting that terrorism was a relative concept. "I'm a South African", he said, "and grew up in apartheid South Africa". Opponents of the apartheid government were initially labelled communists and then became terrorists, he said. Nelson Mandela was accused of being a terrorist, but today he was seen as a "saintly icon". He said two Israeli terrorists - people who had committed acts of terrorism against the British occupation - had become prime ministers of Israel. Even in Israeli history, terrorism was a relative concept. This did not mean that he wished to minimize the savage nature of terrorism, but there was a tendency in Israel to concentrate so much on terrorism that the real issues were ignored. He urged the Israeli Government to consider the issues he raised, such as the legality of the wall, as well as issues such as the ongoing arrest of Palestinian prisoners, the humanitarian crisis and the check points. He urged the Israeli delegation to address the real issues and not focus too much on terrorism, as it did not help to find a solution to the problem.

He said the delegate of South Africa had raised a number of questions, including how the Quartet could play a more meaningful role. This could be done by paying more attention to human rights. A legal advisory opinion might help by providing clarity to the issues. At present, Israel argued that it was not occupying Gaza. An advisory opinion could clear up the issue and other legal issues. Regarding treatment of prisoners, he said there was much that State parties to the fourth Geneva Convention should do. Under humanitarian law, Israel was required to hold prisoners within the occupied territories and not within Israel, as was the current policy. It would be helpful if States could carry out their obligation by bringing pressure on Israel to comply with international obligations.

In response to Portugal's question about what was most urgent, he said that a host of issues such as the wall, the increased checkpoints and the border crossings needed to be addressed. As for how national reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah could be effected, he said the international community should be playing the role of mediator, in trying to bring the two sides together. At present, there were serious accusations of human rights violations by Hamas in Gaza and by Fatah in the West Bank, but this fell outside his mandate. It still required the attention of the international community.

Kuwait had asked about an advisory opinion and how it might be secured. Mr. Dugard explained the procedure.

Noting that the representative of Egypt had asked about settlements, he responded that the Israeli Government said it was freezing settlement activity, but the Government continued to fund and support settlements.

Yemen had raised the question of how United Nations resolutions might be implemented. This was an issue for the Quartet, said the Special Rapporteur. Most of the Quartet's statements were highly critical of Palestine, and no account was taken of the fact that Israel was in serious violation of international law.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

JOSEPH REES (United States) said his country strongly disagreed with the criticism levelled by the Special Rapporteur against the Quartet; it was unhelpful and deeply irresponsible to suggest that the United Nations should consider withdrawing from the Quartet. The superficial treatment of the complicated and illegitimate situation in Gaza, where Hamas had violently seized power in June, was troubling; the fact of the matter was that President Abbas was the elected leader of all the Palestinian people. No more than a passing reference had been given to acts of terror directed towards Israeli citizens; the Special Rapporteur's implication that terrorism could be justified was irresponsible and deeply disturbing. The United States did not support seeking a further International Court of Justice advisory opinion on issues related to occupation, colonization and apartheid, as mentioned by the Special Rapporteur.

The representative of Syria said her delegation fully shared the opinions contained in the report. As a native of South Africa, the Special Rapporteur was the best representative of a dialogue on the Arab/Israeli conflict.

The representative of Libya said the report was clear, transparent and bold. It had noted the negative consequences of the situation in the Palestinian Territories after construction of the wall.

The representative of Nicaragua said that an end must be put to the violation of the rights of Palestinian people.

The representative of Palestine said the prism that the Special Rapporteur had used had been the international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. Such instruments were applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and had been breached by Israel. The same prism had been used by other United Nations agencies. Mr. Dugard's report had been factual and honest, and he was to be commended for that.

Responding to questions from Lebanon and Indonesia on a further advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, the Special Rapporteur explained that the 2004 advisory opinion had been a very narrow one, dealing with the legality or illegality of the wall. A host of other issues needed to be addressed; thus it might be helpful to look at the whole spectrum of the nature of the occupation. As the occupation had been accompanied by colonialism, with half a million settlers on the West Bank, it might help to confirm that it was still an occupied territory. It would be a helpful exercise that would not only give legitimacy to United Nations on the subject, but also provide further clarity.

On a question from Indonesia on what the Quartet could be doing, the Special Rapporteur said his complaint was that the Quartet did not take the human rights context of the situation sufficiently seriously. He explained that he was a human rights Special Rapporteur; he could not trespass too much onto political terrain, but there had to be a human rights approach.

Responding to Libya on how to end the occupation, he said the best solution would be a peaceful settlement. He noted that there was a possibility of a conference in the United States in November towards that goal. He hoped it would succeed, but it was important that it be conducted with due regard to the human rights context, and the need for the protection of the human rights of the Palestinians to be included in any settlement.

On what could be done by the United Nations and civil society, he said civil society had been very active in creating public awareness of human rights violations. States could be more pro-active. For instance, there were still serious suggestions that States had been buying produce from illegal Israeli settlements, blissfully unaware that such produce was tainted with illegality.

Responding to the comments made by the United States, he said he had been interested to hear the representative say that the Quartet was concerned by the normative parameters of any peaceful settlement. That was essential, but such parameters had to have regard to human rights norms and the opinion of the International Court of Justice, whose 2004 advisory opinion had been neglected by the international community. While the United States was not legally bound to accept an advisory opinion, it had imposed its will on the other members of the Quartet, which had indicated that they were prepared to accept the advisory opinion.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

On terrorism, the Special Rapporteur said that while he did not wish to underestimate terrorism, it could be used as a "red herring" and a distraction from the real issues. Many human rights violations could not be justified as actions taken to curb terrorism. It was not necessary to have checkpoints throughout the West Bank to prevent terrorism, now that the wall was being built as a security wall. It was clear that its purpose was to enclose Israeli settlements within Israel. Regarding apartheid, it was politically incorrect to suggest that Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories were akin to apartheid. However, while it was a very delicate issue, many of Israel's practices on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem discriminated on racial grounds against Palestinians.

PAULO SRGIO PINHEIRO, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, then addressed the Committee. He said that, despite having not been granted access to the country since November 2003, he had followed events closely, based on information from independent and reliable sources, as well as through dialogue with the Permanent Missions of Myanmar in Geneva and New York. Tragic events had been taking place in Myanmar since 15 August 2007 when the retail price of fuel had been increased by 500 per cent without warning. Peaceful protests had culminated in large demonstration from 18 September to 30 September, led by Buddhist monks. From 26 to 28 September, excessive force had been used by the security forces in the face of the demonstrations; people had been killed, thousands arrested and many people were still detained. Alarming reports of death in custody, torture and disappearances continued to be received.

The Special Rapporteur said that, as of today, he had been able to verify allegations of the use of excessive force by the security forces, including the use of live ammunition, rubber bullets, tear gas, bamboo and wood sticks, rubber batons and catapults or "slingshots". Those had largely explained the killings and severe injuries that had been reported. It was a matter of very serious concern that non-law enforcement officials and non-State armed groups had been used alongside the security forces. Today marked the twelfth anniversary of the house arrest of Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi, the General Secretary of the National League for Democracy; her release, and those of other detainees and political prisoners, should be immediate and unconditional. Myanmar had an obligation to investigate grave human rights violations, to prosecute those who perpetrated those violations and to punish them if they were found guilty.

He said States in the region had an outstanding role to play, but there was an urgent need to coordinate the different approaches among Member States who had been trying to find ways to contribute towards the principles of democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar. There should be a strategic dialogue with the Government. The Government in Myanmar was called upon to continue cooperating with Ibrahim Gambari, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser, who had recently been in the country.

The Government, he said, had confirmed this week its agreement for the Special Rapporteur to visit Myanmar; he would be particularly concerned to confirm the numbers, whereabouts and conditions of those detained, as well as an accounting for the numbers killed during the protests. It was difficult at this stage to provide accurate numbers of persons killed, arrested and detained; figures given by the authorities underestimated what might be the real numbers.

The recent tragic events had shown that the Government was not adequately protecting the freedoms of opinion and assembly, he said. Meaningful and inclusive dialogue between the Government, political representatives and ethnic groups was the starting point for national reconciliation. International actors, including the Human Rights Council, should contribute to that process. International humanitarian assistance could not be made a hostage of politics; any decision on such assistance had to be solely guided by the best interests of children, women, people with disabilities, those affected by illness and minority groups.

The stability of Myanmar was not well served by the arrest and detention of political leaders, or by restrictions on fundamental freedoms, he added. Unconditional release of the General Secretary of the National League for Democracy and thousands of political prisoners was a prerequisite for an authentic democratic transition. Ordinary people needed space to express their views and discontent, peacefully and in public.

Statement

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

U THAUNG TUN (Myanmar) said that the Special Rapporteur's report was less than objective, yet that cooperation with the United Nations was a cornerstone of Myanmar's foreign policy. It was in that spirit that Myanmar continued to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. In recent months and weeks, his country had become an emotive issue, but the international community had to rise above the fray and discern the true situation. What had occurred recently was tragic. What had begun as a peaceful protest over fuel prices, and protests by Buddhist novices who were unhappy with the mistreatment of fellow monks by local authorities had been "sullied by political activists and rabble rousers".

The Government had exercised restraint and not intervened for nearly a month. The security forces had been called in to restore law and order only when the situation had gotten out of hand and posed a challenge to peace and security, he said. The country had weathered the storm, and had recently appointed a minister to liaise with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. He rejected the "outrageous allegations" of human rights violations, particularly sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers. Those were false allegations disseminated by remnants of the insurgents and their allies. He expressed confidence that the Special Rapporteur would not fail to note the concrete developments taking place in Myanmar, despite all manner of sanctions and obstacles placed in its path.

Discussion

Several delegations then put questions to the Special Rapporteur, during which the Chairman, following a request made by the representative of Myanmar, asked delegations to refer to the country by its official name.

Mr. PINHEIRO said that news about his visit to Myanmar was very recent. There had been a suggestion that it would take place before a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Talks regarding the visit were continuing, but everything at this stage was positive.

On the number of political prisoners, he said several had been released during the past seven years of his mandate, but that it was impossible to give an accurate number. On the condition of women, he noted that the Government had presented a report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; it was imperative that the rights of women be addressed in the new Constitution.

Responding to questions posed by the representative of France on conditions in detention centres, he said that the Government had benefited from visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for a number of years, and he had been told that conditions had improved. It was hoped that ICRC would be able to resume the excellent work it had been doing. On what help could be extended to the Special Rapporteur, he said Member States could continue to do what they had been doing; namely, coordinated action. Such action was indispensable to ensure a transition process in Myanmar. He said he was very pleased by the consensus note issued by the Security Council.

Responding to a question from Guinea-Bissau on the value and need for freedom of expression and speech, he said the Government of Myanmar could soon recognize that such freedoms were essential in a transition to democracy. Answering a question from New Zealand about details of his upcoming visit to Myanmar, he said he had just begun making the arrangements, and noted that the Ambassador of Myanmar had extended the full cooperation of his Government.

On a question from the representative of Japan, also about the potential visit to Myanmar, he said the purpose of the visit would be to follow up on the resolution of the fifth special session -- to offer to the Human Rights Council an honest and thorough picture of the crisis after listening to the protesters and the viewpoint of the Government.

Reacting to the statement by the representative of Myanmar, he said he was not condemning the National Convention, as it could be an important tool in the transition process. Rather, there was a need to include more voices and viewpoints in the process; that was an opinion that had also been expressed by the Secretary-General and his predecessor. Crisis was always an opportunity for progress.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

The representative of Germany -- having seen how important the Internet and mobile technology had been to show the world what was happening in Myanmar recently -- asked how the international community could assist in providing this resource to the people of Myanmar.

The representative of Australia asked how the international community could provide assistance.

The representative of Canada urged the authorities to facilitate the work of the Special Rapporteur, and added that they were very concerned with detention and lack of respect for human rights. How could countries in the region and outside facilitate the Special Rapporteur's work in Burma?

The representative of Myanmar then asked for, and received the floor to speak on a point of order. Speculating that the distinguished representative of Canada might have been out of the room at the time of his last point of order, he again asked the chairman to remind delegations that the name of his country was Myanmar. The chairman did so.

The representative of the United States wanted to know how the Special Rapporteur and the Secretary-General's Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari, were coordinating their work and their travels, as well as how they were supporting each other's mandates. The representative then asked about the Special Rapporteur's proposed phased approach to prisoner releases, and expressed concern that such an approach might encourage the authorities to delay. The representative asked the Special Rapporteur for his thoughts on that possibility. He concluded by urging the international community to address the threat posed by the current political situation not just to "the people of Burma", but also to the overall peace and security of the region.

On a point of order, the representative of Myanmar again took the floor and requested a little more time to fully explain the history of the name change of the country. The Chairman said he would allow that, if only the Myanmar delegation would allow the rest of the questions to be asked first. He then gave the floor to the representative of Brazil, who welcomed the Special Rapporteur's report and expressed support for his work.

The representative of China said they hoped the Special Rapporteur would continue to have dialogue with Myanmar. He hoped the Government of Myanmar would continue to improve the lives of its people, and that the international community would provide constructive help to human rights problems in the country. He observed that the Special Rapporteur understood the Chinese language to some extent, but said that the word "crisis" was not equivalent to opportunity. If the international community and Myanmar could have constructive engagement, the crisis could be turned into an opportunity.

The representative of Myanmar then explained that, in 1989, the Government had changed the country's name and registered it with the United Nations. Ever since the region had been civilized, the nation had called itself Myanmar, he said, and the country wanted the English version to be in conformity with the name. Myanmar was composed of over 100 nationalities and ethnic groups, and if one referred to the country as Burma, one would be referring only to the largest ethnic group in the country, and not to them all. The name was not a political situation.

Taking the floor to answer the questions addressed to him, Mr. PINHEIRO said that one of the articles of the resolution of the Human Rights Council encouraged the Government of Myanmar to engage in a dialogue to ensure full responsibility for human rights. He was working very closely with the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"We have to deal with the indivisibility of human rights," he said, and added that economic and social rights had to be considered as well. The representative of Germany had indicated this very clearly, he said. Access to the Internet could not be denied to the citizens of Myanmar. On the other hand, he said, he thought that the international community and Internet providers had to find ways that did not allow censorship in terms of access to the Internet, which was very much present in the international debate. Regarding forced labour, a dialogue continued between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Government, he said.

Turning to the Australian representative's question, he said the authorities had a duty to ensure humane conditions for prisoners. He mentioned the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and said that the organization's very old history was proof of their seriousness and commitment. He would repeat this appeal to the Government of

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COULD HELP PUT RIGHTS ABUSERS ON NOTICE, THIRD COMMITTEE
TOLD

Myanmar. Addressing Canada's questions on how countries could facilitate his work, he said it was important to assure a humanitarian presence in support of community empowerment. In every example of political transition, international solidarity to empower civil society was decisive, and Myanmar would surely not be the exception to the rule. He said that the international community had to rejoice with the offer permitting him to visit the country.

Right of Reply

The representative of Algeria, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, commented on remarks made by the representative of Morocco during the discussion with the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Ms. Arbour had been asked by Algeria to clarify the criteria by which she decided to present reports on human rights situations and the cases of Nepal, Uganda and Western Sahara had been cited. That Morocco had given a political twist to a technical question was regrettable. Algeria had no objection to the issuance of the report by the OHCHR on Western Sahara, which had been based on a visit to the occupied territory of Western Sahara and to the Tindouf camp.

The representative of Sudan, responding to the earlier statement by Portugal on behalf of the European Union, said that that statement was a reminder of the colonial mindset that, in the past, had dominated Sudan for far too long. Sudan's problems were the legacy of colonialism. He referred to the situations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo in the context of human rights and stated that there had been a politicization of human rights. The representative who spoke on behalf of the European Union should speak instead of the human rights situation of migrants in European countries. Sudan had ceaselessly deployed efforts to further the peace process in Darfur, working with the African Union, while Libya had generously offered to host a conference to end the conflict there. It was hoped that the European Union would be a partner in that process.

The representative of Iraq, responding to Portugal on behalf of the European Union, said that his country shared the concerns that had been expressed about human rights and Iraqi refugees. His Government had been working hard to fulfil its responsibilities. While the security situation had improved in some areas, problems continued, and support was needed from friendly countries and concerned international organizations. In terms of human rights, the main challenge for the Iraqi people had been terrorist activities and crimes targeting innocent civilians. The invitation to the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment to visit Iraq was a sign of the firm belief of the Government to improve the human rights situation and to fight against impunity.

Load-Date: October 25, 2007