

Kota newspaper said on Wednesday.

Indonesian police chief General Banurusman Astroemitro was quoted as telling a parliamentary commission on Tuesday that a woman's virginity would have to be verified before she could enter academies for the military, which includes the police. He said some women entering military academies had to leave after they were discovered to be pregnant.

"Usually the community in the region will give a party for a woman when she is accepted into the military. During that event, women who have boyfriends are left a "deposit." That deposit usually becomes known after a few months," Banurusman said. "The result is that the female cadet soldier must end her education," he said.

Answering legislators' questions, Banurusman said: "If needed, the examination can be done by a woman doctor."  
(Source: Today, 7 March 1996)

### NEW CURE FOR AN OLD COMPLAINT

CHILE (IPS)—Child abuse may be an old problem but it has never merited close attention and scrutiny. At least, not until recently. Official figures show that some 300,000 minors are victims of physical and psychological aggression in Chile. The country ranks third in terms of the prevalence of child abuse according to the National Women's Service. Publicity campaigns have made the public aware of this widespread problem especially since the

case of a five-month-old baby who was put into a coma by a beating from her father, hit the headlines.

The Chilean pediatric surgeon, who concentrated on the issue of child abuse for five years, expressed his frustration at the situation. This problem, according to him, existed mostly in industrialized nations and cuts across all socio-economic levels although he noted that it is more concealed in the upper classes. He cites the need for enacting more laws that deal specifically with child abuse as well as information campaigns in the media and community levels.

### GETTING TOUGH ON PAEDOPHILES

PHILIPPINES (IPS)—An Australian businessman convicted under a 1992 Philippine Law on Paedophilia signals the start of concrete government efforts to crack down on paedophilic activity in Asia. Similar actions have started in other countries in the region. Thailand, for instance, indicted a Japanese businessman for sexually abusing two under-aged girls in the Northern province of Chang Mai. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downes initiated an inquiry in response to reports of Australian aid money being extended to orphanages and schools which supply "clean" children for Australian diplomats—sending out a clear message that he will not tolerate such unethical behavior from his compatriots.

Paedophilic activity reportedly abound in the region with child prostitutes

numbering to more than a million in Asia. While NGOs fighting paedophilia are happy with the recent efforts to curb these activities, they still see the need for stricter implementation of existing laws as well as for richer countries to enact and enforce laws that would prosecute paedophiles returning to their own countries.

### TRAFFICKED INTO INDIA

The Indian and Nepali governments share complicity in the abuse of thousands of women and girls who are trafficked from Nepal to India for the purposes of prostitution. "The willingness of Indian and Nepali government officials to tolerate and, in some cases, participate in the burgeoning flesh trade exacerbates abuse," says Human Rights Watch/Asia in a 90-page report released in July 1995.

HRW concludes that half of Bombay's 100,000 brothel workers are women and girls from Nepal. The report, *Rape for Profit: Trafficking of Nepali Girls and Women to India's Brothels*, says that the workers are kept in conditions tantamount to slavery.

"Held in debt bondage for years at a time, they are raped and subjected to severe beatings, exposed to AIDS, and face arbitrary imprisonment." Non-government workers in Bombay estimate that 20 percent of Bombay's brothel workers are under the age of 18 and at least half could be infected with AIDS.

"These abuses are not only violations of internationally recognized human rights but are especially prohibited under domestic laws of both



countries," states a press release accompanying the report.

Based largely on interviews with trafficking victims, the report says that many prostitutes are young women lured from remote villages and poor border communities in Nepal by local recruiters, relatives or neighbours promising jobs or marriage. They are then sold to brokers who deliver them to brothels in India.

The women then must work to pay off both their purchase price plus interest. However, most never know what they "owe" or the terms of repayment. They are under constant surveillance and face threats, beatings and other worse treatment if they misbehave.

Hoping for help from police or other officials is a waste of time. "Police are often the brothel owners' best clients," says HRW. "In India, police and local officials patronize brothels and protect brothel owners and traffickers." And despite human rights organizations in Nepal reporting extensively on the problem of forced trafficking and identifying traffickers, there have been few arrests and even fewer prosecutions.

The report outlines the distressingly cyclical nature of the abuse. Women who have managed to survive the system of debt bondage frequently become recruiters to fulfill their owners' requirement that they find another girl to take their place.

The report also notes that in 1993, Vinit Muntarbhorn, United Nations Special

Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, questioned the role of officials in trafficking in Nepal. "Law enforcement authorities are often weak, understaffed, undertrained and corrupt," said Muntarbhorn. "There is an expansive web of criminality which exploits children and which abuses the open border with India."

Muntarbhorn called for improved law enforcement, investigations and punishment of corrupt officials, better international cooperation against trafficking (including national co-operation with Interpol) and the establishment of national policies to deal with child exploitation. All these are supported by the Watch report. Human Rights

Watch/Asia says that despite an increased awareness of the problem of trafficking in women and children around the world the international community has "failed to make the control of human smuggling and forced prostitution issues of urgency for regional or global crime control initiatives. India, Nepal and the international community have an obligation to ensure that states rigorously pursue persecution of its own forces found guilty of complicity with the industry."

Human Rights Watch calls on India to protect the women and girls whose rights are violated within its territory, and on Nepal to improve the quality of its law enforcement personnel at all levels.

(Source: Human Rights Tribune, Vol. 3, Oct/Nov 1995)

## LAY MIDWIVES UNDER ASSAULT IN NYS

by David Yarrow

Albany, NY—Witch hunts are past history, and recent

effort has begun to establish women's rights, and re-establish women's rites—including their role as professional midwives independent of medicine.

But in New York State (NYS) it's still legal to hunt midwives. December 13, 1995 Roberta Devers-Scott was called to the Onondaga County Family Planning front office where she worked as counselor. There, two undercover investigators and a police officer handed her a search warrant and handcuffed her. At the police station she was mugshot, fingerprinted and imprisoned, charged with felony. Her home was searched and records seized.

Her crime? Not drug dealing, prostitution, child abuse, street violence, murder. Roberta's felony was to help other women give birth at home, educate them about pregnancy, guide them through the birth process, empower women. Roberta practiced lay midwifery in central NY.

Roberta isn't the only midwife under legal attack in NYS. Rather, a serious effort seems underway to subvert a 1992 NYS law and abolish lay midwifery. To do so drastically reduces women's birth options and home births may become impossible, if not illegal.

An occasional official inquiry into traumatic outcomes of abnormal births was normal—until recently. NYS played "bait and betray" tactics to trap lay midwives and suppress their practice as unlicensed profession.

## Statewide Harassment

Summer '93 a Long Island New York midwife investigated

