

# Women's Conference to battle for feminist rights

## China, the center of recent women's rights controversy, will host the gathering.

BEIJING (AP) — Delegates from 181 countries convene Monday for a once-in-a-decade gathering to push for equality of the sexes by the 21st century and conserve women's reproductive rights under threat today.

"We must struggle ... to come out with a document for the advancement of women," conference secretary-general Gertrude Mongella told reporters Sunday.

"We must watch out ... for conservative or backward-looking elements which want to keep the woman in a place where she has always been."

### "We must struggle ... to come out with a document for the advancement of women."

— Gertrude Mongella, conference secretary-general

Mongella called on delegates to the Fourth World Conference on Women to oppose those who want to roll back previous conference agreements on human rights, abortion and contraception.

Those issues are expected to dominate debate at the 12-day meeting, which Hillary Rodham Clinton will attend as honorary chief of the U.S. delegation.

Nafis Sadik, executive director of the U.N. Population Fund, expressed frustration that issues decided at the 1994 U.N. population conference in Cairo and the 1993 U.N. human rights meeting in Vienna are also on the Beijing agenda.

"It's because there is the desire to subjugate women in so many of the societies of the world. All kinds of spurious arguments are made, religious, moral — except the moral argument that everyone is equal. That is never used," Sadik said.

The three previous U.N. conferences on women were highly politicized by the Cold War, the Palestinian struggle and apartheid. With those issues either resolved or being negotiated, organizers had hoped to keep the spotlight in Beijing entirely on the issues confronting women.

But they hadn't factored in the conflict between China's fear of free debate and the women's demand for it. Women attending a parallel forum of non-governmental organizations have complained of Chinese security guards shadowing and photographing delegates, harassing Tibetan and human rights campaigners, confiscating video tapes and breaking up meetings.

Chinese authorities continued to keep a wary eye on participants of the forum in Huairou, where 23,000 women from around the world have gathered to put pressure on the official delegations in Beijing.

Organizers dropped their threat of a boycott, saying China had reduced surveillance and improved transportation and facilities for the disabled. But some participants in the forum still complained of harassment.

Sunday was the biggest protest day since the activists' forum started Wednesday.

Campaigners for Tibetan independence claimed one of their members was grabbed, shoved and chased from an official Tibetan workshop when she tried to hand out leaflets. Chinese security staff stopped about 150 anti-nuclear demonstrators from marching to the forum site via a main street.

The Chinese did not interfere with protests by women from south Asia shouting "peace now!", Kuwaiti women demanding that Iraq free men imprisoned during the Gulf War, Iraqis protesting against the U.N. embargo on their country, and Muslim women angered at being kicked out of a cinema because of a schedule conflict.

According to the United Nations, 3,000 delegates from 181 member states have registered along with 2,500 journalists.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Labor Day sacrificed for extended Christmas break

Americans are taking the day off today in observance of Labor Day. For many college students, the holiday provides a break from the hectic pace of a new semester.

For Texas A&M students, though, today is just another Monday. While the state of Texas requires all state agencies to observe Christmas and the Fourth of July, other holidays for the University are at the discretion of the Board of Regents at Texas A&M.

For several years, the regents have opted to keep the University, along with the eight other schools in the A&M System, open on Labor Day in order to add more time to the Christmas break.

### Goo oozes out in Goose Creek Consolidated ISD

BAYTOWN (AP) — An elementary school will be closed temporarily because tests show chemical contamination on a playground is more extensive than first thought.

Workers began cleaning up the black tar-like goo at G.W. Carver Elementary School on Friday with hopes of finishing before students return from the Labor Day holiday.

But Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District officials say the contamination is more widespread than the 150-by-80-foot area first targeted.

A statement from the district on Saturday said students should not return on Tuesday because of dangers posed by heavy equipment being used in the cleanup.

On Sunday, district spokeswoman Kathy Clausen said officials were working on a plan to send the roughly 800 G.W. Carver students to other schools next week.

The black goo was discovered oozing from beneath the playground surface on June 29. It was coming from a pit where crude oil was stored in the 1920s and 1930s, before the land was donated to Baytown's Goose Creek school district.

School trustees accepted Exxon Co. USA's offer to clean up the substance over objections from parents who questioned that the site could be cleaned up in three days.

Some of the parents also claim that their children have been sickened by the substance.

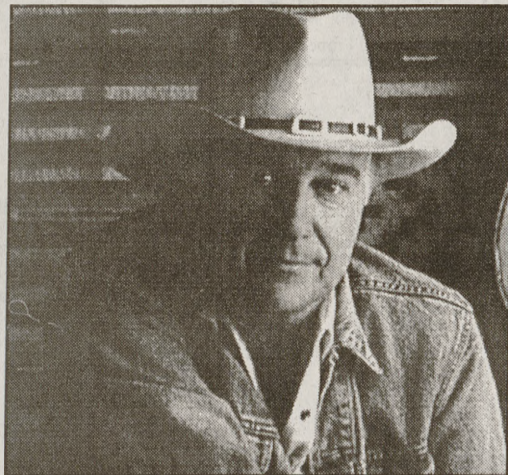
Aerial photographs indicate the oil storage pit may also be underneath the bus barn and a small portion of the school building, said officials from ERM-Southwest Inc., which is overseeing the cleanup.



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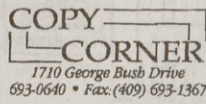
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