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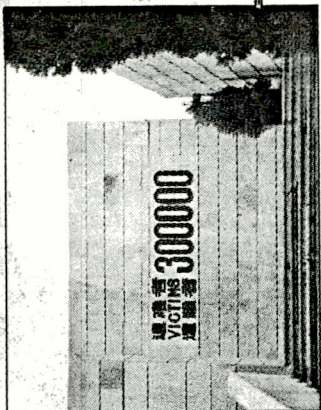
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Museum to a Massacre

A look around the Nanjing Massacre Museum, commemorating 300,000 dead.

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Taking the Title

Pete Sampras wins the Ericsson Open in Key Biscayne, Florida, his first title of the season.

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China's 'comfort women' dealing with a bitter past

Kathy Yang

Seventy-two year old Wang Aihua once stood 165 centimeters tall. Today, she is 147 centimeters.

Her change in height is not due to age; it is due to what she suffered at the hands of the invading Japanese army in World War II.

Wang was once a "comfort woman" — forced to submit to the sexual demands of Japanese soldiers. During that time, her back was broken and her neck was severely disfigured.

"My body is the strongest evidence of what the Japanese army did to the women of China," said Wang, taking off her coat to show her disfigured body at the first China International Symposium on the Chinese Comfort Women, held in Shanghai from March 30 to

was saved by a villager.

Her beating had been so severe that she was confined to bed for three years.

Hoping to forget the past, she changed her name from Linyu to Aihua, and moved to Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi Province, miles away from her hometown. There, she wrestled a poor living by sewing for others.

But unable to forget the past, she decided to confront it. This was a bold step — for nearly half a century, the "comfort women" have lived in the shadow of their painful past, feeling too ashamed to talk about it.

"We want to bring back honor and justice," said Wang, her voice rising in emotion. "It is not we who should feel ashamed, but the Japanese government."

"We are old now," said Wang. "If we do not come

Center. "They come forward, and they turn their pain into power."

The symposium attracted 175 scholars, lawyers, and reporters from many countries. After the three days' discussion, the symposium came up with a resolution.

"It is recognized that the 'comfort women' system, established by the Japanese government and its military was a military sexual system and is a significant part of Japanese military war crimes. It was also a severe violation of human rights and was a systematic, elaborate and most brutal wartime sexual crime," states the resolution.

The resolution also calls for the Japanese government to make a clear apology to the victims of its war crimes, and prosecute those who are responsible.

"Right-wing revisionists have accused the Tokyo Trial as a mere act of revenge by the allies," said Matsui. "Many people are listening to them."

When Korean "comfort women" decided to prosecute perpetrators, their letters of indictment were refused by the Tokyo Prosecutor's office.

Only one Korean "comfort woman" has won her suit. The court stipulated that she be compensated 2 million Japanese yen (US\$2,000).

"That's more an insult than a compensation," said Li.

The Geneva-based International Commission of Jurors passed a bill in the mid-1990s, demanding that each 'comfort woman' be compensated at least US\$40,000.

China brought its first lawsuit for compensation of its victims to the Tokyo court in 1995. The judgment will not be handed down until November.

Organizations from the UN to the Hong Kong government have also urged the Japanese government to make an unambiguous apology and offer compensation.

But according to Li, the Japanese Government is still a long way from tackling the issue "reasonably and properly."

"This must not be dragged on," said Li. "Almost all the victims are aged between 70 and 80. If will be a travesty if they can not see justice with their own eyes."

But Li's ardor is not dampened by Japanese apathy and denial. "I believe



■ Symposium participants visit a "comfort station" in Pudong. Thirty Chinese women were once held here.

April 1.

In 1992, Wang was the first Chinese "comfort woman" to break the silence that she and fellow victims of Japanese sexual slavery had preserved since the end of World War II.

Wang, originally named Linyu, was born to a poor family in Shanxi on December 12, 1929. At the age of four she was sold to a child trafficker by her father, an opium addict, and later became a child bride to a poor peasant family.

By the time she was 13, Wang was a local activist in the anti-Japanese movement. She was betrayed to the Japanese and arrested in June 1943.

She managed to escape after being detained for 21 days. She was caught and group-raped for 29 consecutive days. She escaped again, and was caught again and was savagely raped.

After being beaten into a coma, she was thrown into a river to die.

forward, the truth will be lost."

Lu Xiuzheng also spoke of her sufferings at the symposium — she is the first Shanghai woman to do so.

During the war, the Japanese military set up "comfort stations" in most Asian countries, and all over China. The first was in Shanghai's Hongkou District. By the end of the war there were 83 such centers in Shanghai alone.

"It has been a great pity that for many years, few Chinese women, and especially Shanghai women, have come forth to give their testimony," said Su Zhiliang, a history professor at Shanghai Normal University, and one of the organizers of the symposium.

"Most of the 'comfort women' still live a miserable life, and many are unable to have children of their own, due to the hellish life in the comfort stations," said Su.

"I'm impressed by their courage," said Yayori Matsui, director of Tokyo-based Asia-