

Dutch Jews, Muslims appeal ritual slaughter plan

THE HAGUE - Jewish and Muslim representatives Thursday appealed to Dutch lawmakers not to enforce plans requiring animals to be stunned before halaal and kosher slaughtering rituals.

"We are against any form of stunning because it's against our religion," Yusuf Altuntas, president of the CMO — an organisation that links the Muslim community with the Dutch government — told a parliamentary commission.

"One of the first measures taken during the Occupation (during World War II) was the closing of kosher abattoirs," said Dutch chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs.

Dutch law requires animals be stunned before being slaughtered but made an exception for ritual halaal and kosher slaughters.

The country's Party for Animals (PvdD) which

holds two seats in the 150-seat Dutch parliament, has submitted a proposal, if implemented, would see this exception abolished.

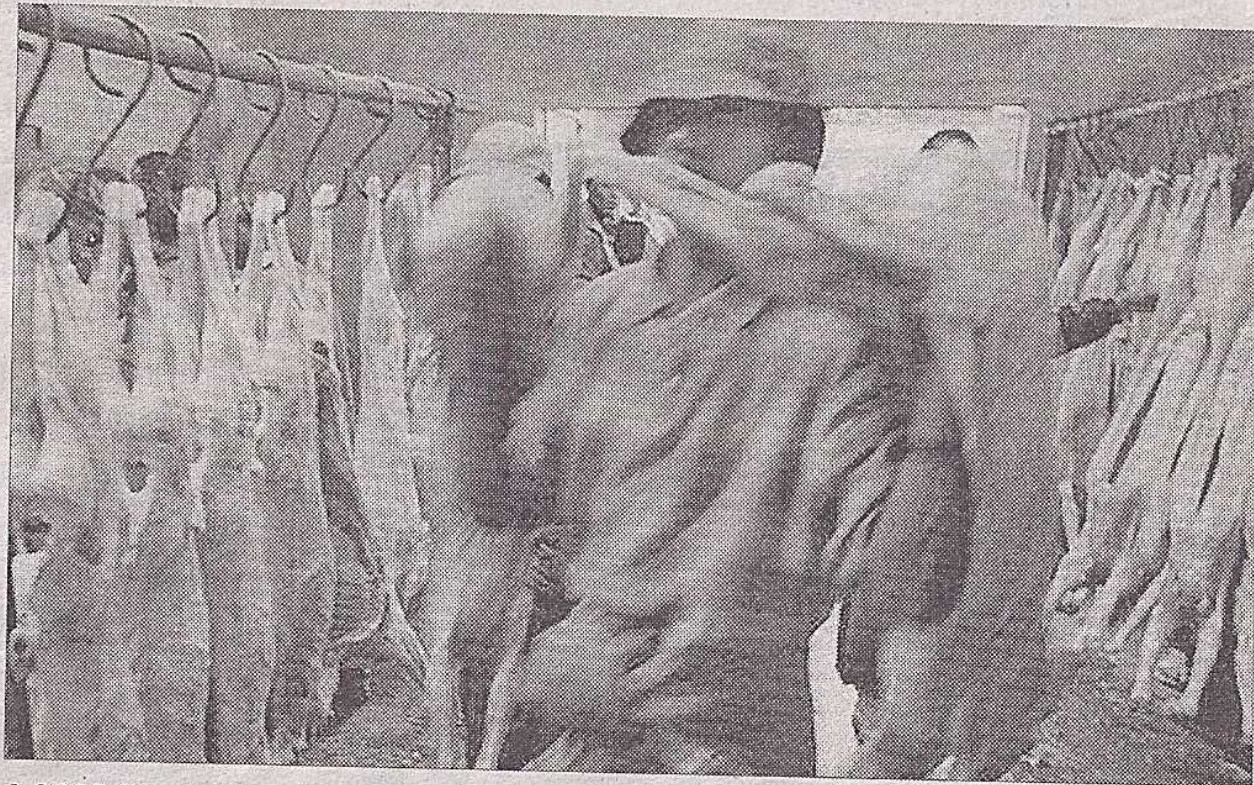
Dutch media widely reported that the PvdD's proposal was expected to get a majority nod from parliamentarians, but a time-frame was not given.

"The animals suffer more and are more distressed if they are not stunned," Esther Ouwehand, a PvdD parliamentarian told AFP.

"By getting this modification in the law, we hope to inspire other countries," she added, pointing out Norway and Sweden already had such measures.

More than two million animals — mainly sheep and chickens — were being subjected to ritual slaughter every year in the Netherlands, the PvdD added.

■ **AFP**



A 2002 file picture of a man carrying slaughtered goats in an abattoir in the Netherlands. Jewish and Muslim representatives say stunning an animal before killing it is against their religion.

Picture: AFP/FILE, SIMON MAINA