

WorldWatch

by Staff

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Earthquakes

Seismologists recorded 6+ magnitude quakes between mid-May and mid-June in the Bolivian Andes, Fiji Islands, Marian Islands, Guatemala, Afghanistan, northern Japan, north of Palu and near the Prince Edward Islands in the Indian Ocean. The devastating 6.6 Afghanistan temblor on May 30 resulted in at least 4,700 deaths and thousands injured.

Europe

» German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said the European Union (EU) and NATO should be ready to respond firmly to defuse the situation in Kosovo. He wants NATO to establish a military presence in the region.

» German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French President Jacques Chirac outlined their goals in reforming the EU to be more efficient and broader in its scope. They stress this does not mean establishing a centralized European state, but it requires the EU to be more accountable and comprehensible to its citizens.

Fire

» Smoke from thousands of raging fires in Mexico and Central America has drifted as far north as Canada and as far east as Florida. The entire state of Texas was put on a health alert, and some aircraft were grounded. U.S. officials are calling it an environmental disaster, "the most serious of its kind we have seen in the world."

» A similar rash of wildfires has burned about a half-million acres in central Florida, burning homes and businesses and causing the closure of heavily traveled highways at the peak of the summer tourist season.

Middle East

Syrian President Hafez Assad has urged the EU to play a stronger role in Middle East peace process. He remarked that he is satisfied with the European position, but he believes Europe should be much more involved.

Solar Flare

The May 28 *Nature* reported on a July 9, 1996, solar flare detected by the SOHO spacecraft. The flare, accompanied by a sunquake of 11.3 magnitude, spewed a huge bubble of superheated gas. Scientists consider this flare "fairly moderate." This data will help scientists predict sun activity better, as strong flares can disrupt electronic devices on earth. The next few years will see increased sun-flare activity.

Technology

» In the past 10 years, the number of English-language Buddhist teaching centers in America has grown from 429 to 1,166, while informal study groups have expanded an estimated three to five times. About 1 million Americans of Christian or Jewish backgrounds utilize Buddhist practices.

» In Latin America, the Vatican is throwing considerable support behind conservative groups like *Opus Dei*, which advocates many "Protestant" values. A survey of Brazilian seminarians showed that students were closer to the evangelical charismatic movement than to liberation theology, advanced by Catholic priests over the last few decades.

Weather

» A May 30 tornado wiped out 90% of the small town of Spencer, South Dakota, killing 6 and destroying its 4 churches, its post office, library and bank.

» India's worst heat wave in 50 years has killed more than 2,500, with nearly half its victims in the impoverished state of Orissa. In addition, a cyclone killed 415 people, injured 1,200 and left thousands homeless in western India on June 9.