

WorldWatch

by Staff

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Earthquakes

- » An earthquake of 6.3 magnitude occurred in northwest China on March 19, killing at least 28 and leaving nearly 15,000 homeless. Quakes of 6.8 and 6.3 struck the Aleutian Islands on March 22 and 30, respectively. Two quakes of 6.0 occurred in the Arabian Sea (March 28) and on Santa Cruz Island, Ecuador (March 31).
- » Large earthquake totals for 1996 as of April 7:

+6.0s: 46 +7.0s: 5

Terrorism

- » Germany gave unconditional support to the peace process in the Middle East, securing a promise from Palestinian President Yassir Arafat to take a more active role in fighting terrorism. Chancellor Helmut Kohl declared his country's willingness to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with other nations against terrorism, saying that the peace process is "the only real chance for a just and lasting peace in the region."
- » An advisor to Arafat said that if Israel will not discuss Jerusalem, return refugees and retreat to pre-1967 borders, then they will resume their terrorism with the help of 30,000 Palestinian soldiers.

Jerusalem

Pope John Paul II warned that peace in the Middle East could disappear if the status of Jerusalem is not resolved in a way that "preserves its uniqueness as a Holy City to all."

Dust Bowl

Winter precipitation was only 30-40 percent of normal over the region from northeast New Mexico to western Kansas. This dryness, combined with normal freezing and thawing and high winds, has created "dust bowl" like conditions. Farmers have already turned under thousands of acres of wheat to prevent further soil erosion.

Health

- » More people died in the U.S. in 1993 than in any other year in the nation's history. The death toll of 2,268,553 is an increase of more than 92,000, a 3.2 percent increase over 1992, interrupting a general improvement in the rate since 1930.
- » The World Health Organization reported 3 million worldwide died from tuberculosis in 1995. Increased air travel and immigration have spread TB in recent years.

Drugs

America has less than 5 percent of the world's population but consumes more than 50 percent of the world's illegal drugs. The value of the U.S. drug market is close to that of the U.S. budget deficit.

Economics

The consumer-debt load could drag the U.S. economy into recession by as early as 1997. Consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of the economy. Credit-card debt rose to \$330 billion in 1995, and consumer loans topped one trillion dollars.

Illegitimacy

In 1995 nearly a third of America's babies were born out-of-wedlock. The illegitimate birthrate among blacks is 69 percent, while among whites, almost 25 percent. Sociologists have traced many social problems—poverty, crime, drug abuse, educational problems, etc.—to the family's breakdown.