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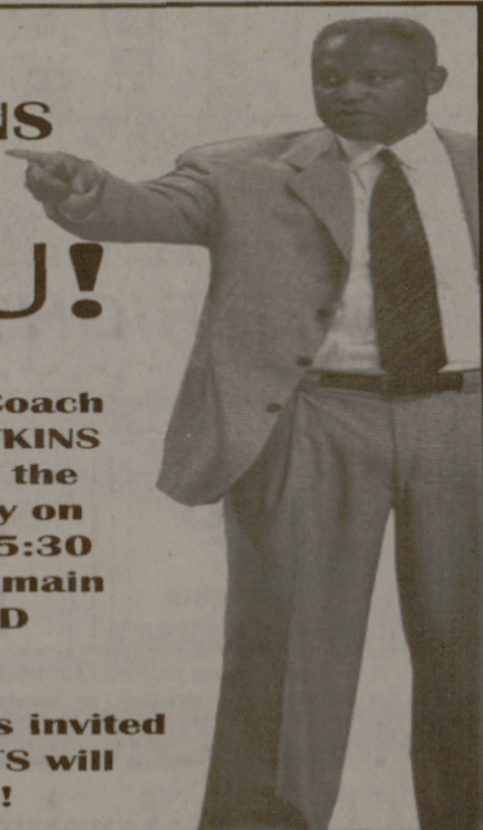


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Texas A&M basketball Coach MELVIN WATKINS will address the student body on MONDAY at 5:30 p.m. on the main floor at REED ARENA.

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India frees top Kashmiri separatist leader in attempt to ease tension

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Kashmir's new provincial government freed a prominent separatist leader from prison Monday as Islamic militants who also seek independence for Kashmir killed 13 parliamentary police in a bomb attack.

Separatist leader Yasin Malik, an icon to thousands of Kashmiri youths, was released eight months after his arrest for allegedly laundering money to finance terrorism.

His release was an attempt by the new Kashmir state government to ease tensions in the region disputed by India and Pakistan and to stem a tide of violence in the province.

The bomb exploded along the main Kashmir highway as police traveled in a truck near the town of Ramsoo, about 130 miles south of Srinagar, said Neeraj Kumar of the Border Security Force. In addition to the 13 dead, five police were injured.

The Pakistan-based Hezb-ul Mujahideen, the largest guerrilla group in Kashmir, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Malik, a former militant leader whose Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front is now a separatist political party, was flown to Srinagar on Monday from the high security Kot Bhalwal prison outside Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu-Kashmir state. Malik confirmed his release in a brief phone call to The Associated Press.

The decision to release Malik came soon after the installation of a new government in Jammu-Kashmir, the heartland of a 12-year Islamic insurgency.

Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the new state administrator, has promised to improve the government's image and to provide a "healing touch" to the region, where more than 61,000 people have been killed since 1989.

Malik is one of the seven key decision-makers of the All Parties Hurriyat

Conference, the main Kashmiri separatist alliance.

He was arrested in March on charges of smuggling \$100,000 to finance anti-Indian militants in the Kashmir Valley. Police officers stormed a press conference he was giving in Srinagar and dragged him away.

His arrest came after police detained a woman traveling from Nepal carrying cash allegedly intended for him. Malik denied the allegation.

Malik, who suffers from a heart ailment, was granted bail in July after a court was told that his health had deteriorated. But within moments, he was arrested again and booked under the Public Safety Act, under which he could be detained for two years without trial.

On Monday, police revoked the Public Safety charges.

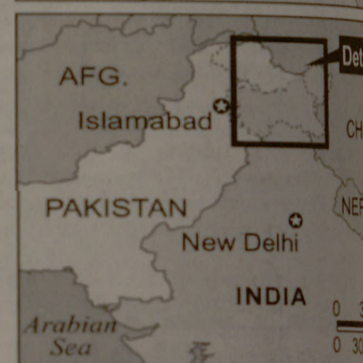
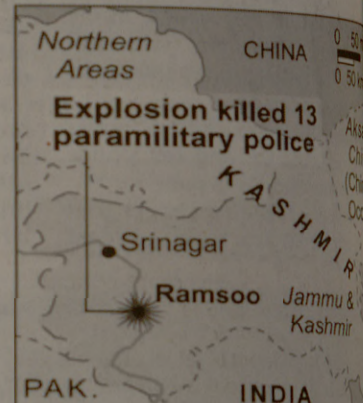
Malik's release was intended as a goodwill gesture by the state government, which is hoping to persuade the separatists to give up their campaign and end the violence.

Malik is among the most popular young leaders in Kashmir. His group led the first wave of young Kashmiris that took up arms in the disputed Himalayan region in the late 1980s, sneaking across the border to Pakistan where former members say they received weapons training to return to fight Indian security forces.

India has said it would not resume peace talks with Pakistan until it stops providing arms and money to separatist guerrillas — a charge Pakistan denies.

On Monday, Pakistani officials said they were waiting for a positive signal from India to resume peace talks on the divided province, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

"The ball is in India's court ... we have not shied away or hesitated in entering talks with India," said Aziz Ahmad Khan. "We



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI

Media restricted at China's Communist Party congress despite 'warm welcome'

BEIJING (AP) — China invited international news organizations, set up a Web site and modern press center, solicited interview requests, even welcomed journalists with a lavish cocktail party. At first blush, it looked like a political media event anywhere else in the world.

But the surface openness at China's Communist Party congress this week in Beijing has, in many ways, proven to be an illusion.

At least one foreign reporter has been detained by police. Overseas television broadcasters have had outgoing stories cut by censors. And the world has been denied any real glimpse into the inner workings of the weeklong meeting, expected to produce the next leaders of the world's most populous country.

While China has adopted some of the glossy trappings of modern public relations, its political system remains as opaque and unwelcoming as ever. It's a contradiction common in today's China, where one of the world's last communist regimes presides over a robust, increasingly free-market economy.

The clumsy mix of friendly talk and intimidation reflects the party's sensitivity to the portrayal of this congress and particular-

"It's clear that what Jiang is concerned about is image. He wants to be celebrated as a great contributor to China's modernization."

— Tim Weston
Assistant history professor,
University of Colorado

ly President Jiang Zemin, 76, expected to retire as party chief this week and be replaced by 59-year-old Vice President Hu Jintao.

"It's clear that what Jiang is concerned about is image. He wants to be celebrated as a great contributor to China's modernization," said Tim Weston, an assistant professor of history at the University of Colorado at Boulder who is writing a book on journalism in China.

Coverage of the congress in China's state-run press has consisted of ceaseless praise for Jiang's accomplishments — even

to the point of doctoring quotes from Western journalists to make them sound rosier. The dozens of newspapers in the capital carry the same centrally generated stories, and often the same photos and front-page layouts.

Press restrictions are nothing new during Communist Party congresses, held every five years. But the number of non-mainland journalists has grown as China's economy has opened. There are 759 this year — some 100 more than 1997, according to organizers.

Failure of foreign journalists to toe the government's line has provoked some harsh responses.

At least one photographer was detained and forced to delete digital-camera images after taking photos of police leading off a protester. The photographer was told his pictures were "unauthorized" and his press credentials applied only to official events.

Several protesters, most acting alone, have appeared outside the Great Hall of the People, the huge building facing Tiananmen Square where the congress is being held. They are quickly bundled away, and any pamphlets they try to hurl toward reporters or delegates are aggressively scooped up by police.

News reports on the congress

by Canadian, German, French and Hong Kong television agencies, all intended for home audiences, were blocked as they beamed out of China, organizers said. The footage showed Chinese protesters in Tiananmen Square and other locations of the outlawed Falun Gong religious sect and other politically sensitive material.

Foreign television agencies also said their requests for press shots outside the Great Hall had been rejected. Satellite broadcasts by CNN and the BBC were blocked at hotels and foreign compounds in Beijing have been repeatedly blacked out for long intervals during reports on sensitive political issues.

The treatment contrasted with the friendly greeting given foreign reporters at the congress's carpeted media center. Simultaneous translators offered a coal check, Internet access and stacks of reference books in several languages.

"Warm welcome to all journalists both at home and abroad for covering the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China," said a red banner on one wall. Forms were available to request interviews with party delegates, but requests for top and even midlevel delegates were rejected.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Gates pledges \$100 million to fight AIDS in India

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — The richest man in the world met with some of its poorest Monday, and pledged \$100 million to fight the spread of AIDS in India.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates opened his four-day, controversy-laced visit to the South Asian nation by visiting HIV-positive patients in a private hospice.

"It's a very brave thing to speak out and it's a problem that needs a lot of brave people," Gates told Naveen Kumar, an HIV-positive man who told him how he was rejected by public-health facilities in India.

"The problem needs all the great talent that exists in this country," said Gates, who was wearing the "tika," or red Hindu mark, on his forehead.

The \$100 million contribution from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the largest grant given by the foundation to a country to fight the deadly virus.

Gates said the foundation was funded by his personal wealth, which stood at \$43 billion in September.

Palestinian gunman kills 5 in Israeli farming community

KIBBUTZ METZER, Israel (AP) — A Palestinian gunman crawled under a

security fence at this communal farm, burst into a home and shot dead a mother and her two children as she was reading them a bedtime story. The gunman then killed two more Israelis before escaping in the dark.

Terrified residents at Kibbutz Metzger spent the night huddled in their homes. By daybreak Monday, Israeli security forces said the attacker had fled, apparently to the nearby West Bank, a short distance away.

The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, a militant group loosely affiliated with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the attack.

LASER HAIR REMOVAL

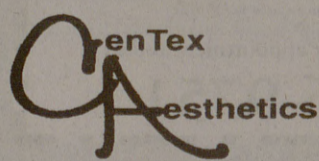
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