

Posted on Tue, Feb. 15, 2005

Latin briefs

CUBA

New course on how to fight drugs opens

HAVANA - Cuba's top anti-drug agent and European officials launched a course Monday on drug interdiction in the Caribbean, marking one of the first renewed programs since diplomatic relations between Havana and the EU were restored last month. The course brings together dozens of anti-narcotics agents from countries including Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Belize and Curacao to receive training.

"For the nations of the Caribbean, drug trafficking represents a permanent challenge," Gen. Jesús Becerra, chief of Cuba's anti-narcotics agency, said in opening remarks. "We will only have success if we constantly prepare ourselves, and, with concrete acts, demonstrate to international criminals that we are capable of uniting to counteract them."

CUBA

BRAZILIAN OFFICIAL VOWS CLOSER TIES

HAVANA -- Brazilian pop superstar Gilberto Gil, who is Brazil's minister of culture, said he plans to push for more cooperation between his country and Cuba.

Gil, who came to Havana to attend an international book fair dedicated to Brazil, signed an agreement with Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto to launch cultural exchanges revolving around language, cinema and historical patrimony.

A Brazilian foundation that studies black culture will also work jointly with Cuban groups studying Afro-Cuban society, he told The Associated Press.

PUERTO RICO

SEWER AUTHORITY SUED OVER POLLUTION

SAN JUAN -- Two environmental groups sued Puerto Rico's sewer authority on Monday, accusing it of using coastal waters "as a toilet" by allegedly leaking human waste into the sea.

The citizens' action suit filed in U.S. federal court in San Juan accuses the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority of violating clean water laws by failing to maintain a water treatment plant in Ponce, on the island's south coast.

Residents have complained that a tube at the plant has been leaking waste into open water for years, leaving a bubbling black slick on the surface, said Mary Ann Lucking, director of CORALations, a Puerto Rico-based group that brought the suit along with the Highlands, N.J.-based American Littoral Society.

PERU

LAWMAKER CLEARED IN ELECTION FUND PROBE

LIMA -- Peru's Supreme Court on Monday cleared a congresswoman of charges she improperly accepted campaign funds from former spy chief Vladimiro Montesinos ahead of fraud-filled elections in 2000.

Martha Chávez was suspended from Peru's legislature in June 2002 pending the outcome of the charges.

HAITI

ARISTIDE SUPPORTERS RIP UNITY PROPOSAL

PORT-AU-PRINCE -- Haiti's interim government on Monday announced the creation of a new commission aimed at fostering unity after last year's ouster of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The National Dialogue Commission will consist of private sector leaders, members of willing political parties and communities representatives from across the country of 8 million, Prime Minister Gerard Latortue said. Its main task will be to hear citizens' concerns, hold open houses and conduct opinion polls.

MEXICO

MAN GETS 40 YEARS FOR MURDER IN L.A.

MEXICO CITY -- A court has sentenced a Mexican man, Ramón Adan Delgado, to 40 years in prison for a double killing that took place in 1986 in a Los Angeles clothing factory, the Mexican attorney general's office announced.

Mexican law bans the extradition of suspects who might face the death penalty in the United States, but its constitution allows citizens charged with crimes abroad to be tried at home.

MOCK MARRIAGES

ON VALENTINE'S DAY

MEXICO CITY -- Hundreds of Gay and lesbian couples participated in Valentine's Day mock marriages in Mexico on Monday to demand passage of a law that would grant greater recognition for nontraditional families.

"It's about eternal love," said Marisol Jiménez, who married Brenda González. "We're in love and we want to be together for ever."

GRENADA

13 MURDERERS MUST STAY IN JAIL

The Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeals ruled Monday that 13 prisoners convicted of killing Grenada's leader and four Cabinet members in a 1983 coup should remain behind bars, striking down a March ruling by Grenada's High Court that overturned their life sentences.

The prisoners were among 17 whose 1983 coup led the United States to invade Grenada.