

HTY NOT OUT: Pope John Paul II blesses thousands of priests in St Peter's Square

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TICAN CITY

ORE than 7000 priests, nops and cardinals helped pe John Paul celebrate his th birthday yesterday as gave no sign of wanting

to step down, despite advancing age and declining health.

A solemn ceremony in St Peter's Square, bathed in brilliant sunlight, was believed to be the largest number of priests to

"concelebrate" a single Mass in the Vatican.

A sea of white vestments worn by priests filled part of the square at the Mass to launch celebrations for the Pope, who was born Karol Wojtyla in Wadowice,

Poland, on May 18, 1920. The Pope, who has suffered from many ailments and survived an assassination attempt in 1981, gave thanks to God for allowing him to live this long.

- Reuters

Picture: AP



ably start tomorrow or after tomorrow."

The rebels were reported to have demanded a ransom of £1.6m for the release of an ailing German housewife among their captives.

Negotiators rejected the demand, saying the Philippines and the hostages' governments were unanimous in adopting a no-ransom policy. Malaysian and Filipino doctors are heading for the rebel hideout to examine the hostages.

The fundamentalist Abu Sayyaf rebels kidnapped nine Malaysians, three Germans, two French, two South Africans, two Finns, two Filipinos, and one Lebanese from a Malaysian diving resort on April 23 and brought them to Jolo.

Tension has been high around Jolo since Wednesday, when a soldier was shot and killed while out shopping.

He was the second soldier killed in the town in the past week. Police blamed Muslim gunmen for both attacks.

The Philippines is mostly Roman Catholic as is its army. Muslims make up only about five million of the 75 million people and live mostly in the south.

The Abu Sayyaf is one of two groups fighting for an Islamic state in the south. - Reuters

people were still missing after detectives tracked down hundreds of people in the days since the blast.

Trump diamond is not forever



NEW YORK: Marla Maples apparently has decided a diamond is not forever, much to Donald Trump's dismay.

The developer is flabbergasted that his ex-wife has decided to auction off the diamond engagement ring he gave her. "It seems pretty tacky to me. It's really ridiculous," Trump said in the New York Post.

Wolf pack in for a shock

LIVINGSTON, Montana: A wolf pack with a history of killing cattle will be removed from Montana's Paradise Valley and taken to a ranch owned by media billionaire Ted Turner for shock therapy.

At Turner's Flying D ranch, federal game officials hope to use high-tech shock collars to teach the predators to avoid livestock, said Ed Bangs, the wolf recovery co-ordinator for the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Reactor leak on British submarine

GIBRALTAR

A BRITISH nuclear submarine has sprung a leak in the cooling system of its reactor and may have to be towed back to Britain from Gibraltar, the military said yesterday.

"There is no hazard to the general public, nor to personnel on board," British Forces Gibraltar said in a statement. "Radiation levels are normal throughout the submarine; routine monitoring continues."

HMS Tireless was due to arrive in Gibraltar on Friday for checks on its propulsion system after being withdrawn from a round-

the-world deployment, the military said.

The defect involved a leak of coolant water from the reactor's cooling system but the leak was contained in the reactor compartment. The reactor has been shut down, the statement said.

The Tireless is one of seven Trafalgar class submarines in the British Navy capable of launching Tomahawk missiles, according to James Fighting Ships.

Launched in 1984 and commissioned in 1985, the Tireless is 280ft long, holds a crew of 130 sailors and can reach a speed of 32 knots.

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Clear path towards historic Korean peace summit

a delegation of 130 on his to Pyongyang, including 50 Korean reporters, North's official Korean Central Agency (KCNA) said.

expect both North and South as to open a new chapter of an history based on mutual Yang Young-shik, head of South Korean delegation, said signing the agreement. "We ly achieved an historic agree-

ment and will make thorough preparations to welcome our guest (from the South)," replied Kim Ryong-song, Yang's North Korean counterpart.

Under the agreement signed yesterday, President Kim can either take a North Korean car across the heavily militarised border through Panmunjom or fly to Pyongyang from Seoul. There are no direct air or communication

links between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war.

The South Korean delegation will be allowed to use an inter-Korean hotline and satellite communication channels while staying in Pyongyang June 11 to 14.

Pyongyang will also allow South Korean reporters to broadcast summit events live to South Korea using their own equipment. South Korea is to send a 30-

member advance team to North Korea on May 31 to look around the summit site and hammer out details of communication, media coverage, security and protocol for the historic meeting.

Meanwhile, a South Korean ship carrying the first delivery of a promised 200,000 tonnes of fertilizer left the south-western port of Yosu yesterday for the North Korean port of Nampo. Seoul

announced earlier this month that it was providing the fertiliser to famine-struck North Korea from mid-May as a humanitarian gesture ahead of the summit.

Next month's summit will be the first between the two countries. They remain in a state of conflict because the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armed truce, not a peace agreement. - Reuters