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HOLLAND - In the headlines, China furious about Dalai Lama's visit. Anti-immigrant sentiment stronger in the Netherlands. Cocaine fuelled the credit crisis and China furious about Dalai Lama's visit.

The conservative mass-circulation De Telegraaf writes: "European countries which roll out the red carpet for the Tibetan spiritual leader must count on 'serious harm to their ties with Beijing'. The Netherlands has apparently had a fortunate escape due to Prime Minister (Jan Peter) Balkenende's refusal to meet the Tibetan during his visit tomorrow and Thursday".

The paper reports that China was furious with the Danish prime minister, who officially received the Dalai Lama in spite of Chinese objections. The Dutch parliament, however, will receive the Dalai Lama on Friday with all the due formalities. MPs had called on the prime minister, in vain, to meet with the Tibetan spiritual leader.

China will not do anything to harm its interests

In an interview with the quality free newspaper De Pers, John Fox of the European Council on Foreign Relations strongly criticises Prime Minister Balkenende for "letting a foreign power dictate whom he will, or will not, meet". Mr Fox says that the prime minister is frustrating European attempts to formulate a united policy. "The message to China is: it helps to keep bullying."

Mr Fox, a former British diplomat who worked in Beijing, does not believe the Netherlands has that much to fear from China. "Just as little as the other government leaders who received the Dalai Lama." He admits that China did impose sanctions against France when it was EU president. "China was very angry with France, but even in that case the sanctions were symbolic. China is not stupid and will not do anything to harm its interests. The Netherlands is, and will remain, an important distribution country for China. If there is a dispute there will be a lot of barking, but little biting."

Voter does not feel well-informed

Elections for the European Parliament are being held in the Netherlands tomorrow. Most countries will vote on Sunday, but due to objections from religious Christian parties, elections are not held on Sundays in the Netherlands. According to the Protestant daily Trouw, there is only moderate interest in the elections despite weeks of coverage by the media. The market research institute

TNS NIPO predicts that turnout will probably not exceed that of the last European elections in 2004 when just over 39 percent of the electorate voted. TNS NIPO says that "despite all the media interest in Europe, the voter does not feel well-informed". Trouw writes: "The electorate does not have much to choose from. When it comes down to the nitty-gritty, all Dutch parties are in favour of Europe, including the Freedom Party due to the economic advantages."

AD writes that even the polling stations are having to cope with a lack of enthusiasm. The Electoral Council has reported that because of the sunny weather many polling stations have been forced to look for substitute officials for Thursday's poll. Electoral Council spokesperson Mat Meijs says "Many polling station officials apparently feel they have better things to do."

Anti-immigrant sentiment stronger in the Netherlands

The **EU Profiler** has found that anti-immigrant sentiment is stronger in the Netherlands than most of the remaining 26 EU member states, writes AD. Around 550,000 voters in the EU filled in the survey at the EU Profiler website, whose intention is to help inform voters which party's platforms bear the most resemblance to their own views. A total of 108,000 Dutch citizens filled in the survey, a disproportionately large number because the concept of the EU Profiler originated in the Netherlands.

In answer to the statement "Immigration to my country should be restricted", more than 55 percent of Dutch respondents agreed, or agreed strongly. Only the islands of Malta and Cyprus, which are being swamped with large numbers of boat refugees, had higher figures. Just over five percent of Dutch respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, the lowest percentage in Europe.

Cocaine fuelled the credit crisis

De Volkskrant presents an original theory to explain the credit crisis: "It was partially caused by excessive cocaine use amongst bankers." In a speech given last week to 600 bankers at the Luxembourg Financial Forum, Dutch trend watcher Adjiedj Bakas told the bankers: "Now you should end your coke habit." In an interview with de Volkskrant, Mr Bakas says that while working on his book *Beyond the Crisis* everyone he spoke to on Wall Street told him the same thing. In certain circles on Wall Street a hectic style of life is dominant.

"More profit, and more, and more. That drove people to use cocaine. One of the biggest drawbacks of cocaine is that people suddenly take enormous risks...The traders kept on playing the pyramid game while they knew that it would crash." Mr Bakas says: "It is indeed the first time that someone has told a room full of bankers to do something about their coke habit. However, people have been whispering about it for a long time."

Mr Bakas said he also made a plea for "a feminisation of the branch. Ninety percent of the people in the hall were men and ten percent women. Would this crisis have occurred if the proportion was the reverse? I don't think so. Women take less risks than men do. Insurers have known that for a long time. If they invest, they do it more cautiously and book better results in the long term."

De Volkskrant asked Mr Bakas if he had any more "wise lessons". "I also told the bankers that the pinstripe suit will soon be out of fashion... The banking sector has been considered very sexy since the 1980s. That is why everyone, even politicians, wanted a pinstripe suit. When I said that the bankers were astonished: have we really become so unpopular?"

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