7,000 Lankans back home: The first batch of more than 7,000 Sri Lankan refugees from camps in southern India returned to the island on Tuesday on board an Indian vessel, officials said. AFP reports from Colombo.

The MV Nicobar brought the first batch of 1,058 people to the northeastern port of Trincomalee on the first stage of a fresh repatriation scheme supervised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), officials said.

Bomb defused in Belfast: Soldiers early yesterday defused a bomb, apparently planted by Protestant extremists, outside a bar in the Belfast's Catholic Falls Road district, police said, AP reports from Belfast,

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. But official sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the 4.5pound (2 kg) bomb outside the Rock Bar appeared to be the work of the Ulster Volunteer Force.

Row over Shaka Day in SA: Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini lacks the authority to cancel tribal celebrations for a legendary ancestor, nationalist leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi says, AP reports from Ulundi.

The defiant tone by Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party, could heighten tensions within South African's largest tribe on the eve of its most important holiday - the Shaka Day festivities honouring the 19th century warrior king.

Zhirinovsky denied visa: Nationalist Russian politician Vladimir Zhirmovsky has been denied an entry visa to Norway because of his behaviour on past foreign visits, the foreign ministry said on Wednesday, Al' reports from Stavanger.

'It is because of the threatening and offensive remarks he has repeatedly made while abroad," said Norwegian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ingvard Havnen

Cabinet shake-up in Chile: President Eduardo Frei shook up his cabinet Tuesday, replacing his Foreign Affairs, Interior and Education ministers and Chief of Staff. AFP reports from Santiago.

It was the first change in his coalition government since he assumed office six months ago.

Cambodian talks resume: Negotiations to secure the release of three western hostages being held by Khmer Rouge guerillas in Southern Cambodia have resumed a senior army commander said yesterday. Renter reports from Phnom Penh The commander, closely involved in efforts to free the

three asked not to be named but confirmed they were still alive and that a food parcel had been delivered on Monday for the foreigners. The rebels were now again demanding a cash ransom, the commander said after dropping an initial demand for money in favour of seeking political concessions.

Irish troops leave Somalia: The final contingent of Irish troops which had been serving in the United Nations forces in Somalia arrived in Dublin on Tuesday night, government sources said, AFP reports from Dublin.

The 81 members of the Irish second transport company had been stationed in the Horn of Africa nation as part of the UN mission to bring relief supplies and seek to restore peace. and worked closely with the Indian and French contingents.

CIS summit on Oct 21: The next Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit, originally set for October 6, will be held in Moscow on October 21 at the request of Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, the Russian news agency Interfax reported on Tuesday, AFP says from Moscow.

The Ukrainian embassy in Moscow said the summit would have clashed with celebrations in the Ukraine of the 50th an niversary of liberation from German occupation.

UN advance team in Guatemala: A UN advance team arrived on Tuesday to ensure the army and guerillas keep their pledge to end atrocities. AP reports from Guatemala City

The accord, reached March 29, is the biggest breakthrough yet in efforts to end the 34-year-old civil war. The advance team will pave the way for a permanent UN observer mission, set to arrive within weeks under a 7.4 million dollar allocation by the United Nations. Team leader Leon ardo Franco, an Argentine, came To-sday with 10 observers

Cholera claims 7000 this year: Cholera has killed more people so far this year than in the whole of last year, including 4.181 in Zaire's refugee camps according to the latest World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, AFP reports from Geneva.

So far more than 7,000 people have died of the disease this year, compared to 6.781 in 1993. But Maria Neria, the doctor coordinating the WHO's fight against cholera, warned against over reacting to the figures.

Liberia's condition worsens: Aid organisations and officials of the African peacekeeping force claim there has been a serious worsening in the humanitarian conditions in Liberia since fighting flared up last month, AFP reports from Monrovia.

A resumption in fighting in mid-August has sent thousands of refugees fleeing the country where some 150,000 people are thought to have been killed since a civil war started in December 1989

US court upholds anti-porn law: A US federal appeals court reinstated on Tuesday a law requiring people who produce sexually explicit films and photographs to keep records of the names and ages of their actors or models. AP reports from Washington.

The appeals court also ruled that the law could be applied to producers outside the United States. A three-judge panel of the US Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia said the law, the Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act of 1988, and regulations linked to it do not violate freespeech rights.

13 die in Mexican mishap: Thirteen people were killed and another 27 injured on Tuesday when a train slammed into a bus in the central state of Mexico, officials said, AFP reports from Mexico City.

With a train speeding toward the bus, its driver tried to make it across train tracks near the Palmillas highway outside Mexico City first, officials said. But the train slammed into the bus and dragged for several metres (yards), a spokesman for the Mexico state highway police said

Biggest military contract with Paris

Pakistan to buy 3 French subs

ISLAMABAD. Sept 21: Pakistan has decided to buy three French-built Agosta 90-B submarines complete with technology transfers for around one billion dollars, officials and reliable sources said here today, reports AFP.

The deal will be one of the biggest military contracts ever concluded by Pakistan.

The package calls for improvements to Karachi dockvards where one of the three submarines will be built using French technology. A memorandum of under-

standing is expected to be signed on Wednesday during an official visit to Pakistan by French Defence Minister Francois Leotard, official sources quoted by the daily The News said.

France and Britain were the only competitors left in the race which began more than two years ago and also in-

cluded China. Sweden and the Netherlands. Britain had proposed selling its upholder class submarines which are in serviced with the Royal Navy.

According to reliable sources, the deal with France will also include the sale of SM 39 sea-to-sea missiles built by French group Aerospatiale.

The missiles are considered more effective than the Exocet, which proved itself during the Falklands conflict. and their sale to France would be the first to any foreign country, the sources said.

According to the sources France clinched the deal with its commitment to transfer technology to Islamabad, a key demand of the Pakistan navy.

One submarine will be built at the Cherbourg naval dockyard, west France, and delivered within four to five years. A second will be constructed

US soldiers guarding the main gates to the Port-au-Prince harbour look on as a Haitian

Ban on protests in Haiti

Meanwhile US troops con-

tinued to pour, into the coun-

try, including 1,800 marines

from the US Wasp who landed

earlier in the day in Cap

Haitien, 260 kilometers (160

some 6,000 US troops were

expected in the country by

midnight. Most of them in

instructions to leave the job of

maintaining order in the city

to the Haitian police and mili-

tiated by former President

Jimmy Carter, Haiti's military

leaders are supposed to step

down no later than October

15, clearing the way for

Under an agreement nego-

The US troops are under

US military officials said

miles) north of here.

Port-au-Prince.

Aristide's return.

policeman swings his baton to disperse Haitians on Tuesday.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Sept 21:

Haiti's defacto government is-

sued a ban on street protests

late Tuesday, saying it was

acting to avert a bloodbath in

the wake of a US intervention

to restore democracy, reports

with clubs dispersed protests

by supporters of exiled Pre-

sident Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

beating one man to death, as

well-known sector of the

population are profiting from

the presence of the US

amilitary cooperation mission to

resume their subversive acti-

vities with the goal of leading

the country to chaos," the

The statement issued by

"Professional agitators of a

US troops stood by.

government said.

The ban came after police

in Cherbourg but assembled in Karachi and the third will be fully-built in Karachi.

Pakistan will then be in a position to construct its own submarines.

Pakistan's main concern in buying submarines is to prevent any blockade of Karachi. the country's main seaport, which could severely damage the economy within a few weeks. The most likely threat coming from India, diplomats said.

France had already become a major supplier of military hardware to Pakistan which has operated two Agosta submarines since the 1970s and four Daphne-class submarines since the late 1960s.

France has also supplied 100 Mirage Jets, Puma and Lama helicopters for the country's air force as well as Breguet-Atlantique naval patrol aircraft.

- AFP photo

Haitian military, saying it al-

non-governmental organisa-

tions at the United Nations.

was referring to the deal

reached in Post-au-Prince on

Sunday that he said would al-

low the military to take an

"early and honurable retire-

ment" under a general

said, adding that these were

the men whose forces mur-

dered, tortured and raped and

who shot or beat to death

more than 3.000 unarmed

lowing such men and their

forces to escape justice," he

amnesty had been a stumbling

"Where is the honour in al-

The reference to an

Haitians.

"This is unacceptable," Sane

Pierre Sane, in a speech to

lowed killers to go free.

The new Agosta submarines have a maximum underwater speed of 17 knots and can be used at a maximum depth of 320 meters (1040 feet). The submarine will be equipped with an air independent propulsion system which doubles the length of the time it can stay submerged.

Sweden had offered to supply its T-96 type Gotland submarines currently in service with the Australian navy. But an internal debate erupted about selling such vessels to what was considered "conflict risk zone."

The offer was shelved ear lier this year.

China had proposed to sell its S-20 submarines and latecomer, the Netherlands, had offered Moray type submarines. But neither country was considered a serious contender in the deal.

Taiwan may

suspend

cultural link

with China

may suspend sporting and

cultural links with China be-

cause of Beijing's hostility to

President Lee Teng-hui atten-

ding next month's Asian Ga-

mes, officials said Wednesday,

The government also may

declare Tang Shubei, an official

of China's body that handles

links with Taiwan, persona

non grata for remarks he made

last week, Yeh Chin-fong, vice

chairman of the Mainland

Affairs Council, told legislators.

vice chairman on the council.

said. "The government will

consider suspending sports

and cultural links because of

the Chinese Communists' un-

Carter meets ROK.

DPRK envoys

separately

Former President Jimmy Car-

ter has been holding separate

meetings with representatives

from North and South Korea at

the Carter Center in Atlanta,

Georgia, The State Department

The former president had

been instrumental in defusing

a confrontation between the

United States and North Korea

earlier this year, and on

Sunday reached an accord with

Haiti's military leaders that

man Michael McCurry con-

firmed that Carter met with

the North Korean ambassador

to the United Nations Monday

and the South Korean amba-

sue in the past as you know

and we welcome that," said

Volcanoes rage for

3rd day around

Papuan city

Two volcanoes raged for third

day Wednesday around the

devastated port city of Rabaul,

and officials warned residents

in nearby coastal villages of a

new possible danger - tidal

Commission used its shortwave

radio service to warn residents

to take cover if they noticed a

sudden drop in the sea level.

an early sign of tidal waves.

rise again, and tidal waves

could happen," the broadcasts

fessor at the University of

Papua New Guinea, said con-

tinuous earthquakes for vol-

canic eruptions could trigger

the huge waves, but none had

been reported as of Wed-

nesday.

"The water will definitely

Hugh Davies, a geology pro-

also known as tsunamis.

The National Broadcasting

waves, reports AP.

PORT MORESBY, Sept 21:

"He has worked on that is-

State Department spokes-

averted a US invasion.

ssador on Tuesday.

McCurry.

said on Tuesday, reports AFP.

WASHINGTON, Sept 21

friendly moves."

Kao Koong-lian, another

reports AP.

TAIPEI, Sept 21: Taiwan

Algerian talks fail

ALGIERS, Sept 21: A fourth round of talks aimed at ending Algeria's Islamic insurgency closed in failure on Tuesday. with no agreement on a final communique and no date set for a future meeting, a source

said, reports AP. The result contrasted with the high expectations for the closed-door meeting following President Liamine Ze oual's decision to move the nation's top two Islamic leaders from a military prison to house arrest to encourage progress.

But the Islamic Salvation Front was absent from the closed-door session between five opposition parties and Zeroual Abassi Madani, head of the

banned group, and his deputy. Ali Belhadj, are thought to hold the key to ending 2 and half years of violence that has left at least 10,000 people dead. Participants at the 11-hour

close to the negotiations, who

session decided to "continue the dialogue on a bilateral level," according to the source

spoke on condition of anonymity.

There had been reports a truce was in the making, but violence has continued.

An armed group commandeered a train on Monday in the Berber region of Kabyle. forcing the passengers off and setting it afire. On Sunday night, a commando set off bombs in the city hall of Bab Ezzouar, near Algiers, partially destroying it. Security forces said 21 armed Islamic mili tants were killed over the weekend.

A Salvation Front official said Madani and Belhadj, who were released from prison last week and placed under house arrest in a secret location. would not attend negotiations because, they considered themselves still jailed.

Madani and Belhadi want "total liberty, the rehabilitation of their party, the liberation of all their leaders" the unidentified official was quoted on Tuesday as saving in the EL Hiwar newspaper

Off the Record

Murayama doll soon to go on sale

TOKYO: Sometimes it seems like Japan's Socialist Party will try anything to get ahead. First it allied with its arch-en emy to get its leader the prime ministership. Then it jettisoned almost all of its basic policies, reports AP. What could be next?

Announcing the official Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama doll, soon to go on sale at Socialist Party offices everywhere.

A limited edition of 1,000 dolls, complete with the prime minister's trademark bushy eyebrows, will be available starting next month for 1,800 yen (dlrs 18).

And buyers better hurry. Already 100 people have called the party to reserve their doll.

It's the brainchild of party public-relations man Hiroshi Imai, who's doing his best to promote Murayama's motto of "politics gentle to people."

2 elderly sisters die together

DOYLESTOWN: For 10 years, the two elderly sisters lived together and took care of each other. When constant health problems convinced them it was impossible to go on, they decided to die together, reports AP.

Ardys Van Horne, 83, and Kathryn Lachner, 82, were found shot to death Sunday in their two-bedroom apartment in what authorities ruled a murder-suicide.

A note on the dresser indicated the women had planned their deaths.

"Life has become a daily battle with aches and pains, and the frustrations of trying to cope with unending health problems," the note read. "We don't feel that the Lord meant us to end our days this way."

"Since euthanasia is denied us in America, we are taking the only available wayout.

Authorities say Van Horne shot her sister once in the ch est with a .38-caliber handgun, then fired two shots into her own chest.

The women were known as "The Sisters" at the Pine Run Retirement Community, where they had lived together since each became a widow about 10 years ago.

Molestation charge to go

LOS ANGELES: Prosecutors have decided not to file child molestation charges against Michael Jackson, the Los Angeles Times reported yesterday, reports AP. Jackson was accused in a civil lawsuit of molesting a 13

year-old boy he befriended while the two pursued their friendship in Los Angeles and at dackson's "Neverland" ranch in Santa Barbara County.

Prosecutors are likely to say they considered the teenager, now 14, a credible witness - but he has declined to testify, unidentified sources told the Times.

The sources said an announcement was expected vesterday. Larry Feldman, the

teenager's lawyer, told the Times he met with prosecutors from Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties Monday. He would not disclose what was said. "I believe a statement

will be made shortly outlining the district attorneys position," Feldman said. Los Angeles District

Attorney Gil Garcetti said Tuesday that a decision would be made "very soon. but he would not be more specific. Santa Barbara District Attorney Tom Sneddon also declined to say anything more. Jackson, 35, has been

under investigation by both district attorneys since August 1993. There has be-

marriage to Lisa Marie Presley Although Jackson denies any wrongdoing and has not been criminally charged, he reportedly reached a multimillion dol

en renewed interest in the investigation after his May

lar settlement in the civil suit with the teenager and his fam

information minister Jacques block in all negotiations with Reuter from UN says: The Sanint-Louis said all public the Haitian military over the Secretary-General of Amnesty demonstrations were banned International on Tuesday past two years, with Aristide in to avoid "chaos and a bloodbath sharply criticised the Clinton the past having blaked over so wanted by some in the administration's deal with the blanket amnesty. US envoy shuttles from Syria

to Israel for ME peace

that the gaps in positions were

JERUSALEM, Sept 21: A top US envoy shuttled from Damascus to Jerusalem on Tuesday, trying to keep up the momentum toward a peace accord between Israel and Syria.

reports AP. US envoy Dennis Ross arrived Tuesday after meeting earlier in the day with Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, meanwhile, confirmed Tuesday for the first time that quiet contacts have been taking place through the Syrian and Israeli ambassadors to Washington.

"There are no secret negotiations. There are meetings with the ambassadors, and things of this sort." Peres told reporters. However. Peres suggested

still wide. "For yow, it is clear that there is a definite will to make peace, but no definite way to achieve it," he said. Ross, the US peace coordi-

nator, said after meeting with Assad for six hours on Tuesday that the two had discussed the issues "at great length and de-

Ross said he felt there was a lot of seriousness about achieving peace and "we'll be working in that direction. At the core of the dispute

are the Golan Heights captured

by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war. Syria wants Israel to commit itself to a complete withdrawal before discussing the type of peace it envisions. Earlier this month. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said he

the Golan immediately, without uprooting a Jewish settlement, to be followed by a three-year testing period in which the two countries would establish normal relations. Only then would the final line of withdrawal be negotiated. Israeli officials have said

was ready to give up a slice of

that Syria has not rejected the proposal outright. However, Syria reportedly wants Israel to dismantle at least one Jewish settlement in the first stage as a proof of Israeli in-

The Syrians also want the second stage to be completed in two years rather than three. with normalisation only starting toward the end of the pullout phase.

Junta's talks with Suu Kyi may ease political impasse

YANGON, Sept 21: The first official meeting between the country's ruling junta and detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi sparked some optimism Wednesday that Myanmar's political impasse could be eased, reports AP.

Hopes arose because the meeting Tuesday was widely reported in the official media and all participants were shown smiling in the televised

It was the first face-to-face meeting between junta leaders and the 49-year-old Suu Kyi since the Nobel Peace Prize winner was placed under house arrest in July 1989.

Analysts say tensions in military-ruled Myanmar will continue until some kind of compromise can be reached

between the widely popular democracy leader and the

tary," said a senior politician. who demanded anonymity.

insist that their names not be used when discussing politics for fear of punishment by the repressive regime.

All three official newspapers published accounts and photographs Wednesday of the meeting, which official sources

"We are very glad to see Aung San Suu Kyt is in good health and we hope that the meeting might produce posi-

tive results," said two school teachers on their way to classrooms carrying Wednesday's newspapers.

A brief television report Tuesday showed Gen Than Shwe, chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council. meeting with a smiling Suu-Kyi, who was wearing a

the Defence Ministry guest-

Suu Kvi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Prize for her non-violent promotion of democracy, looked slim and healthy. US Rep Bill Richardson of

New Mexico, who in February became the first outsider to visit Suu Kyi during her extended house arrest, said he was encouraged by Tuesday's

News Analysis

pink traditional Myanmar "I hope they are more than jacket with matching pink just good public relations. hope they get into her release

Yangon, lobbied hard with

encouraged at the time by their response. But after his departure, prospects for such a meeting turned elusive. Richardson said he would return to Yangon in November ,to meet again with the junta

junta leaders to begin a dia-

logue with Suu Kyi, and was

and Suu Kyi. Myanmar officials had said last month a meeting was in

the works after a Buddhist monk, the Revered Revata Dhamma, served as a go-between in separate meetings with Than She. Khin Nyunt and Suu Kyi.

Revata Dhamma, the spiritual leader of a Buddhist community in Birmingham, Engdand, was the second outsider after Richardson to be allowed to visit Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi's

British husband and two sons have been allowed regular

According to the monk. both Suu Kyi and the junta leaders were eager for national reconciliation and agreed to meet for dialogue to settle the political stalemate in the country.

The junta has held power since violently suppressing pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988. Stru Kyi was detained for allegedly endangering public security in 1989.

After her National League for Democracy party won a landslide victory in a 1990 general election, it refused to allow the winning parliamentarians take their seats, and has continued to stamp out all dissent.

Abiola's health deteriorates

LAGOS. Sept 21: The trea son trial of Nigeria's would be president. Moshood Abiola was set to resume on Wednesday as defence lawyers scrambled to get the hearing halted and to secure his release on health grounds, reports AFP.

For the third time this month, the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) raised the alarm, saying the millionaire businessman's health had deteriorated again

Traces of blood had been found in his urine during the latest medical examinations on Friday. NMA doctors said

They added that he had lost the use of his right leg and risked paralysis unless he were admitted to hospital for treat-

scheduled 1.1th day in orbit.

landed on Monday, but thunderstorms and thick clouds forced it to spend an un-Some patches of blue were visible through the clouds on Tuesday, boosting the confi-

Discovery lands

safely

21 : Six astronauts brought the

space shuttle Discovery down

safely in California on Tuesday

after two days of bad weather

kept them from landing in

Discovery glided to a touch-

The shuttle was to have

down at 5:12 PM (2112

GMT) with navy Captain Dick

Florida, reports Reuter.

Richards at the controls.

CAPE CANAVERAL, Sept

dence of ground controllers. but rain surrounding the Kennedy Space Centre eventually prompted the switch of anding sites.

"This is a positive move to-

ward peaceful settlement of the political stalemate between Aung San Suu Kyl and the mili-Most people in Myanmar

said lasted about one and a half

longyi, a type of sarong. Also present was Lt Gen Khin Nyunt, the secretary who is reputed to be the actual power behind the junta. The report did not give any details of the meeting, held at

house in Yangon.

Associated Press in Bangkok.

and an eventual political role for the opposition," he said speaking by phone from his Washington office to The Richardson, in his visit to