Off the Record

NASA delays launch of shuttle: NASA said Friday it has indefinitely delayed the launch of the endeavour because o-ring seals were damaged by heat in the last two launches. AFP reports from Cape Camaveral Florida.

The 1986 explosion of the Challenger shuttle with seven astronauts board was attributed to faulty o-rings in the solid rocket boosters.

Diarrhoea claims 12 in Indonesia: An outbreak of diarrhoea in the east Javanese district of Lumajang has killed 12 people, and 253 others have been hospitalized, a newspaper in Jakarta reported yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The diarrhoea outbreak, which struck the sub-districts of Senduro, Ranuvoso and Klakah, first came to official attention in early July the Kompas Daily cited a local health official as saying.

UN to reduce troops in Lebanon: The Security Council voted unanimously Friday to reduce its peacekeeping force in Lebanon by 10 per cent and ex-

tend the mandate of the mission by six months, AP reports

from United Nations. The cuts would save 10 million dlrs a year. UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in a report to

the council earlier this month.

from London.

22 hurt in Turkey prison riot Leftist inmates armed with clubs and bottles took over a prison in this western town on Friday, clashing with soldiers and leaving 20 people injured before calm was restored, the Anatolia news agency said. AP reports from Buca. Turkey.

The prisoners, members of the leftist urban guerilla group Dev Sol, or Revolutionary Left, started an uprising during the prison's roll call. They took eight security officials hostage.

British Defence Secy to visit US: British Defence Secretary Michael Protillo will travel to Washington Monday for a series of talks on the Bosnian conflict, the Ministry of Defence said Friday. AFP reports

Portillo will hold talks with his US counterpart William Perry and other US administration officials as well as with Senate majority leader Robert Dole who was behind Wednesday's vote in favour of lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia Herzegovina.

2 Rajneesh followers found guilty: A federal jury on Friday found two former followers of freelove Guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh guilty of conspiracy to commit murder in a 1985 plot to kill a federal prosecutor. Reuter reports from Portland, Oregon.

Sally-Anne Croft and Susan Hagan, British citizens who were extradited to the United States last year after a four year fight, face possible life sentences after being convicted in the plot, which was never carried out.

4 die in Australian plane crash: All four people aboard a light plane were killed when it crashed near the town of Wagga 400 km (250 miles) southwest of Sydney, police said yesterday, Reuter reports from Sydney.

The wreckage of the twin engined Ceassna 310, reported missing on Friday was found early on Saturday strewn over a wide area.

King Hussein to visit Egypt: King Hussein of Jordan is to visit Egypt and hold talks with President Hosni Mubarak in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria on Tuesday, Jordanian diplomats said Friday, AFP reports from Cairo.

They had indicated earlier that the two leaders would discuss improving bilateral relations restoring Arab solidarity and all tracks of the Middle East Peace process.

Angolans condole Pedle's death: Over 10.000 Angolan people including Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos and parliament Speaker Franca Vandunem, Friday went to the Luanda provincial building to express their condolences on the death of Defence Minister General Pedro Maria Tonha Pedale. Xinhua reports from Luanda.

Pedale died in London on July 22 at the age of 54. His remains were transported to Luanda Thursday. Pedale took part in Angola's struggle against the Portuguese colonialism and for the independence of the country in his early years. Since 1980 he has assumed the post of defence min-

Ghali for extending Haiti mission: The United Nations should extend its mission in Haiti to maintain stability until the nation's next president is inaugurated in February, the UN chief said Friday, AP reports from United Nations.

In his progress report UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said the mission has made "significant progress" toward achieving its goals: sustaining the security established by the US-led force, retraining Haiti's security and police forces, and creating the conditions for free and fair elections.

Khmers suffer heavy casualties: Khmer Rouge guerillas have suffered heavy casualties while retaking parts of areas taken from them by government forces, Co-Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh said

Saturday, AP reports from Phnom Penh. The government July 5 declared it had taken the Khmer Rouge base of Kla Ngorp, close to Cambodia's northwest border with Thailand significantly improving security for border trade.

Ireland frees 12 more IRA men: Ireland on Saturday released another 12 Irish Republican Army prisoners early in an bid to restart the stalled

Northern Ireland peace process, AP reports from Dublin. The latest release from Ireland's top-security Portaoise Prison reduces the population of IRA members imprisoned in the Irish Republic to 23. Irish officials indicated they want Britain to reciprocate by releasing some of the 300 IRA members it holds behind bars.

Polls aimed at impressing the West

Kashmiri leaders reject Delhi's move to hold elections

SRINAGAR, India, July 29: Kashmir leaders have rejected India's plans to hold elections in the strife-torn region saying they were aimed more at impressing the West than finding a solution to its problems, reports Reuter.

In June, India extended New Delhi's direct rule over Jammu and Kashmir, the largely Hindu nation's only Muslim-majority state, saying it planned to hold elections to start the democratic process afresh.

Rebels have been waging a five-year rebellion against New Delhi and militancy in the state is rampant. Some militant groups want independence, others want to join neighbouring Pakistan. which disputes Kashmir.

"The current crisis in Kashmir is a direct offspring of election, therefore elections are not an answer to the problems," Abdul Ghani, a senior leader of the separatist multi-party Hurriyat (freedom) conference told Reuters.

Armed rebellion broke out in Kashmir in 1990 after a steady build up of resentment against New Delhi's ruling Congress Party and the locally-popular national conference, which formed an electoral alliance in 1987. Police and hospital

killed since violence erupted in the state. India accuses Pakistan of fomenting separatism in Kashmir and aiding and abet-

German top model Claudia Schiffer (R) and (2nd R to L) Helena Christiansen, Clara

Bruni and Elle McPherson pose Friday, after they gave a joint press conference to present

'US won't block further private

visits by Taiwan President'

next week in Brunei with

Chinese Foreign Minister

period of difficulty in this

important relationship."

Christopher said in a speech

in exposing human rights

abuses in China, particularly

within the prison system. He

spent 19 years in labour

camps before emigrating to

was arrested June 19 as he

tried to enter China from

Chinese released a videotape

purporting to show Wu con-

fessing to inaccuracies in a

BBC documentary on abuses

ought "to be some skepticism

about all the statements that

Christopher said there

The 58-year-old activist

Earlier this week, the

the United States in 1985.

Wu has played a major role

at the National Press Club.

"We're going through a

Qian Qichen.

Kazakhstan.

in China.

the "Portugal Fashion 95", in Portugal yesterday evening.

WASHINGTON, July 29:

The Clinton administration

will not try to block further

private visits to the Unites

States by Taiwan President

Lee Teng-hui, Secretary of

said Friday, reports AP.

one-China policy."

alma mater, in June.

State Warren Christopher

Christopher sought to reas-

sure Chinese government in

Beijing that the Unites States

"has not and does not intend

to change its longstanding

which insists that Taiwan is

part of China, reacted harshly

to the decision to permit Lee

to visit Cornell University, his

and the arrest by China of

Harry Wu, a Chinese-born

human rights activist who is

now a US citizen, will be the

top items on the agenda

when Christopher meets

US policy toward Taiwan

The Beijing government,

At the same time,

DE TEXTEIS EM

sources say more than

20,000 people have been

ting the militants. Islamabad says it gives only moral and diplomatic support.

"Elections are a futile exercise aimed more at impressing the West by telling them that democratic process has been started in the state," Hurriyat president Mirwaiz Omar Faroog said.

Plans to hold elections this month fell through after a shrine to Kashmir's patron saint. Sheikh Nooruddinwali. at Charar-e-Sharief was burnt down in May. India accused militants of razing the shrine. but the guerillas blamed the Indian army.

Faroou said elections would be a futile exercise as India continued to shy away from the core issue - that Kashmir is a region disputed between India and Pakistans.

- AFP/UNB Photo

are made on the tape."

The secretary of state re-

peated the administration's

call for the early release of

Wu, saying: "I hope it will

happen in the near future,

although I don't want to

make any predictions on that

score, nor would I want to

official said that he had

"absolutely no evidence" to

support speculation that Wu

would be released before

by August 1, it will be on the

agenda," said the official, who

spoke only on condition of

also includes two days in

Vietnam, where the secretary

will open the US Embassy in

Hanoi and receive remains of

Americans missing since the

Christopher's trip to Asia

"If in fact he's not released

Christopher meets Qian.

anonymity.

Vietnam War.

A senior State Department

set any kind of a deadline."

ASSOCIAÇÃO PORTUGUESA

There needs to be a change of heart. India first has to accept that Kashmiris have rebelled against its ad ministration. The core issue

have died, have given their blood for a cause, not for elections." Faroog said. adding that until India and Pakistan sorted out their differences over Kashmir and involved Kashmiris in their talks no solution could be

fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir, since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

lindia has deployed tens of thousands of paramilitary and army troopers in Kashmir to fight the militants.

India tightens safety measures at N-power plant

nuclear scientists have tightened safety measures at a state-run atomic power plant following a leak of radioactive water from its waste disposal unit in April. officials said Friday, reports AFP.

A number of precautions have been taken to ensure against future leaks at the waste immobilisation plant of the Tarapur Atomic Power Plant. some 100 kilometres (62 miles) from Bombay, they

"We have stepped up our monitoring frequencies. The plant is ready for operations once again," said A N Prasad. director of the stat-owned Bhaba Atomic Research Centre which runs the 160megawatt Tarapur Atomic

Nigerian junta arrests another HR activist

pdown on free speech, re

Clement Nwankwo, director of the Constitutional Rights Project, issued a statement from hiding. He said the mili tary government was hunting down activists on fabricated charges that they planned to storm the Kirikiri Prison in Lagos Friday night to free coup plot suspects.

Human rights activists and heads of state worldwide have been pleading with Nigerian ruler Gen. Sani Abacha to ease the sentences against 40 people convicted to plotting to overthrow the government.

Libya blasts UN for maintaining sanctions

tions only reinforce the certainty that the UN and its assemblies have lost their credibility in the eyes of all — AFP/UNB photo nations," it said.

has to be discussed," he said. "The 20,000 people who

India and Pakistan have

BOMBAY, July 29: Indian

LAGOS, Nigeria, July 29: Another leading Nigerian human rights activist has been arrested in the military government's renewed clamports AP

Abdul Oroh, director of the Civil Liberties Organisation, was taken from his offices in Lagos by security agents Friday.

Shortly before his arrest

LONDON, July 29: The Libyan authorities have at tacked as illegal and unjust a decision by the UN Security Council Friday to maintain sanctions against Libya, BBC monitoring said, reports AFP The officially-sanctioned

Libyan television said late Friday, in a report monitored in London by the BBC, that the UN Security Council decision Friday destroyed the UN's credibility, showing it was controlled by the western powers.

"Similar unjustified resolu-

Sexy secrets of Di's bedroom

LONDON: Buckingham Palace will try to stop a former employees of the Prince and Princess of Wales profiting from publication of details of the couple's private life, a spokesman for the British royal family said early Saturday.

reports AFP The royal family would take "all steps" to stop the former employee cashing in, the spokesman said.

The royals decided to act after it emerged that the US tabloid magazine Star planned to publish extracts from a book based on the diaries of former housekeeper Wendy Berry next week

A spokesman for the prince told the press association domestic news agency he expected the book to contain "tittle-tattle from a disloyal former employee."

Star Magazine, published in New York state, said it would serialise excerpts from the book, entitled "The Housekeeper's Diary," in two parts.

The first, headlined "Sexy Secrets of Di's Bedroom" is to be published next week. A second extract will follow a week later.

Shy Jackson shows all

LOS ANGELES: The King of Pop is keeping his crown jewels to himself. Michael Jackson, whose talent for controversy seems keener these days than his hit-making ability, reportedly did a nude scene in his new video, "You Are Not Alone," that revealed his genitals, reports AP.

But the peek of his privates was hastily removed by a costly computer process before the video's TV debut scheduled for Friday night. Daily Variety and the Los Angeles Times reported.

Angel wings were added at the same time, Variety said. Neither newspaper said who called for the changes.

The video was scheduled to premiere as part of a halfhour Jackson special shown simultaneously on ABC and cable channels MTV and BET.

"Jacko Gains Wing, Loses Ding" was Variety's merry headline earlier this week.

'Miss ugliness'

BRASILIA, Brazil: Wanted: homely women. Only the really ugly need apply. A poor northeastern town is promoting a lack-of-beauty pageant, with contestants competing for the title of "Miss Ugliness," the Meridional news agency reported Friday, says AP.

The contest will be held Saturday at the Municipal Club of Sao Vicente de Ferrer, about 1,380 miles (2,220 kilometres) northeast of Brasilia. The winner gets a used bicycle and the equivalent of 220 dollars.

A local promoter, Jose Pereira, came up with the idea as a dubious tribute to his wife, who is among the contestants. Mayor Flavio Regis pledged the town's support. Pereira said he offered to hire make-up consultants for

the contestants, but that many didn't want help. "My wife wants to compete without make-up to win the title," Pereira was quoted as saying.

ASEAN, Papua New Guinea slam French N-test plan

BADAR SERI BEGAWAN. Brunei July 29: The South Pacific nation of Papua New Guinea on Saturday condemned French plans for nuclear testing in its neighbourhood and warned that the world's first environmental refugees could well come from the region, reports AP.

The condemnation by a Papua New Guinea government minister came in a speech to the foreign ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations, or ASEAN, which itself is planning to officially deplore the French plan.

"We do not need any scientific studies to tell us about the safety or dangers of nuclear testing nor about the rising sea level and the general destruction of our environment," said Albert Kipalan, minister for lands and physical planning.

He said developed countries should now reassess their contribution to the destruction of the environment. "It nothing is done to assist the small South Pacific states, we can expect the first environmental refugees to come from their region.

Although Papua New Guinea is not part of the ASEAN, it holds an observer status in the club comprising Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam. The foreign ministers of

the seven nations, who began their annual meeting here Saturday, plan to call on France — without naming it to desist from testing nuclear devices in the Murorua Atoll in French Polynesia. In a draft communique,

the foreign ministers "called on all nuclear weapons states to desist from testing nuclear devices."

HR group accuses Kuwait of driving out nomadic Arabs

NICOSIA. July 29: A USbased human rights group on Saturday accused Kuwait of systematically discriminating against hundreds of thousands of stateless Arabs in a bid to drive them out of the country, reports AFP.

The government's treatment of the stateless Arabs know as the Bidoon "amounts to a policy of apartheid, harassment and intimidation," which has worsened since Kuwait was liberated in February 1991 after seven months of Iraqi occupation. Human Rights Watch-Middle East charged.

Tens of thousands of Bidoons who fled Kuwait during that time have been barred from returning and

become stateless," the New York-based group said in the report received in Cyprus.

After decades of treating Bidoons, which means "without" in Arabic, as citizens and promising them citizenship, the government 10 years ago embarked on "a policy of mass firings and summary deportation." it

"The Bidoon were declared illegal residents of the only country they ever knew," according to the report. called the Bidoons of Kuwait: citizens without citizenship.

"The denial of their right to lawful residence, employment, travel and movement contravene basic principles of human rights and international law," it said.

Calcutta bldg

Suu Kyi accepts post of UNESCO special adviser

PARIS, July 29: Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has accepted in principle the post of UNESCO special adviser on democracy and human rights a UNESCO statement said Friday, reports AFP.

The statement said UNESCO director genera Fedrico Mayor had asked the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner to be his special adviser and "she accepted in principle on July 20."

Federico Mayor has long been' trying to obtain Aung San Suu Kyi's release, the statement added.

ASEAN welcomes communist Vietnam as its new member navy blue caps hoisted the members in dealing with a BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN. from the six other members. Vietnamese flag - a yellow common adversary. China, among countries claiming the founding fathers to make it a Brunei, July 29: The formalised the admission by

Association of Southeast signing the ASEAN declara- star on red background - as which has disputes with sev- Spratlys, a Philippine state club of all 10 Southeast Asian Asian Nations ASEAN, born 28 years ago partly as a bulwark against the spread of communism in the region. welcomed its first communist member, Vietnam, on Friday, reports AP.

"You are just across the water from us and for too long we have been distant strangers," said Brunei Foreign Minister Mohamed Bolkiah in welcoming Vietnam as the seventh ASEAN member in a simple

ceremony. Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam, watched by counterparts

"As a full member of ASEAN, Vietnam undertakes to fulfill all obligations and responsibilities of a member country according to the targets, objectives, principles and regulations," Cam said.

In their speeches, foreign ministers from Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines also spoke glowingly of Vietnam. Later, the seven ministers walked outside to a tiled

pathway outside the

International Conference

Centre where three police-

man dressed in white and

a 39-member brass band played the Vietnamese national anthem.

A Muslim refugee woman from the besieged town of Zepa sits on the ground in the town

of Zenica on Friday where they are waiting to be moved to a permanent place to stay.

As the poorest member of ASEAN, Vietnam hopes to gain from the experience of the other members, among the world's fastest growing economies. ASEAN also expects to benefit by gaining a member nation with 72 million people, low-cost labour and abundant natural resources being harnessed by economic reforms and liberalisation despite a socialist government.

Vietnam's joining also is of strategic importance to other eral ASEAN members over the Spratly Islands, believed rich in oil and mineral resources, in the South China

In January, China seized a Philippine-held reef in the Spratlys, sending alarm signals in ASEAN. China and Taiwan claim the entire archipelago while the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam claim parts.

But signs of ASEAN cooperation are evident. On Friday. Siazon and Cam held a one-one-one meeting

and supported a 1992 ASEAN

declaration calling for non-

On Saturday and Sunday,

the foreign ministers will hold their annual conference and on Tuesday sit down again to talk about regional security with 12 other nations, including the United States and China. "With Vietnam in ASEAN

the foundations for enduring national security and stability have been strengthened more than ever before, Siazon said. "We have learned our lessons from the past The ray of peace is shining brightly in our region.

Vietnam's entry partly ful-

confrontational dialogue fills the goal of ASEAN's nations. In addition to the seven members, Cambodia and Laos have observer status and Myanmar has acceded to a friendship treaty, a mandatory clause for joining.

The initial objective of ASEAN when it was established on August 8, 1967. was to place regional reconciliation within an institutionalised structure of relations. At that time, Indonesia and Malaysia were locked in a confrontation and communism was feared to be spreading in Vietnam. Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines.

collapse toll rises to 25 NEW DELHI, July 29:

Nearly 25 people were killed when a portion of a fivestorey apartment block collapsed in the eastern Indian city of Calcutta on Friday. newspapers reported today. reports AFP. Six bodies had been re-

covered, and efforts were on to recover the others, domestic news agencies said. The Hindu newspaper said four people, including a 10month-old girl, were trapped in the debris. Residents were sleeping

when one of the wings of the 10-year-old building collapse early in the morning.