



This US Navy handout photo shows the tail section of Korean Air flight 801 standing at the crash site Wednesday on the US Pacific island of Guam after the plane crashed in the early morning hours. The plane carried 254 people, but 32 people are known to have survived.

Over 200 feared dead as Korean jet crashes in Guam

AGANA, Guam, Aug 6: A Korean Air jet carrying 254 people crashed and burned in a rainstorm early Wednesday, and rescuers who trudged through the jungle with flashlights found at least 35 survivors. US Navy crews tried to crack open the fuselage to see if anyone else could be saved, reports AP.

Flight 801, a Boeing 747 from Seoul, South Korea, was carrying mostly Korean tourists, including several couples on their honeymoon, when it went down in the lush green hills as it was coming in for a landing in the middle of the night. At least one Japanese and 13 Americans were on board.

There was a big ball of fire just before the crash, said Rudy Delos-Santos, reporter at radio station KOKU who lives near the crash site on Nimitz Hill, three miles (five kilometers) from the airport on this US island possession. "The plane plowed through the jungle for a minute or so before it came to a rest."

He said he ran to the area through the darkness and got within about 90 yards (80 metres) before law enforcement officials stopped him.

The fire was still going, and I could see the silhouettes of bodies in and around the plane," Delos-Santos said. "It was like a giant bonfire."

Rescue workers had to take breaks to get fresh air because the smell of burned fuel and flesh was unbearable, he said. The survivors came from the front of the plane, which was largely intact. The back was in ruins.

"It's flaming and smoking. There's quite a bit of smoke. There's a military helicopter hovering overhead providing light," said Edward Poppe, owner of radio station KSTO.

"They're carrying them one at a time up the hill, those that survived — and there's only a few."

A White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said authorities have concluded there was no fire and no distress call from the pilot prior to the crash, as was previously believed. The official said earlier accounts contained information that proved unreliable.

Meanwhile, when a Korean Air jet crashed during a tropical downpour in Guam, the airport had neither a crucial landing system to help guide planes nor a government-staffed control tower, US officials said.

In fact, the Guam airport is the only US airport with a tower operated by privately hired workers to direct 747s and other large passenger planes, said FAA spokesman Tim Fyle.

52nd Hiroshima Day marked with vows for peace

HIROSHIMA, Japan, Aug 6: With vows for peace and a moment of silent prayer, Hiroshima marked Wednesday the anniversary of the atomic bomb attack that devastated their city on a clear summer morning 52 years ago, reports AP.

About 45,000 people gathered in the city's Peace Park, built at what was the epicentre of the blast, for a memorial ceremony at 8:15 am — the precise moment the bomb exploded over Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945.

As a bronze bell tolled nearby, the crowd observed a moment of silence to commemorate the victims killed in the world's first atomic attack.

About 140,000 people were killed by the blast and the firestorm and radiation that ensued in this western Japanese city, which was a major military centre during World War II.

"We in Hiroshima are outraged that nuclear weapons have yet to be abolished and banished from the face of the earth, and we are very uneasy about the future of civilisation," Hiroshima Mayor Takashi Hiraoka said in a speech at the ceremony.

Hiraoka criticised the United States for conducting a series of low-level nuclear tests that began early July in Nevada.

"On the one hand, the US promises to reduce its stockpiles of nuclear weapons, and on the other hand it obstinately maintains its nuclear testing programme," Hiraoka said. "This attitude is utterly devoid of the wisdom needed if all peoples are to coexist."

The United States maintains the tests do not violate the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban because they do not produce a self-sustaining nuclear reaction.

Whiling offering his "respects from the heart" to the victims, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto vowed to work toward "abolishing nuclear arms and realising a world without war."

Hashimoto said that Japan was the first country to ratify the comprehensive ban among the 44 required to bring it into effect.

Hamas vows more suicide attacks US seeks sustained effort by PA to curb terrorism

WASHINGTON, Aug 6: Despite new assurances from Yasser Arafat, the Clinton administration says Israel's security requires a sustained effort by the Palestinian Authority to curb terrorism, reports AP.

In the meantime, the administration is going ahead with a high-profile drive to steer Israel and the Palestinians into a resumption of their broken-off talks.

Dennis Ross, the chief US mediator, will fly to the region for talks this weekend. State Department spokesman James Foley said Tuesday that Ross would meet with Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and possibly other Mideast leaders.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who has shunned the shuttle diplomacy strategy used by her predecessors to push Middle East settlements, will go to the region soon, irrespective of what Ross' trip produces, Foley said.

Arafat offered his assurances in telephone conversations with Albright and Ross on Monday as he has often in the past after Palestinian terrorists killed Israeli civilians.

Administration officials declined to say whether they were convinced the Palestinian leader could or would be able to control the terrorists, whose bloody assaults have torpedoed Mideast peace efforts and discouraged Israel from relinquishing control of West Bank areas.

"He's been saying the right things," Foley said. But, the spokesman stressed, "We want to see sustained efforts."

The Israeli government has taken a similar stand, insisting that statements disapproving terrorism as a tactic and expressions of sympathy for its victims were insufficient.

In an apparent gesture to Israel, the State Department is now calling security the first priority in Middle East peace-making, although Foley singled out the economic well-being of the Palestinians and a need for further negotiations as concerns, as well.

Meanwhile, the administration called on Israel to resume its reimbursement of taxes and other fees that it owes the Palestinian Authority.

Spokesman Foley said the suspension was counterproductive to peace efforts and the mutual trust upon which negotiations are based.

AFP adds, Islamic radicals vowed Tuesday to launch more suicide strikes against Israel as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rebuffed appeals to lift harsh sanctions imposed on the Palestinians following a deadly Jerusalem bombing.

Amid a growing diplomatic effort to save what remains of the peace process, the Palestinian Islamic movement Hamas distributed a leaflet in the Palestinian territories warning that last week's double suicide bombing which killed 13 Israelis "was not a single event."

Ranariddh replaced Cambodia's parliament confirms Ung Huot as new First PM

PHNOM PENH, Aug 6: Cambodia's parliament today confirmed Foreign Minister Ung Huot as the new First Prime Minister to replace the toppled Prince Norodom Ranariddh, reports AP.

The minister easily won a two-thirds majority of the 120-seat national assembly in the vote of confidence. He garnered 86 votes, with four against and six abstentions, the house was told. Three papers were spoiled.

An earlier figure of 87 votes in favour was given but revised.

Ung Huot beamed and MPs applauded as the result was announced, while powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen also smiled. The country's strongman leader, who ousted Prince Ranariddh after two days of fighting last month, has given Ung Huot his full backing to become the next co-premier.

The house also stripped Prince Ranariddh of immunity from prosecution, paving the way for charges alleging he plotted to overthrow the government.

The vote of confidence came minutes after Hun Sen called on MPs to vote for Ung Huot's appointment which he said would boost "the work and stability" of the strife-torn country's government.

He said in a report Ung Huot's "capability and great advantages which he has shown us so far" will "certainly increase the high quality of the work and the stability of the royal government."

He added in the report, read to the house by Sok An, Minister in charge of the cabinet, that Ung Huot had already received "great support from the public and international opinion" following his nomination.

The Acting President of the National Assembly Loy Sim Chheang also read letters of support for Ung Huot from two key figures of the Royalist FUNCINPEC Party, who have remained in Phnom Penh.

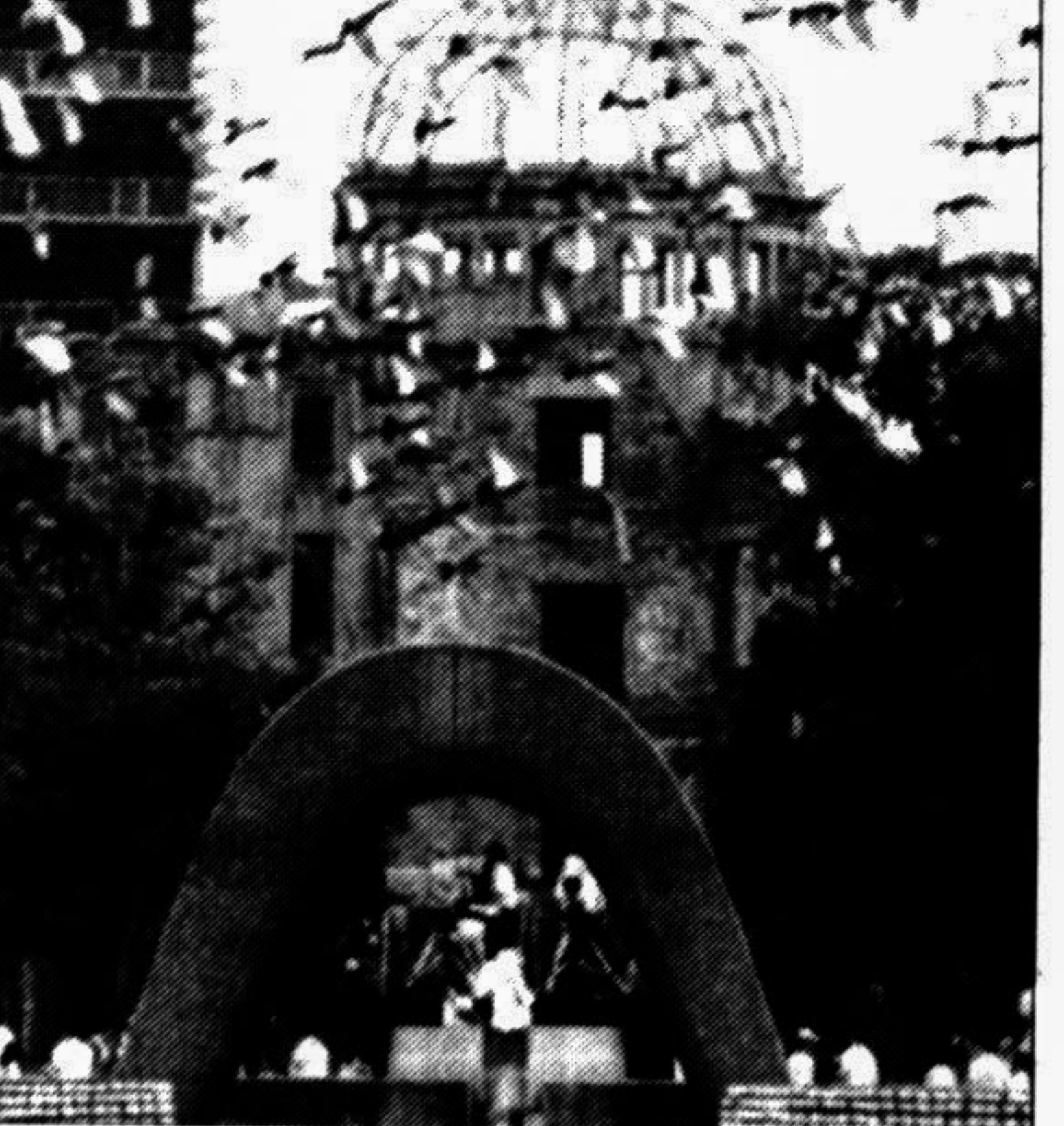
Then he read a letter from Hun Sen asking the house to give the foreign minister its vote of confidence.

"I have the honour to inform your excellencies... of the request of the royal government to support the nomination of his excellency Ung Huot as First Prime Minister of the government," the letter dated July 25 said.

He said as Tuon Chhay, leader of the renegade faction of FUNCINPEC here and the party's dean Nady Tan had also submitted a letter calling for a vote of confidence in Ung Huot, he would also back the move.

"That is why I request your excellency the acting president of the national assembly to put this request to the national assembly to check and adopt a vote of confidence (in Ung Huot) urgently."

Ung Huot was then asked to stand and "show himself" to the house before members cast their ballots.



Some 1,500 doves fly over the cenotaph of the A-bomb victims and the A-bomb Dome in central Hiroshima Wednesday during the 52nd annual memorial service for the two hundreds thousands A-bomb victims.

BRIEFLY

Gunman kills 5 in France: A man who shot dead five people, including two policemen, during a family row Tuesday was overpowered when another officer shot and wounded him, officials said, AFP reports from Chateaubourg.

Police in Chateaubourg, 20 kilometres (12 miles) east of the northwestern city of Rennes, said two of their colleagues were shot dead at nearby Saint-Didier by a man who also killed three members of his family. A policeman then opened fire, wounding the man. The identities of the policemen who intervened in a family row, were not released, one was aged 35, the other 33. Both were fathers of young children.

2 border guards killed in Russia: A Russian border guard in Tajikistan was killed in a clash with suspected drug smugglers, eight of whom were captured, the border guards' command said Wednesday. AP reports from Moscow.

Spokesman Dmitry Romantovsky said a firefight developed Tuesday evening between the guards and an armed group of traffickers trying to bring a large amount of drugs into the Central Asian republic from neighboring Afghanistan. Eight of the infiltrators, including five wounded, were captured, he said. The Russians suffered no losses.

Australia, Indonesia sign deal: Australia's national police force and Indonesia have pledged greater cooperation to fight "trans-national crime" with the signing of a formal agreement on Wednesday. AP reports from Canberra.

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Palmer and Indonesian National Police chief Gen Doby Widodo signed a memorandum of understanding in Canberra to formalise what Palmer said were existing high levels of cooperation. The document calls for full cooperation in combating trans-national crime affecting both countries and the region. It also calls for exchange of information on relevant criminal activity.

Dutch tourist drowns in Indonesia: A Dutch tourist drowned while swimming with his family at a beach in Bengkulu, South Sumatra, the official news agency Antara reported Wednesday. AP reports from Jakarta.

The report quoted police chief Lt Col Muh Amin Saleh as saying that Jacob Mos, 42, was swimming with his wife and children Monday when he went under. Rescuers found the victim unconscious more than an hour later. He was rushed to a hospital, but the doctors could not save his life.

Air crash kills 2 in Russia: A small plane crashed on the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia's Far East, killing two people on board, the Emergency Situations Ministry said Wednesday. AP reports from Moscow.

The plane was carrying a regional fishing authority inspector on an air tour of his territory, said the report, cited by the Interfax news agency. Both he and the pilot were killed when the aircraft crashed Tuesday. Authorities launched an investigation into the cause of the crash, the report said.

China slams US decision to appoint Tibet affairs official

BEIJING, Aug 6: China lashed out with an official commentary Wednesday that accused the United States of trying to meddle in its internal politics by appointing an official to handle Tibet-related affairs, reports AP.

In the first public reaction since US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright proposed last week to appoint a special US policy coordinator for Tibet, the newspaper China Daily warned Washington, to "draw back the hand that tries to stir China's business."

Veerappan frees one of nine forest wardens

MADRAS, Aug 6: A notorious Indian bandit and elephant poacher on Wednesday released one of nine forest wardens he has been holding hostage to press his demand for amnesty, reports AP.

It was not immediately clear why Veerappan, who uses one name, freed the warden, who was identified only as Raju. Raju reached safety in Madras, 1,600 kilometres (1,000 miles) south of New Delhi early Wednesday after 23 days in captivity.

Manila govt, rebels make progress in talks

MANILA, Aug 6: Government and communist rebel negotiators on Wednesday said they have made progress in talks in the Netherlands, more than three months after formal negotiations to end 28 years of insurgency were suspended, reports AP.

Bosnian authorities agree to overcome obstacles to Muslims' return

SARAJEVO, Aug 6: Local authorities from central Bosnia agreed Tuesday to form a joint police force to help hundreds of Muslims expelled from a Croat-held town make a second try at going home, reports AP.

A local internal ministry divided evenly between Croats and Muslims should be formed by August 11, the agreement said. A joint police force should be functioning by August 30.

Having Muslims and Croats together in a joint police force should improve law and order, said the head of UN police in Bosnia, Kai Eide.

In another move toward greater inter-ethnic cooperation, direct-dial telephone links were established Tuesday between Sarajevo and Banja Luka, the biggest city in Serb-held Bosnia, after a 5-year hiatus. Sarajevo was also linked to Trebinje, a smaller Serb-held town. Communications officials promised other links soon.

International officials on Tuesday reiterated their demand that up to 500 refugees expelled over the weekend from Jajce be allowed to return as soon as possible.

Muslim refugees started returning to Jajce about three weeks ago. The town was striving to be a model of ethnic harmony and thereby qualify for more economic aid.

Over the weekend, however, Croats forced the Muslims back out of their homes, and set several houses on fire. The body of a 62-year-old Muslim man who apparently was killed was found with a bullet near it.

"We expect the Jajce authorities to allow the return," said Simon Haselock, a spokesman for Carlos Westendorp, the top international official in Bosnia. "There is, I understand, a possibility that people may start returning today."

Civil war finally an end in sight, says PNG PM

AUCKLAND, Aug 6: Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Bill Skate said today there was finally an end in sight to his country's decade long civil war on Bougainville island, reports AP.

He also condemned the killing of a pro-PNG politician, saying it was the work of "ungodly cowards."

Since 1988, rebels have fought for the independence of the mineral rich tropical island. The war initially started over the environmental damage caused by the Panguna open cast copper mine.

Skate said there was finally "light at the end of the tunnel."

"I am buoyed by the direction the Bougainvilleans themselves are taking, as evidenced by the recent New Zealand talks, and pledge my government's unconditional support towards finding an amicable and lasting solution to the crisis," he said.

Skate did not fully endorse the Burnham Declaration, saying he agreed with "certain issues" and, later in the press statement, made it clear his government was committed to "our notion of one people, one nation, one country."

Flood waters receding in Germany

FRANKFURT AN DER ODER, Aug 6: With flood waters receding, the German army pulled hundreds of soldiers Wednesday from emergency sandbagging duties on the main dike holding back the Oder River, reports AP.

But work continued on a new three-kilometre (1.5 mile) long backup dike in the village of Reutwein, north of Frankfurt an der Oder. In case the soggy main dike should break under continued high pressure.

The army still has 10,900 soldiers in the flood zone, which stretches about 160 kilometres (100 miles) along east Germany's border with Poland. As of Wednesday morning, though, 2,000 soldiers were called off their immediate work on the dike and put on standby.

During the night, water levels continued to sink in three key points along the swollen river — Frankfurt an der Oder, Eisenhüttenstadt, and the northern Oderbruch region — and emergency workers said they noticed only one leaky spot on the dike.

In Frankfurt an der Oder — the mid-point of the flood zone — the water had dropped 23 centimetres (9 inches) from the day before.

Landslides kill 11 in Darjeeling

NEW DELHI, Aug 6: At least 11 people were killed and several others injured today after heavy monsoon rains triggered landslides in the Indian hill resort of Darjeeling, the Press Trust of India said, reports AP.

Officials said eight bodies were recovered and three were still buried under rubble.

They said rescue operations were hampered by heavy rains in the eastern hill station, adding the number of casualties could rise.

Everything proceeding normally in ailing Mir space station

MOSCOW, Aug 6: Two relief cosmonauts were orbiting the earth today gradually aligning themselves with the ailing Mir space station where they plan to make repairs that will determine the ship's future, reports Reuters.

"Everything is proceeding normally," mission control spokesman Valery Lyndin said this morning. "The new crew are already on their 11th orbit around earth."

As commander Anatoly Solovoyov and Flight Engineer Pavel Vinogradov prepared for their Thursday rendezvous with Mir at 1703 GMT after their Tuesday launch, the current crew continued repairs on the elektron oxygen generating system that has not worked since last week, NASA spokeswoman Kathleen Maliga said.

On board Mir the crew of two Russians and one American were using solid fuel oxygen generators called 'candles' as they failed to restart the newer elektron on board.

It failed to work last week and by midday today (0800 GMT) they had still not resolved the problem, which NASA believes is caused by a faulty pressure regulator, officials said.

Mir's older back-up oxygen generator is not available for use because it is located in the kvant-2 module, which the crew powered down to save energy after the space station collided with its supply ship on June 25, causing a major loss of power.

At 1144 GMT today the Mir crew of commander Vasily Tsibliyev, engineer Alexander Lazutkin and British-born US physicist Michael Foale were planning to undock their progress cargo ship to make room for the new crew.

The new crew will reconnect with progress after Tsibliyev and Lazutkin return to earth on August 14 after 185 days in space.

"The Mir crew is making preparations to meet the new crew and to depart. These are their two main tasks today," Lyndin said.



Russian space craft "Soyuz TM-26" is engulfed in flames and smoke as it blasts off carrying Russian cosmonauts Pavel Vinogradov and Anatoly Solovoyov at the Baikonur cosmodrome Tuesday. The cosmonauts went into orbit Wednesday after successfully blasting off on a vital repair mission to the orbiting Russian space station Mir.

Bihar, India's most enriched state, turns out to be a political nightmare

PATNA, India, Aug 5: India's Bihar state, sitting on 40 per cent of India's mineral wealth and blessed with fertile soil watered by the Ganges, ought to have been an economic dream, reports Reuters.

Instead, it has turned out to be a political nightmare.

Bihar reeks of endemic crisis and the trappings of underdevelopment — Hindu caste violence, Maoist peasant uprisings, administrative paralysis, police brutality, deep-rooted corruption, natural disasters and poverty.

A corruption scandal that forced state Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav to resign last month provoked some to caution that Bihar needs too radical solutions — more land reform and less democracy.

"There is no doubt to my mind that Bihar has become the dark state of India," retired general S K Sinha, former deputy chief of India's army and a prominent Bihari, told Reuters in the state capital, Patna.

"Bihar needs suspension of democracy for a period of at least two years with a governor in the mould of T N Seshan."

Tough-talking Seshan, who retired last year as India's chief election commissioner, cracked down during a five-year tenure on violence, administrative breakdown and rigging of votes in Bihar, where analysts say all parties are equally to blame.

Casteism compounds corruption: Bihar's roads are pitted with potholes. The stripping of government assets is common. Floods routinely claim hundreds of lives annually, often in accidents involving villagers who take rides on rickety buses on risky routes.

In the early 1980s several policemen in the town of Bhagalpur were found blinding accused criminals by shoving bicycle spokes and pouring acid into their eyes.

Upper-caste landlords have now been joined in battle by low-caste groups. Political support and strategies follow bloodlines, not development programmes.

Yadav, currently in judicial detention, resigned after a court issued a warrant for his arrest in a 280 million dollars "foder" scandal, in which federal police accused 56 politicians and officials of embezzling state farm funds over 10 years.

The low-caste politician promptly named his unschooled wife, Rabri Devi, as his successor, his detention last week was promptly labelled a caste issue during which his supporters clashed with police and blocked roads and rail tracks.

At least 61 per cent of Bihar's 93 million people are illiterate. The province is also the poorest — annual per capita income in 1994-95 (April-March) was 3,816 rupees (dollar 106.9) compared with the national average of 8,281.5 rupees.

Political indifference: "It is all political apathy," said Nisheth Jaiswal, Secretary-General of the Bihar Industries Association. "Every leader who sprang from here became a national leader and forgot Bihar... they want to keep the people poor."

As India's second most populous state, Bihar accounts for 58 seats in the 545-member federal parliament. Its political cauldron has yielded several national leaders including India's first president, Rajendra Prasad.

But voting has been along Hindu caste lines and marred by widespread rigging by caste gangs. Lower-caste groups have grown in power and influence and are now linked to the violence and corruption that were hallmarks of older, upper-caste domination.

"We find that (the caste) elites are the gate-keepers but they block innovations as well," said Manohar Lal, sociologist at Patna's A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies. "In all castes, the empowered elite tends to cut off and join the general elite."

Administrators regard Bihar as a nightmare case study. The state's civil service is widely perceived as having been forced into submission by political leaders.

Bankers and development agencies are afraid of extending funds which they fear would be hijacked by powerful middlemen.

Government departments are overstuffed, with many jobs given to people with political and caste patronage of various hues.

"If you try to get tough with them, the bosses say: You are tactless," said an engineer of the Bihar State Electricity Board. "There is a mafia for everything," he said. "An education mafia (to buy college seats), a coal mafia (to exploit miners)." "The whole system has collapsed," Sinha said.

Analysts say Bihar's way out of its current mess could lie in land reform, which is handled by provincial governments. In other parts of India, land reforms have worked, with the redistribution of surplus land to the poor.

"The masses are landless and poor," Lal said. "They have a relationship of dependence."