Aid to malnourished DPRK

children should not be

held hostage: UNICEF

Pentagon honours China's

army chief



A massive column of smoke billows over the Soufriere Hills volcano as it erupted again Friday. Guadeloupe and other islands have been working on a plan for the possible evacuation of the 5,000 people who remain on - AFP/UNB photo the British Caribbean colony.

BDIFFIY

Kim likely to amnesty Chun, Roh: south Korean President Kim Young-Sam is likely to amnesty former presidents Chun Doo-Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo before he finishes his official term early next year, a senior government official said yesterday. AFP reports from Seoul.

It belongs to the president's prerogatives to amnesty convicts, the unidentified official was quoted as saying by Yonhap news agency.

"But it is expected that the president will conclude the issue of pardoning the two former presidents before he finishes his offi cial tenure." he said.

IFGO conference ends in Denmark: The 15th Congress of the International Federation on Gyneacology and Obstetrics (IFGO) closed Friday in Copenhagen, Denmark, Xinhua reports from Stockholm.

About 6000 gyneacologists and obstetricians from more than 1000 countries took part in the five-day meeting to discuss ways of improving the health of women and the newborn. Ian Wilmut, leader of the British research group which suc-

cessfully cloned a sheep from an Ewe's cell, chaired a debate at the meeting over the ethical aspects and the significance of cloning in the future.

Fumes sicken 109 in India: As many as 109 persons, including 90 students, were hospitalised after they inhaled poisonous fumes emanating from an insettle des godown at Kaffrer village in the powerloom town of Biffvaridi in neighbouring Thane district on Friday, PII reports

The students and 19 teachers, including three women, of New English High School complained of dizziness and vomiting after they inhaled toxic fumes emanating out of the godown situated nearby and were admitted to Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, police yesterday said adding that they were out of danger.

6 policemen killed in Andhra: Six policemen were killed yesterday when their vehicles ran over a landmine in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, the Press Trust of Indian reported, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Two others were injured in the explosion in the coastal state's Annavanam district.

The news agency said the landmine planted by Maoist guerillas of the outlawed People's War Group, which often targets the police in its campaign against feudal landlords in Andhra Pradesh.

Israeli jets bomb south of Beirut: Israeli warplanes bombed yesterday the base of a pro-Syrian Palestinian group on the outskirts of Naameh, south of Beirut, security sources said. AFP reports from Siden.

Two jets fired two missiles at 19:10 pm (1610 GMT) on hills near Naameh, 15 kilometres (9.3 miles) south of Beirut, they

The pro-Syrian Popular Front for the Liberation of Palesune-General Command, led by Ahmed Jibril, has a base in Naameh.

Jose Maria meets Mahathir: Costa Rican President Jose Maria Figueres Olsen paid a courtesy call Saturday on Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, a news report said, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur. Figueres was accompanied by Costa Rica's Minister of Trade Jose Manual Salazar and Minister of Education Eduardo Doryan, the national news agency Bernama reported. Also present was Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Figueres, on a two-week private visit, had stayed at the holiday

resort island of Pulau Langkawi in the Straits of Malcacca, 400 kilometers (240 miles) northwest of here and also trekked in the tropical jungles of Sarwak on Borneo island. 23 executed in China: China has executed 23 people convicted of offences from murder to hooliganism in the southern boomtown of Shenzhen, which borders onto Hong Kong, the Shenzhen Special Zone daily said

yesterday. AFP says from Beijing. The 23 were sentenced at a public rally held by the Shenzhen intermediate people's court on Friday and executed shortly afterwards. All were workers from outside Shenzhen who had committed a number of offences ranging from the theft of an automatic machine gun from the people's armed police to murder

during a bar brawl Mild quake shakes Japan: A moderate earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.1 shook the Tokyo area early Saturday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. AP reports from Tokyo.

Violence escalates in south of Beirut

UNSC agrees to bring Israel, PA back to talks

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 9: The 15 members of the UN Security Council agreed to do all they can to get Israel and the Palestinians back to the table. the Council's president said Friday, reports AFP.

In statements following informal talks on the subject. British Ambassador John Weston, Acting Security Council Chief, said the Council had reached "no agreed conclusion or decision" in spite of "general concern" about the situation.

But "we all agreed on the paramount importance of resuming the peace process and the need for timely implementation of the agreements already reached," he said.

"All agreed that every effort should be made to bring the parties back to the negotiating

table - all council members committed themselves fully to that objective," Weston said. The July 30 suicide bomb-

ings by Islamic militants at a Jerusalem market "reinforces the urgency of a return to nego-tiations," he said. The blasts killed 15 people including the bombers. Weston said the council

members were also concerned about Israeli measures taken in the wake of the bombing which "threaten to impose serious hardship on Palestinians." Israel imposed restrictions on the movement of Palestini-

suicide attack. Reuter adds: Violence escalated along the Israel-Lebanon border ahead of US peace envoy

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 9:

Aid to 800,000 North Korean

children suffering from malnu-

trition should not be held

hostage to the politics of the

Communist state, UNICEF di-

rector Carol Bellamy said, re-

are going to die," said Bellamy

on Friday, hours after she re-

turned from North Korea. She

recently tripled UNICEF aid ap-

children or 38 per cent of those

younger than 5 were suffering

from malnutrition. Of this

group 80,000 children were

severely malnourished and in

danger of dying from starvation

WASHINGTON, Aug 9 : Chi-

na's top general was honoured

at the Pentagon Friday with a

19-gun salute as part of a US

charm offensive to coax the

Chinese military to be more

of the General Staff of the Peo-

ple's Liberation Army (PLA), met

with General John Sha

likashvili. Chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff, after the

full-honours arrival ceremony

at a parade ground overlooking

importance of maintaining

high-level military contacts, a

and agreed on the need to con-

tinue the four-party talks be-

tween North and South Korea.

The generals agreed on the

They discussed North Korea

General Fu Quanyou, Chief

open, reports AFP.

the Potomac river.

US defence official said.

She said about 800,000

peals to 14.3 million dollars.

"People are dying and people

ports Reuter.

ans and their goods, and froze

financial transfers after the

Dennis Ross's arrival on Saturday to try to break a crisis in Israel-Palestinian peacemaking. Israeli planes unleashed

rockets south of Beirut on Friday just hours after Katyusha rockets fired from Lebanon slammed into northern Israel. The United States condemned the cross border attacks and urged both sides to exercise

the violence in which 13 people have died since Monday. "We've been in contact with all the parties directly to urge maximum restraint," US State Department spokesman James Rubin said in Washington.

"maximum restraint" in ending

Ross returns to the region in an attempt to clam tensions after two suicide bombers killed 13 people and themselves in a Jerusalem market on July 30.



An unidentified Bosnian woman amongst children touches the cheek of Princess Diana, in Tuzla Friday. Princess Diana arrived her for a three-day visit to Bosnia as part of her global campaign against landmines. - AFP/UNB photo

20,000 children below one die in Benin every year

COTONOU, Aug 9: Almost 20,000 children die every year in Benin before reaching the age of one, the head of the United Nations population fund told an international conference here, reports AFP.

"This sad truth" could be improved through better education and family planning, Nafis Sadik told the conference on minimum social standards. Some 1,500 women also die

every year as a result of preg-

nancy, she said. For more than a decade vaccination programmes against measles, tetanus, yellow fever, polio, diphtheria, and whooping cough — the biggest killers of infants — have been expanded in Benin, but the dis-

execution in

Burundi

wean leader and Chairman of

the Organisation of African

Unity (OAU), Robert Mugabe on

Friday condemned the recent

execution of five people in Bu-

carried out by the military

junta of major Pierre Buyova

constituted a violation of hu-

Mugabe said the executions

He said the hanging of the

"By carrying out the hang-

five on July 31 in Bujumbura

might not help improve the sit-

uation in the strife-torn Cen-

ings, President Buyoya's gov-

ernment, moreover, has created

a situation which does not au-

gur well for the envisaged all-

party talks due to take place

later this month," Mugabe said

rundi, reports AFP.

tral African nation.

in a statement.

man rights.

HARARE, Aug 9: Zimbab-

and disease. eases still exist in places. Her estimates were similar to OAU chief slams

those of North Korea and those released last month by the aid agency, Caritas.

"It is very important that the immediate significant humanitarian crisis not find itself hostage to what is also a political crisis. Humanitarian needs can't wait," she told a news con-

The United States, South Korea and Japan, among others, have at one time or another indirectly linked food aid to North Korea's presence at peace talks, North Korea, in turn, has done the same in exchange for its cooperation.

The country has suffered from drought this year after food stocks were already depleted by two years of floods.

China and the United States

that aim to put a formal end to

the Korean war, the official

Japan defence guidelines came

up in their talks, the official

States August 5 for a little-pub

licised tour of US military in-

stallations. He is the second-

highest ranking Chinese mili-

tary officer to visit the United

States since the 1989 Tianan-

rights groups and some mem-

bers of Congress, the Clinton

administration in December re-

newed a campaign to improve

military-to-military relations

Over protests from human

men Square massacre.

with Beijing.

Neither Taiwan nor US-

Fu arrived in the United

Kashmir violence claims 17 lives

SRINAGAR, Aug 9: Seventeen people, including 13 militants and two army jawans, were killed and 20 others mostly security personnel wounded in militancy related violence in Kashmir since Thursday evening as security forces intensified their antimilitant operations keeping in view the coming Independence

Day celebrations, reports PTI. Seventeen structures, nearly half a dozen residential houses and cowsheds, were gutted while three militants were arrested and another laid down his arms in the valley, an official spokesman said here yesterday.

The senior leader of Hurriyat Conference and Vice-Chairman of banned Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Javid Ahmad Mir was apprehended by the security forces during a late night raid on his relative's house at Magermalbagh in the civil line area of the city, an official source said.

Mir was taken to an unknown destination, the source

Marxist rebels kill 26 troops in Colombia

BOGOTA, Aug 9: Marxist guerillas said on Friday they had killed 26 soldiers posing as right-wing paramilitary fighters, and that six of their own men had died in a fierce battle in eastern Colombia, says Reuter.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's oldest and largest rebel force, said they attacked the troops last Saturday in an isolated hamlet about 25 miles (40 km) from the town of Mapiripan, which was the scene of a brutal massacre last month.

Egypt plans to launch 'Islamic satellite' to determine exact Muslim lunar month

CAIRO, Aug 9: The Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Nasr Farid Wassel, said in statements published Friday that his country planned on launching an "Islamic satellite" to determine with precision the Muslim lunar calendar, reports AFP.

"Studies are underway to launch in space an Egyptian Islamic satellite to determine the start of the Muslim months." Sheikh Wassel told the Egyptian government daily All-Akhbar. "This will help put an end to

disagreements which have arisen between Arab and Islamic countries over the start of the Muslim months," he said. The start of the Islamic

of Ramadan, when Muslims

fast from dawn to dusk, is de-

The mufti, who is entrusted by the government of issue religlous decrees and set the start of Muslim months, said he hoped the new satellite would be months such as the holy month launched before Ramadan

clouds.

Pathfinder in good shape to send its rover on bonus journeys

PASADENA, California, Aug 9: Officially done with its 30day mission, Mars Pathfinder is in good enough shape to send its rover on bonus journeys, including a trip up a hill to see what lies beyond, according to scientists, reports AP.

The goal now is to concentrate on more long-range monttoring of the Martian Weather and surface before possibly sending the rover Sojourner dozens of metres (yards) away from Pathfinder for a journey up a gently sloping hill, scientists said Friday.

"We will have to go very slowly," said project scientist Matthew Golombeck. "This is the long, long, long range plans for the rover.

The probe landed July 4 near the Mars equator for what

was planned as a month-long mission, sending back photos and data that captured the nation's attention.

termined by the sighting of the

new moon and often Muslim

states observed different dates

the day after the moon's cres-

cent is seen with the naked eye.

satellite would transmit to

earth pictures which would be

used to determine without doubt

the new moon, which otherwise

is often difficult to see because

of "natural obstacles" such as

which should start this year

around December 31.

The Muslim month starts

Sheikh Wassel said the

for the start of these months.

The newest findings show changing wind and air patterns that could be "dust devils" swirling on the Martian surface, and indications a rock nicknamed Scooby Doo may actually be a Martian dirt clod compacted by unknown means. Water from an ancient time may be one tantailising source, scientists said.

In the next few weeks, the rover also will examine more rocks and roll back to the Pathfinder to see whatever may have stuck to a magnetic ramp, Golombek said. So far, the rover has trav-

elled more than 50 metres (vards).

Sihanouk powerless to help resolve Cambodian crisis

PHNOM PENH, Aug 9: Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk said in a letter released Saturday that he is powerless to help the people of his country following a coup that ousted his son as co-prime minister, reports AP.

Nonetheless, he clearly disapproved of the violent and bloody July 5 putsch led by coprime minister Hun Sen. The king said he holds totally different views from the people now in power, and branded the political situation a comedy.

"The fate of our nation is terribly sad," the king said in a letter to exiled opposition political leader Sam Rainsy dated August 8, "I have no ability to do anything. The power is totally in their hands."

The king left Cambodia during November for a monthlong programme of medical treatment in Beijing, but has not returned.

Hun Sen, jealous of the king's popularity, has threatened the royal family in the Rainsy had written an ap-

peal to Sihanouk not to issue a royal decree recognising Foreign Minister Ung Huot as Ranariddh's replacement.

Hun Sen installed Ung Huot in the position and had Parliament, which he now controls, rubber stamp his move with a vote. But the replacement would not be legal without a royal decree.

Chea Sim, who has been designated by Sinhanouk as acting head of state and has the power to sign the decrees on the king's behalf, initialled the decree recognising Ung Huot. Sihanouk, however, at-

tempted to dodge responsibility for any royal decrees signed by Chea Sim. "If I have given Chea Sim the

authorisation to sign all laws and decrees in my place, it is to make him responsible before the people and before history," the king wrote. "I must not share this re-

sponsibility with him nor with Hun Sen. If I share responsibility it would mean that I associate myself with these people in the ongoing new political game. I just cannot take part in this new comedy involving the State," the king wrote.

He concluded his letter by saying "history will render justice to each one of us." Khmer Rouge hardliners, meanwhile, said in a radio peaceful means."

broadcast Saturday that Hun Sen must be arrested and brought to trial in the United States like Panamanian dictator and drug trafficker Manuel Noriega.

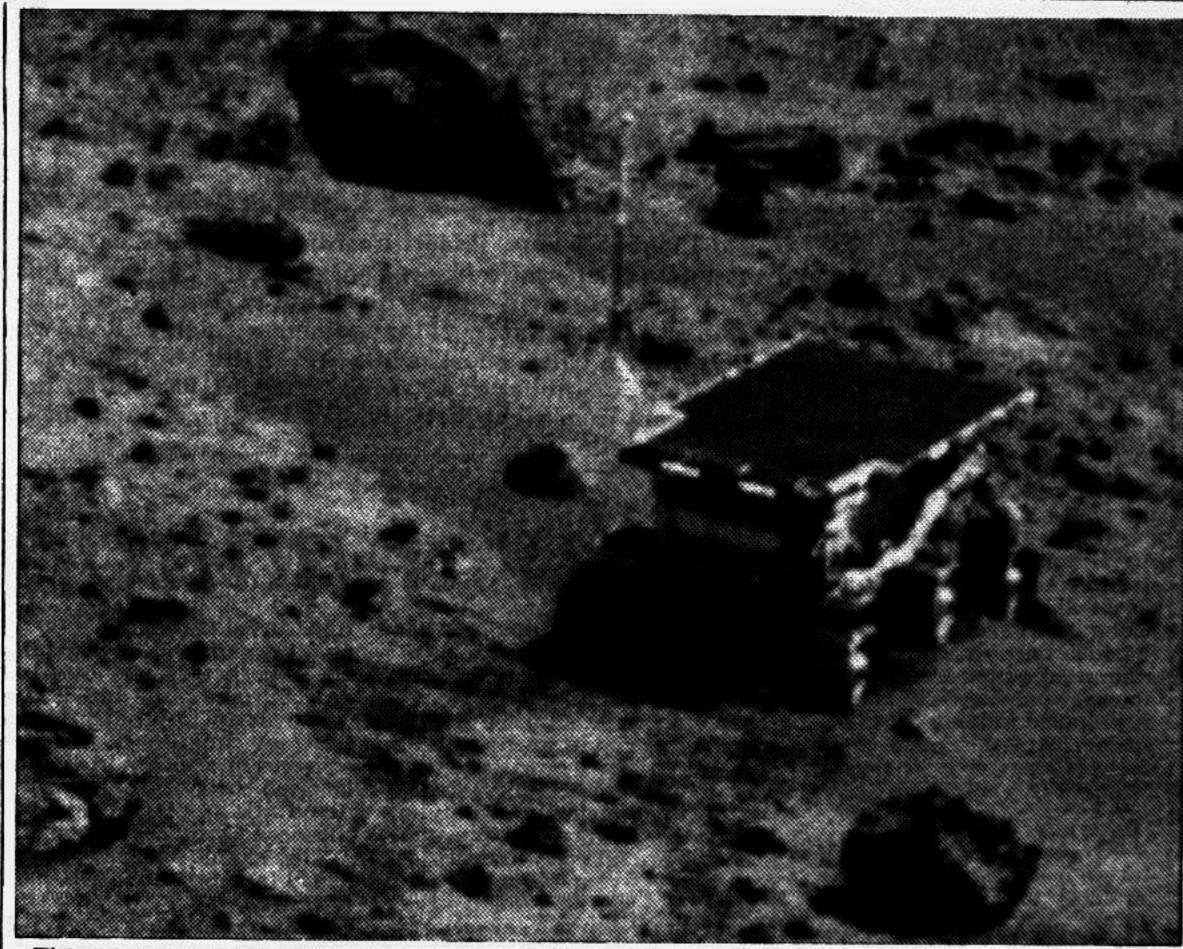
The Khmer Rouge said that its spokesman, Khieu Samphan, had sent a letter to Philippine Foreign Minister Domingo Siazon complaining about the Ung Huot's installation as first prime minister.

A formal relationship exists only between Phnom Penh and Manila, therefore it is not clear how or what channel was used by Khieu Samphan in dispatching his letter to Siazon. "This coup d'etat has created

serious insecurity and instability in Cambodia and also threatens stability and security in the region (of Southeast Asia)," Khieu Samphan said in his letter which was dated August 7.

He said that the coup had destroyed the possibility for free and fair elections in 1998.

Khieu Samphan said that Ung Huot's installation confirmed that "Hun Sen and his (Vietnamese) master have no willingness in quickly solving this political crisis through



This image of the Sojourner rover was taken at the end of day on Sol 30 and released by NASA on Friday. The rover is perched atop Mermaid Dune, a dark material distinct from the surrounding bright surface. Dark red rover tracks extend from the foreground to the base of the rover's wheels. - AFP/UNB photo

MNLF leader appeals to int'l donors for aid

GENERAL SANTOS, Philippines, Aug 9: Former Muslim guerilla leader-turned-development chief Nur Misuari on Friday appealed to international donors to help develop war-ravaged areas in the southern Philippines, reports AFP.

At the meeting, the government presented potential donors with a list of 85 projects for financing, ranging from roads, bridges, ports, social services, agriculture, skill development and education, includ-

ing Islamic-based schools. "While we have signed the peace agreement, the infrastructure is not yet present, the economy is still in as shambles," Misuari said at the formal opening of a fund-raising drive for the country's 14 Muslim-populated provinces.

MOSCOW, Aug 9: A new crew safely arrived on Mir, yet the applause at Russia's Mission Control had scarcely subsided before the focus was back on troubling questions about the hobbled space station, reports

The answers likely will determine if the new rescue mission has a chance to salvage the Mir - and Russia's manned space program.

- Is the damage to Mir worse than officials have disclosed? - Will the Americans pull out of the joint space shuttle-Mir project?

- What are the chances of operating Mir for another two or three years without a disas-

It's the last question that is causing the, most unease, from Europe to Washington to Houston, and somewhat less so in Moscow, where space officials have adopted a "what me

worry?" public persona. "We're in uncharted terri-

tory," said James Oberg, an American space engineer and expert on the Russian program. "No one's ever flown equipment this long, and the level of safety aboard in simply unknown."

All the uncertainty creates a tense backdrop for cosmonauts Anatoly Solovyov and Pavel Vinogradov, who arrived armed with high-tech tools after drilling for hundreds of hours for special repair work.

With American astronaut Michael Foale standing by in a backup role, they represent the only read hope of restoring most of the power lost in the Mir's June 25 collision with a supply craft.

The extent of the exterior damage will remain somewhat of a mystery until Friday, when the trio climb into a Soyuz capsule and fly around the Mir to inspect it.

Russian officials say the

Progress cargo ship poked one or two small holes in the side of the Spektr scientific module when it smacked into it during a practice docking. But the astronauts scheduled

to visit Mir next month on the US shuttle Atlantis say an analysis of photographs and telemetry suggests that more than the Spektr was damaged.

Writing on their mission's site recently on the World Wide Web, they said the theory is that the Progress "may have careened into the end of the Base Block module (main Mir module) and even the Kvant-1 mod-

If that is borne out, it could greatly increase the Russians' damage estimate of between dlrs 17 million and dlrs 22 million, and give the US space agency NASA more reason to abandon its role in the aging Mir for safety reasons.

NASA already is withholding final approval for a replacement for Foale, citing concerns voiced at levels all the way up to President Clinton himself. With an investment of more

Uncertainty shadows Mir rescue mission

than dirs 400 million in Mir, which it sees as a stepping stone to the international space station, it is likely to maintain the commitment — but only if repairs pan out. "I don't think NASA can

the power is restored," said Geoff Perry, head of the Kettering Space Observers Group in Cornwall, England. In the meantime, an international debate has been raging for weeks over safety on the di-

make a firm commitment until

lapidated Mir. "For many observers, it is hard to understand why human lives are being put at risk - and hundreds of millions of dollars

a year spent by the Russian and US space agencies — to prolong the working life of a 130-ton rust bucket that is anyway due to go into retirement by 2000." London's Financial Times newspaper wrote Thursday. "Surely not just for the thrills?" Some US lawmakers share that view.

But numerous Western space experts, along with Russian officials themselves, think that kind of attitude amounts to unwarranted Mir-bashing, which they say has dominated world media coverage since the June crash.

After all, the Mir has successfully endured more than 1,400 breakdowns in its 11 1-2 years, according to the Russian newspaper Segodnya — an average of one every three days. "There are always these problems, but they're usually

overcome," Perry said. "We've

just heard more about the breakdowns lately. A US expert called the Russian orbital station "a treasure

that should not be waster." "Mir is doing for us exactly what it should be doing," said Harvey Wichman, director of the Aerospace Psychology Lab-

oratory at Claremont McKenna

College in California.

"The things that went wrong on Mir don't usually happen with a new vehicle, so the forthcoming international space station won't provide these lessons until it, too, is aging," he wrote in a newspaper commentary.

The Russians are sticking to their own planned scenario for Mir's demise.

On Friday, President Boris Yeltsin visited the Khrunichev Space Center in Moscow and was debriefed on plans to revive the power-starved Mir. Officials also previewed the Mir's final shutdown - in 2000, after an international space station becomes operational.

Nat'l Front to remain a coalition, says Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 9: Malaysia's governing National Front will remain a coalition and not become a single party, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said Saturday, reports

Malay, Chinese, Indian and other ethnic parties. It has been returned to power at every election since independence from Britain in 1957 with big majorities in Parliament.

The coalition comprises 11

Some members have suggested that it might be time to amalgamate them all into a single party.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the front's supreme council meeting. Mahathir said the front is not ready to become a single party and will remain a coalition until the idea of a single party is accepted by every-