

SCIENTISTS BRING SPACE A LITTLE CLOSER TO EARTH



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

The smooth surfaces of rocks on a reddish terrain are seen in this image from Mars on Tuesday. The panoramic camera on the Mars Exploration Rover, Spirit, took the photo. Below is the first color image transmitted from the rover.

Mars surface captured in detail

PASADENA (AP) — NASA's Spirit rover yielded the sharpest picture ever taken of the surface of Mars, revealing in breathtaking detail Tuesday a completely rust-colored landscape strewn with rocks.

NASA scientists said the "postcard," sent across 105 million miles of space to Earth, had three to four times the resolution of any other pictures ever taken of the Red Planet. Spirit used a camera with the robotic equivalent of 20/20 vision.

"My reaction has been one of shock and awe," said Jim Bell of Cornell University, the main scientist on the rover camera team.

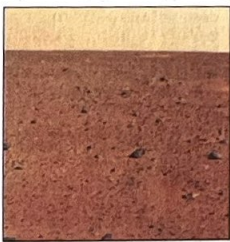
President Bush telephoned to congratulate the mission team, calling Spirit's successful landing on Mars over the weekend a "reconfirmation of the American spirit of exploration."

NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe announced that Spirit's landing site would be named Columbia Memorial Station, in memory of the seven astronauts who died in February in the space shuttle disaster.

"Spirit carries the dream of exploration the brave astronauts of Columbia held in their hearts," O'Keefe said.

NASA has registered more than 1 billion hits on its rover-related Web sites, as computer users around the world logged on to see more of the first pictures from the surface of Mars since the Pathfinder mission in 1997.

Spirit is half of an \$820 million project. Its identical twin, Opportunity, should land on the opposite side of Mars on Jan. 24. The rovers, the size of golf carts, were designed to probe Mars for evidence it once might have been a warmer, wetter place conducive to life.



AP PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

Stardust spacecraft collects comet sample

PASADENA (AP) — NASA's Stardust spacecraft was on its way home Tuesday after surviving a virtual flyby shooting as it plowed through a hail of dust particles to successfully collect samples of a comet and take unprecedented pictures.

An estimated 10 million particles of dust traveling at six times the speed of a rifle bullet blasted the spacecraft as it flew past the comet Wild 2, members of the mission said. Stardust shot 72 black-and-white pictures of the dark nucleus of Wild 2 during Friday's swoop past the frozen ball of ice and rock.

"These are showing us views of another world — a world we've never seen the likes of," project manager Tom Duxbury said as he narrated for reporters at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory a brief movie stitched together from the images of the comet's 3.3-



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

Don Brownlee, main scientist of the Stardust mission team, displays an example of a collector grid on Tuesday in Pasadena.

mile diameter nucleus.

To get its unprecedented close-ups, Stardust flew through the comet's coma, the fuzzy shroud of gas and dust that envelops it. The images show features on the comet's pocked surface as small as 66 feet across, seen from about 150 miles away, said Ray Newburn, a member of the Stardust imaging team.

Coroner requests investigation into Princess Di's death

LONDON (AP) — Britain's royal coroner asked police to look into theories a conspiracy led to the car crash in Paris that killed Princess Diana and boyfriend Dodi Fayed, saying Tuesday he was obliged "to separate fact from fiction and speculation."

Coroner Michael Burgess' request — part of the opening of official inquests into their 1997 deaths — came as a tabloid newspaper reported Diana believed Prince Charles was plotting to kill her by staging a car accident. Fayed's father said he suspects not only Charles, but also his father, Prince Philip.

A French investigation found the crash was an accident and that driver Henri Paul, who also died, had been drinking. But more sinister explanations for the crash abound, and Burgess said he asked police to investigate whether he should take them up in his inquests.

The coroner immediately adjourned his long-awaited inquiry — Britain's first investigation of the crash — for at least a year to 15 months, saying he needs that time to review evidence gathered by French authorities and conduct his own investigations.

On Tuesday, the Daily Mirror tabloid reported that Diana, in a letter to her butler Paul Burrell, claimed her ex-husband "is planning 'an accident' in my car, brake failure and serious head injury in order to make the path clear for him to marry" his longtime girlfriend Camilla Parker Bowles.

Charles' office said it would not comment on the charge.



Princess Diana

Suspicious jacket causes security scare

HEBRON, Ky. (AP) — A woman was taken off a Paris-to-Cincinnati flight just before it left France on Tuesday because of suspicious wires poking out of her leather jacket. Security officials later determined she was not a threat.

It turned out that the motorcycle jacket was designed to heat up like an electric blanket to keep the wearer warm, officials said.

However, as a precaution, Delta Flight 43 was kept a half-mile from the terminal at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport after it landed. U.S. officials then re-screened all passengers and baggage.

Hafiz Aboulhosn, 53, said he was one of several people

questioned in Paris and among about 10 Middle Eastern men questioned at the Cincinnati airport.

The plane landed at a cargo area where Air Force One lands when President Bush visits. Police cars and Delta passenger buses were gathered at the site, which is surrounded by a 10-foot chain-link fence with barbed wire.

A Homeland Security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the passenger was taken off the plane before it left France because of concerns about the wires. Police bomb disposal experts were called in to check the woman's jacket, said French police officials speaking on customary condition of anonymity.

Women square off in battle for jackpot

CLEVELAND (AP) — Two women — one with a ticket, one tearfully without — laid claim to a \$162 million lottery jackpot Tuesday, triggering a legal dispute that could come down to "finder's keepers" or fraud.

Elecia Battle went to police Monday with the teary story of a lottery ticket lost outside a convenience store, and a small crowd with flashlights soon gathered in the snowy parking lot in search of the precious paper scrap.

Tuesday morning, Rebecca Jemison said Battle's claim prompted her to quit stalling, submit her ticket and collect the prize from the Dec. 30 drawing.

"I was angry at first, but not worried at all," said Jemi-



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

Rebecca Jemison speaks to the media in Cleveland on Tuesday.

son, 34. "I knew what I possessed."

Police, who originally said Battle, 40, had told a credible story about losing the winning ticket, are now investigating whether she lied in a police report, a misdemeanor punishable by 30 days to six months in jail.

Evidence of colliding galaxies found

ATLANTA (AP) — For the first time, astronomers have direct evidence of a galaxy similar to the sun's own Milky Way being torn apart as it smashes at a speed of more than 4 million mph into a cluster of galaxies.

By combining observations from several telescopes and in different wavelengths of light, researchers identified a galaxy, called C153, in the act of streaking toward the core of a large, young cluster of galaxies and being ripped asunder by an immense high-speed collision of gases. Such violence could be the Milky Way's ultimate fate in millions of years.

"It's a clear case of galaxy assault and battery," said William Keel, a University of Alabama astronomer who presented the study Tuesday at the national meeting of the American Astronomical Society.

Astronomers have long known that spiral galaxies such as the Milky Way lose the clouds of gas that form stars when they merge with clusters, which may include thousands of other galaxies. The collision turns vibrant young, star-making galaxies into stunted ellipticals that dim with time as stars die off and aren't replaced. The study of C153 by Keel and others is the first to detect this process under way.

Storm socks Northwest

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Roads, schools and businesses closed in parts of the Northwest on Tuesday as a storm blew in with record cold and unaccustomed snow accumulations.

Swirling snow and temperatures dipping into the teens forced Oregon State University and Western Oregon University to close, along with dozens of school districts around the state.

Portland's MAX light rail commuter train skidded to a stop on icy rails on some routes, interrupting service to Portland International Airport. The city had 7 inches of snow by afternoon.

In Washington, classes were canceled for the day in Seattle and Tacoma public



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

Ian Markert, 3, makes a snow angel in La Conner, Wash., on Tuesday.

schools and at Evergreen State College in Olympia and the University of Washington's Tacoma branch.

Seattle, which typically has mild weather moderated by marine waters, reported a few inches of snow by afternoon.

LAW & DISORDER

Elderly man pleads not guilty

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An 87-year-old man pleaded not guilty to vehicular manslaughter Tuesday in the deaths of 10 people who were struck when his car barreled through a crowded farmers market last July.



George Russell Weller

Jim Bianco entered the plea on behalf of George Russell Weller.

NYC settles in Diallo's death

NEW YORK (AP) — The city will pay \$3 million to the family of Amadou Diallo, the unarmed West African immigrant killed by undercover police in a hail of 41 bullets outside his home five years ago.

"The mayor, the police department and the city deeply regret what occurred and extend their sympathies to the Diallo family," Michael Cardozo, the city's chief lawyer, said Tuesday in announcing the settlement.

Diallo was shot to death in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment building on Feb. 4,



Amadou Diallo

1999, by four white officers who said they mistook his wallet for a gun. The officers said they wanted to talk to Diallo because he fit the description of a rape suspect they were seeking.

The officers fired 41 shots, hitting the street vendor from Guinea 19 times and making the killing an international symbol of police brutality.

WEIRD NEWS

Robber leaves ID at scene

BAKERSFIELD (AP) — Kern County sheriff's deputies said they have never seen a less gaudy suspect.

James Paul Egan allegedly robbed a 7-Eleven at gunpoint, taking care to conceal his identity by covering his face with a blue bandanna and wearing a knit hat and gloves.

Then he ran into the backyard of a nearby house, and threw away all the allegedly incriminating articles: the bandanna, the gloves, the hat, a .357-caliber handgun, and the jacket he had been wearing — with his county jail property identification card in the pocket.