

Scientists feel at home at planet Mars

Parts of Mars look just like Earth. The conclusion of NASA scientists after viewing initial images sent back from Curiosity

Just hours after successfully landing on Mars and the Curiosity space probe has already started sending images back to NASA. Scientists at the US Space Agency hailed the flawless landing as a miracle of engineering.

At a press conference, NASA mission manager Jennifer Trosper was asked if there is anything that has not gone wrong. 'No', was her amusing one word reply. After the laughter died down she went on, "There is a lot ahead of us, but so far we are just ecstatic about the per-

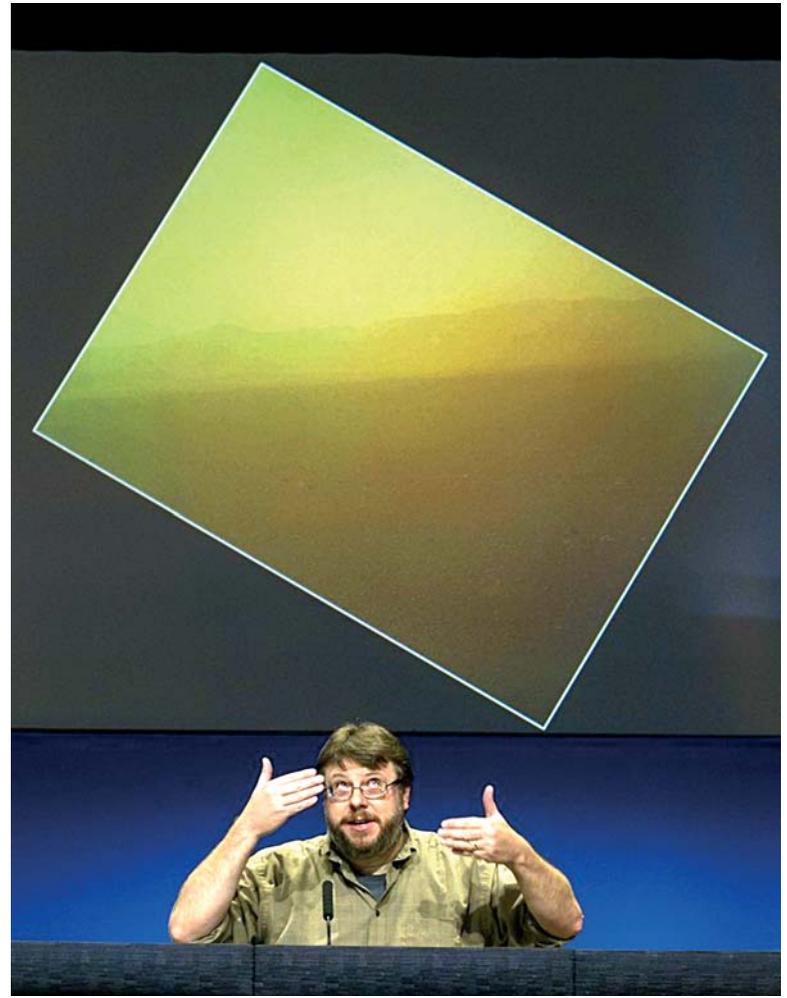
formance of the vehicle."

NASA says Curiosity opens up a whole new era in planetary exploration. US President Barack Obama hailed the accomplishment as a historic point of national pride. The first photos are wide shots of the Gale Crater where the rover landed.

NASA officials say everything is still going to plan and that all of Curiosity's instruments are in good working order. "With Curiosity we landed something that actually looks very Mars-like", said project

scientist John Grotzinger. "But it also looks Earth-like with those mountains in the background there, these deeply dissected pyramidal mountain ranges, and it just looks a lot like what you see out in the Mojave Desert, it's really cool, and so it kind of makes you feel at home."

Scientists have always thought that Mars is the most similar planet to Earth and that it supports, or has supported, key ingredients for organic life. They hope this 2bn Euro project will provide them with the evidence to confirm that theory.



Ken Edgett, Mars Hand Lens Imager (MAHLI) principal investigator



Tourists hesitate as travel agents go under

Times are tough for travel agents in Poland, with holidaymakers spooked after a spate of firms went bust

Eight Polish travel firms have gone under since the start of July. Those left are struggling to reassure nervous customers that they can book up with confidence.

"The bankruptcies that we have heard about in the media made clients afraid that if they buy a holiday tour they might not get their money back or they won't get to go on holiday or they might even be unable to return from their holidays," said Elzbieta Strawa, a travel agent at the Rainbow Tours company in Warsaw.

Polish tourist authorities are playing down the problem, arguing that the troubles of the national industry should not be blown out of proportion. "If we look at the European Union, at the countries which can be compared to us, then we can say that the number of bankrupt companies is much smaller than in other European Union countries," said Polish Tourism Board boss Tomasz Rosset.

However tourists from Poland have been left stranded across the world after travel agents folded. The industry's woes may be, among other things, a knock-on effect from the demise of Polish budget airline OLT which suspended all flights in July.

London Olympics seem to be 'greenest Games'

As it enters its final few days, officials in London say the 2012 Olympics are on track to be the 'greenest Games' in history

The original bid to host the 17-day event included plans to holding the most environmentally friendly tournament possible. Organisers point to the regeneration of what was wasteland leftover from London's industrial past, which has been transformed into the Olympic park.

David Stubbs, Head of Sustainability for the Games' organisers LOCOG said the area had been polluted and then neglected for generations. "This was a derelict wasteland with contaminated land, rivers full of rubbish, broken down buildings."

The Olympic cauldron uses just 15 percent of the gas used at the Beijing Games, organisers claim. Following the games, the site will become the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park with

plans to convert even more of the land into precious London parkland.

But environmental campaigners wanted London 2012 to generate enough renewable energy to replace the amount consumed. The WWF says the games will neither be zero carbon nor zero waste. They hope Rio, a city that has become a symbol of sustainability, will do more for the green cause in 2016 when it hosts the next Olympic Games.

Samsung probes allegation of supplier's underage workers



Samsung Electronics has said it will investigate claims that one of its suppliers hired child workers

New York-based campaign group Child Labor Watch (CLW) alleged its investigators found evidence of the violation while working at a factory owned by China's HEG Electronics. It said seven under-16-year-olds were identified between June and July. But Samsung said it had found no evidence of an employment law breach when it carried out its own checks.

"Samsung Electronics has conducted two separate on-site inspections on HEG's working conditions this year but found no irregularities on those occasions," it said in a statement. "A team of inspectors consisting of Samsung personnel from Korea headquarters will be dispatched to Huizhou, China on August 9th, and it will immediately launch an investigation and take appropriate measures to correct any problems that may surface."

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Recent student protest in Chile ends in violence



Students take part in a demonstration against changes in the public state education system in Santiago

The latest march by students demanding free education in Chile has turned ugly, with clashes between protesters and police

Rallies have often turned violent since the movement started more than a year ago. Security

forces used water cannons and tear gas to disperse the crowd in the capital, Santiago. The confrontation came during an unauthorised demonstration, demanding changes to Chile's largely privatised education system.

Hooded youths regularly mix

with peaceful demonstrators at the protests. Rocks were thrown at police. Education reforms proposed by Chile's President Sebastian Pinera are not enough, students say. They are also angry at a proposed public order crackdown.