



US super model Cindy Crawford holds a copy of her new book at a signing event at Planet Hollywood in Washington, on Tuesday. Crawford was on hand to sign copies of "Cindy Crawford's Basic Face" in which she gives advice on basic make-up techniques. — AFP/ UNB photo

British FM to meet Netanyahu, Arafat next month

US warns Europe not to meddle in ME peace negotiations

WASHINGTON, Oct 23: The United States warned Europe Tuesday not to meddle in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians saying it was unwise to try to create a "mini-United Nations" in the Middle East, reports AFP.

Israel and the Palestinians would be the "sole country" present at the talks that began earlier this month, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

The talks attended by US envoy Dennis Ross were called to try to implement a key provision of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords that calls for a redeployment of the Israeli army from the West Bank town of Hebron, which is predominantly populated by Arabs.

AP adds: In the politest of terms, Secretary of State Warren Christopher has asked they Europeans, particularly the French, to play a low-key role in Middle East diplomacy and been turned down — very politely.

Letters have been exchanged, and for the record State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns and the European recipients decline to divulge the details.

But diplomatic sources, insisting on anonymity, have disclosed that Christopher tactfully told the European foreign ministers in his letter that their governments were already playing a significant role and should keep to that role.

The French, just emerging from a war of words with Christopher on Africa, responded diplomatically with a letter thanking him for the compliment and asserting France wants to be more active in forging agreements between Israel and the Arabs and wants to make a political contribution.

Evidence of that goal was President Jacques Chirac's statement in Jerusalem that Israel should accept the Arabs' demands for an independent Palestinian state and return of the strategic Golan Heights to Syria.

Israel's reaction to Chirac's proposition came from Avi Pazner, ambassador to France, who said the French government seemed more sympathetic to the Palestinians than Israelis. But, Pazner added diplomatically, "France is building a good relationship with the Arab world; it's also building up relations with Israel."

The disagreement between the United States and France over Europe's role in the Middle East follows a recent war of words over Africa that centred on the trip Christopher took early this month to five African countries.

The French, mindful of the calendar and the fact it was Christopher's first trip to Africa in nearly four years, suggested his visit was an election-year afterthought.

In a highly unapologetic rebuke of an ally, Christopher said without citing France by name that France was treating its former colonies as a "private domain" and should permit their greater independence.

Charges and counter charges volleyed across the Atlantic for days while Jacques Rummelhardt, the French foreign minister's spokesman protested that "we never considered the African continent as a private domain of France, no more than any other part of the world is for anyone."

On Tuesday, the second war of words opened with a reporter asking State Department spokesman Burns whether Christopher had sent a letter to Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring, whose country is currently president of the European Union.

Burns said he knew Christopher had been in contact by letter with Spring and other European foreign ministers. Burns said he could not divulge the contents of Christopher's letter, though.

"But I should tell you, without going into the details of those communications, we think the European Union can and should play a positive, active role here, a positive and active role in the Middle East," the US spokesman said.

And yet, Burns said, Israel and the Palestinians have decided on their own that the United States should be the sole country present in their talks.

"They've made that decision and we have to abide by their decision," Burns said.

He made no mention that the French, at least, had responded. Beginning with thanks for his "kind words," the French said the Europeans intended to be more active in the Middle East and that one indication of this would be a trip by Spring to the region.

Christopher, meanwhile, has had his own direct experience with French diplomacy.

Meanwhile, Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind will tour Israel and Palestinian-controlled areas early next month, his office announced Tuesday.

The announcement came as French President Jacques Chirac concluded a discomfiting state visit to the region that underscored the gap between American and European approaches to promoting peace in the region.

Off the Record

Art works stolen by Nazis to be auctioned

VIENNA: Christie's auctioneers and leaders of Austria's Jewish community unveiled thousands of art works and other objects on Tuesday that were stolen by the Nazis and kept for decades in a monastery, reports AP.

Next week's auction is the culmination of a struggle over confiscated objects that have been in limbo for decades, with many Jewish claims to ownership going unanswered.

The landscape and portrait paintings, sculptures, carpets and furniture — enough to fill many of the galleries of the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts — will be auctioned off October 29 and 30. The proceeds — expected to be at least \$3.5 million — will go to needy Holocaust survivors and their families.

Included in the collection are paintings by the Old Masters, a painting by the 20th century Russian artist Alexander Archipenko that was believed lost, and a 3rd century BC marble head of Alexander the Great or a successor.

But many of the pieces are everyday items — well-worn marble tables and chipped wooden beds — that offer glimpses of the homes from which Nazis seized most of the objects between 1938 and 1945.

More than one-third of Austria's 180,000 Jews perished in concentration camps.

Men, women can't mix or even look

KHARTOUM, Sudan: The city government in Khartoum has issued a wide-ranging law designed to enforce the separation of men and women in public places and ban certain practices perceived as un-Islamic, reports AP.

A new "public order law," which was made public Tuesday requires physical barriers between men and women at such social events as weddings, parties and picnics, and orders that they not sit facing each other.

It also requires buses to display a verse from the Koran, Islam's holy book, asking Muslims to not look at members of the opposite sex. The law specifies streets must be well lighted to prevent couples from escaping into the darkness.

The law, issued by the Khartoum Council, did not say what the punishments would be, but the tone was reminiscent of Iran's enforcement of strict Islamic laws after the 1979 revolution. The council urged a media campaign to explain the law to the public, the state-owned Sudan News Agency reported Tuesday.

NDP likely to decline any offer to join ruling coalition govt

TOKYO, Oct 23: Japan's New Democratic Party is likely to decline any offer to join in a ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's conservative Liberal Democrats, a party leader said today.

"Now is the time for us to hunker down," Yukio Hatoyama, co-leader of the Democratic Party, told Reuters in an interview.

Hatoyama said no final decision had been made, as the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had not yet made a formal request, but added: "Basically I believe that our stance should be to start off as an opposition party."

The LDP won 239 seats in Sunday's general election, 12 short of the 251 needed for a majority in the 500-seat lower house. It has therefore been courting its old partners in the outgoing coalition, the Social Democrats and the tiny Sakigake Party, and eyeing an alliance with the Democrats.

Sakigake has just two seats, the Social Democrats 15 and the Democrats 52. The Democratic Party was formed on September 28 by defectors from the Social Democrats and Sakigake.

But with more than 50 seats, the Democrats — ardent advocates of trimming government and reducing bureaucrats' grip on policy — would still have the ability to introduce their own bills in parliament as an opposition party, he added.

He reiterated his party's support for a planned rise in the consumption tax to five per cent from three per cent next April, and said some sort of extra budget for the current fiscal year to next March 31 would be needed.

But he cast doubt on the advisability of crafting a five trillion yen (44.6 billion dollars) budget including three trillion yen (26.7 billion dollars) worth of public works spending, as advocated by some senior LDP members during the campaign.

President won't appoint new security adviser

Yeltsin urged to hand over power to PM or face popular revolt

LONDON, Oct 23: Alexander Kozhakov, former close confidant to President Boris Yeltsin, today urged the ailing Russian leader to hand over power to his Prime Minister or face a popular revolt, reports AFP.

In an interview with The Guardian newspaper, the former chief of the presidential bodyguards also said Yeltsin had rejected unanimous advice from his doctors in May that his re-election campaign was threatening his life.

And he had ignored aides' advice to form a coalition with the communists, Kozhakov added.

The warning came a day after Nikolai Yegorov, the former Kremlin chief of staff who was unceremoniously dumped in June, urged Yeltsin to call early presidential elections, saying he was not fit to run the country.

Kozhakov told The Guardian that the president had fallen under the influence of his daughter, Tatyana Diachenko, and of Anatoly Chubais, successor to Yegorov at the Kremlin.

Asked why he thought Chubais posed such a threat to Russian security, Kozhakov described the Kremlin chief as a regent totally controlling all appointments and preparing decrees for the president to sign.

"We have a regent with a president still alive, this is extremely dangerous for Russia," he said.

"I wouldn't like things to get to a level of a popular revolt, but events are moving this way by themselves," he said. He added that Chubais does not know how much he is hated in Russia for his role in the country's privatisation scheme.

Yegorov, in an interview with a Moscow daily on Tuesday, also accused Chubais of holding a Rasputin-like hold over the Russian president, and of amassing excessive powers for himself, chiefly by manipulating the president's daughter.

Kozhakov claimed Chubais was trying to engineer a situation where he would take over as president, and that the clique of advisers were already working on contingency plans if the president did not survive the heart operation he is due to have late next month.

Chubais was working on plans to influence deputies in the Duma with the aim of forcing through constitutional changes which would scrap presidential elections, Kozhakov said.

The plan was to manipulate events so that he could take over as head of state, he alleged.

Chubais is widely believed to have orchestrated the June ouster of Uorzhakov, who is now campaigning with Alexander Lebed, the national security chief sacked by Yeltsin last week.

Kozhakov urged Yeltsin to hand over power to Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

AFP adds, Russian President Boris Yeltsin has decided not to appoint a new special national security adviser following last week's dismissal of General Alexander Lebed. Interfax news agency reported Tuesday.

Yeltsin on Saturday named former parliament speaker Ivan Rybkin to replace Lebed as secretary of the powerful National Security Council, but on Tuesday Kremlin spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said he would not appoint a special security adviser as well, Interfax reported.

Yastrzhembsky said the adviser role was no longer necessary "as Rybkin is a member of the presidential team and will fulfill this role."

UNSC seat Indian press blasts govt

NEW DELHI, Oct 23: Leading Indian newspapers lashed out at the government today following its failure to beat Japan to a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, reports AFP.

An editorial in the Indian Express, reacting to India's 142-40 vote defeat Monday in the General Assembly for the annual replacement of five non-permanent council members, called the result "more than a setback."

"It was a veritable foreign policy disaster," it said, accusing the government of living in a "make-believe world."

The paper criticised the country's leaders for mistakenly presuming it could win the backing of the 113-strong Non-Aligned Movement to compete with Japan.

"Japan has something concrete to offer in terms of aid, capital, technology and commercial expertise. India has an overdose of sentimentality," it said. "Japan is dynamic, India is a crashing bore."

"Japan has Sony, Mitsubishi, Nissan, India has dengue fever, Mother Teresa and the collected works of Mahatma Gandhi for solace."

US arms control expert to meet Chinese team Nov

WASHINGTON, Oct 23: The State Department's top arms control expert will meet Chinese officials in Beijing in November 4-5 to discuss alleged nuclear sales and other non-proliferation issues, the state department said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Under secretary of state Lynn Davis' talks agreed to in principle by US and Chinese officials some months ago, are designed to pave the way for a trip to China in November 21-22 by secretary of state Warren Christopher, spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

He added that Davis' discussions would involve "the full range of non-proliferation and security issues."

His visit is part of a newly resumed dialogue between the United States and China on arms-related matters.

Tulsi for checking spread of dengue fever

SHIMLA, Oct 23: Dr Rakesh Kumar Pandit, senior ayurvedic specialist, regional ayurvedic hospital, here has suggested use of "tulsi" for effectively checking the spread of dengue viral, reports PTI.

Claiming that dengue fever had been described as an "epidemic in hot temperate areas" in the ancient ayurvedic texts, he said a paste of 'tulsi leaves or decoction of tulsi, neem and giloy' can be very useful for dengue patients while the use of 'shadang-pariyati' and 'vednat-tak ras' provided great relief from restlessness and aches.

He also suggested medicines like 'hingureshwar ras, sanjeevani, vati, tribhuvankirti ras, godanti, bhasma' and sonth (dry ginger) for treatment of dengue patients.

Royal quarter of ancient Alexandria discovered

CAIRO: Archaeologists based in Germany said on Tuesday they had discovered traces of the royal quarter of the ancient city of Alexandria, where Mark Antony wooed Cleopatra, the last Pharaoh of an independent Egypt, reports Reuters.

They said in a faxed statement that a team led by Marine archaeologist Franck Goddio had found the quarter in the eastern harbour of the Egyptian city.

But they declined to give details until a news conference by Goddio in Alexandria on November 3.

Marine archaeologists led by Frenchman Jean Yves Empereur have been retrieving ancient statuary from the north-western corner of the eastern harbour, close to where the pharos or lighthouse stood in classical times.

Textbooks say the palace enclosure was built on Al-Silsilah, a promontory that marks the eastern edge of the eastern harbour, but no remains are visible on land today.

Alexandria was built for the Macedonian warrior Alexander the great from the late 4th century BC. The ptolemies, a dynasty founded by one of his generals, ruled Egypt from the city until the Roman invasion and it remained the capital of the country until the Arab conquest in the 7th century AD.

Kennedy Jr was 'convinced by 'Just do it'

PORTLAND, Oregon: Newlywed John F Kennedy Jr joked at an advertising luncheon that Nike's famous "Just Do It" slogan convinced him to take the wedding plunge, reports AP.

"One evening not so long ago, I was staring out my window, wondering whether I should make a major life decision," Kennedy said Friday. "And my eyes focused on a billboard that said: 'Just Do It.'"

An adoring crowd jammed a hotel ballroom for a glimpse of the celebrity editor of the year-old political magazine, George.

"I realise that politics and magazines may not be the only reason you're here," Kennedy said, delighting the crowd with personal quips such as new wife Carolyn "let me keep my maiden name."

Attendance at Portland Advertising Federation luncheons usually tops out at a couple of hundred. Kennedy drew 928 people at up to \$15 a ticket.

"There is one other wedding dress in the world like my wife Carolyn's," Kennedy said. "I believe it's owned by Dennis Rodman."

BRIEFLY

- 600 Kurdish leave Turkey for US:** Some 600 Kurdish dissidents and their families left for the US Pacific territory of Guam Tuesday to be resettled in the United States, AP reports from Adana.
- The Kurds, most of them members of the CIA-aided Iraqi National Congress which opposes Saddam Hussein, were evacuated into Turkey from northern Iraq earlier this week. They were feared to be in danger after Saddam regained influence in the Kurdish-controlled north of the country seven weeks ago.
- Qatari crown prince appointed:** The emir of Qatar has named the third of his four sons to be crown prince after passing a decree that permits any of his sons to succeed him, not just the eldest, AP reports from Doha.
- Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani named his 18-year-old son, Sheik Jassem bin Hamad Al Thani, to be his successor after consulting with other members of the ruling family, including his eldest son, the official Qatari News Agency said. It gave no other details. Sheik Hamad seized power in this tiny Persian Gulf state in June 1995 when he ousted his father in a bloodless palace coup. The former emir, Sheik Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, was on vacation in Europe at the time.
- Chopper crash kills 4 in UK:** Four people died when a helicopter they were traveling in crashed late Tuesday near the northwestern English town, police said, AFP reports from Middlewich.
- Forty firefighters were at the crash site, shifting through the wreckage of the French-built twin-engine aeroplane. The cause of the crash was not yet known but there were high tension cables nearby, a police spokesman said.
- 400 criminals held in SA:** South African police have arrested 400 most-wanted criminals in the country, a police statement issued Tuesday announced, Xinhua reports from Johannesburg.
- The arrests were made in Johannesburg region during the past four months, the statement said, adding they were part of the national anti-crime plan which came into effect in the second week of June this year.
- German defence minister in India:** German Defence Minister Volker Ruehe arrived in New Delhi Wednesday for three days of talks on global security, AP reports from New Delhi.
- Ruehe, the first German defence minister to visit India, led a 17-member delegation that included military leaders and defence department analysts.

Dostam troops join former govt soldiers against Taliban

JABUL SARAJ, Afghanistan, Oct 23: Troops loyal to northern Afghan warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam joined former government soldiers against the Taliban militia today for the first time since the fall of Kabul, a spokesman for the former government said.

The joint assault was made on the strategic Fabz Pass, some 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the capital, spokesman Marhabuddin Mastan told AFP.

The troops secured both sides of the pass, along the so-called "new road" one of two major northern routes out of Kabul, he said.

The attack, which was launched early in the morning with Dostam's men moving in from the north and Masood's from the south, was aimed at cutting off Taliban forces from pulling back southwards towards the capital, Mastan said.

"We hope that our forces will take the pass in the afternoon," he said.

A Reuters report from Kalakan adds, forces of the ousted Afghan government launched a major attack early today to capture the De Sabz Pass a strategic position just 10 km (six miles) north of the Afghan capital Kabul.

Shells and rockets fired by Jamiat-i-Islami troops under the leadership of deposed government commander Ahmad Shah Masood pounded positions of the radical Islamic Taliban militia in hills above the pass nearly every minute.

Masood is trying to dislodge Taliban forces from Kabul nearly a month after the fundamentalist Islamic group captured the capital, giving it control of two-thirds of the country.

Control of the pass, which links the road from Masood-controlled territory to north-eastern Kabul, would give Masood's forces command of heights vital for an advance on the capital.

"We are progressing," Mehrabodin Masstan, a spokesman for Masood, told reporters. "We have taken control of the high positions on De Sabz Pass and we will soon clear the Taliban's remaining two positions."

"If we take control of this pass (De Sabz), we get very close to Kabul — we will be only 10 km away," Masstan said.

AFP from Tehran says, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said today that his country still recognized Afghanistan's ousted government and called the Islamic Taliban militia a "group of rebels."

"We consider former President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government as the only legal representative in Afghanistan and the emergence of a group of rebels doesn't raise questions about its legitimacy," Velayati told a news conference.

Iran has been sharply critical of the fundamentalist Taliban since it captured the Afghan capital Kabul last month.

Shiite Muslim Iran also charges that the Sunni Muslim militia is a puppet of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States with a goal of countering Tehran's influence in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Russian deputy foreign minister Evgeny Mikhailov (R), Russian presidential envoy in Tajikistan, takes northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostam (L) by the hand during their talks in Mazari-Sharif, Dostam's residence, October 20. — AFP/ UNB photo

Myanmar students stage largest demonstration

YANGON, Oct 23: Chanting "Are we untied? Yes we are, more than 500 university students staged one of the largest street demonstrations in several years, dispersing early Wednesday after voicing protests against police brutality, reports AP.

The peaceful, six-hour sit-down strike took place near the campus of Yangon University, traditional site of student protests against Myanmar decades-old military rule.

The demonstration, led by students from the Yangon Institute of Technology — 13 kilometers (eight miles) from downtown Yangon — was sparked by an incident Sunday in which police arrested students involved in a dispute with a restaurant owner.

They allegedly beat them badly after taking them to the police station, and one received a wound requiring 12 stitches. Students said the quarrel had been settled by the time police arrived.

The demonstrators dispersed before dawn Wednesday after teachers and university officials told them that authorities had agreed to take action against the police. They also told the students that authorities had asked the demonstrators to disperse in one hour.

The students said their protest was not political.

Ogata's call to avoid 'humanitarian catastrophe' in Zaire

GENEVA, Oct 23: The head of the UN refugee agency has urged warring sides in Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi to stop fighting "immediately" to avoid "another humanitarian disaster in a region that has already suffered enough," reports AP.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata warned that "unless all parties to this conflict step back we are heading toward a humanitarian catastrophe."

The United Nations evacuated 54 relief workers trapped in fighting between Zairian troops and ethnic Tutsi rebels after an earlier unsuccessful effort. The workers flew out Tuesday afternoon by air from Uvira, a refugee spokesman confirmed.

"The refugees and humanitarian workers are at the mercy of a very unstable and dangerous security situation, and it is impossible at this time to predict the outcome," Ogata said.

UNHCR is "once again facing an emergency operation" after prolonged efforts to provide help and stability in camps for Rwandan refugees since 1994, she said. Zaire hosts 1 million of the 1.6 million Rwandan refugees. The rest are in Tanzania.

Also Tuesday, thousands of Rwandan refugees fled camps near Goma, also in Zaire. Zaire's military said three camps with more than 500,000 inhabitants were affected by fighting between Zairian troops and Tutsi rebels, said Ron Redmond, the refugee agency spokesman.

"If this true, this is very alarming because we are now facing problems in the North and the South of Zaire," Redmond said.

Between 48 and 54 UN relief workers, who were forced to leave everything behind, were airlifted to Bukavu.

There was no immediate explanation for the difference in numbers. The relief workers were from UNHCR, the food programme, the UN Children's Fund and non-governmental organisations.

UN staff "report that fighting is continuing in the Uvira region," Redmond said. The sound of gunfire could be heard in the town of Uvira, which lies across Lake Tanganyika from Bukavu, Burundi.

Zairian officials on Monday refused to allow the aid workers to leave overland, a trip of about 30 kilometres (19 miles) around the northern end of the lake.

The fighting between ethnic Tutsis known as Banyamulenge and Zairian troops prompted an estimated 220,000 Hutu refugees to flee camps in eastern Zaire. Some 3,000 of the refugees, originally from Rwanda, have shown up in the Bukavu area.

"Scores of refugees and displaced Zairians have also arrived in Bukavu town," he said.

The refugee agency is sending a team Tuesday to look into the condition of refugees arriving at Nyengezi-Mulwa camp, Redmond said.

Also, there are unconfirmed reports of columns of several thousand refugees on the road heading toward Bukavu, he said. However, the grounded relief workers have not been able to investigate the situation.

Many of the refugees who left the camps in Uvira area over the weekend are likely in the surrounding hills and banana plantations waiting to see what will happen, he noted. Most of those who fled are from the four camps north of the fighting, which held about 70,000 refugees, Redmond said.

Refugees in the eight camps south of the fighting "are finding it difficult to go North to safety," he added.

Redmond said the refugee agency is preparing existing refugee camps in Bukavu to receive some 75,000 Rwandan refugees from Uvira.