

International

US plans quick bid to restart tripartite talks

WASHINGTON, Oct 3: The United States plans a quick bid to re-start negotiations between Israel and Syria and Lebanon if it can nail down an Israeli-Palestinian deal at a summit this month, a top US official said on Friday, reports Reuters.

Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk told a Middle East conference that "we do have a chance" of an accord when Israeli and Palestinian leaders meet. President Bill Clinton in the Washington area in mid-October.

"We have very clearly in mind that if we can reach an agreement in the coming weeks we would move quickly to an effort to relaunch the Israeli-Syrian negotiations and the Israeli-Lebanese negotiations," Indyk said.

Sporadic talks between Israel and Syria, aimed at an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in return for Syrian recognition of Israel, lasted for more than four years but have not been held since February 1996.

Because of Syria's strong military and political influence in Lebanon, all sides have always assumed that no serious talks between Israel and

Lebanon could take place until the Golan issue was resolved.

Indyk said he believed Israel, Syria and Lebanon were now keen to get talks going again.

"Finding a basis for doing so will not be easy, but... I believe that there is another unusual confluence of interest that leads these three parties to want to resume the negotiations," he said.

Indyk did not elaborate. Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Shara and Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri held separate meetings with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright last week and US officials said both had expressed an interest in resumed talks.

Another report adds: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said on Friday no substantive progress had been made in his talks with US President Bill Clinton in Washington on breaking the impasse in Middle East peacemaking.

He spoke hours after Israel imposed a complete closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip over warnings that the radical Palestinian Islamic group Hamas planned to carry out a major attack.



Fist Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton receives a flower from a mime as she visits the Museum of Visual Arts after delivering the keynote address at the 'Vital Voices of the Americas: Women in Democracy Conference,' on Friday in Montevideo, Uruguay. The conference is co-sponsored by the US government and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Royal aides at Buckingham Palace misled press for past 20 yrs: Andrew

LONDON, Oct 3: Royal aides at Buckingham Palace have deliberately misled the press for the past 20 years, Britain's Prince Andrew said in an interview published on Saturday, comparing them to secretive Soviet bureaucrats, reports AFP.

"The difficulty is trying to convince you that you are being told the truth because you can't believe you're being told the truth."

"For the past 20 years you probably haven't. It's like the Russians," he told the Mirror tabloid on an official visit to Malta.

Andrew, 38, admitted that palace press officials used to routinely deny stories — such as the break-up of the marriage between Diana and Prince Charles — without seeking approval.

But under new rules, they must check with individual royals over any story.

"Nowadays, they're very good," said Andrew, who is Queen Elizabeth II's second son.

Since the death last year of Diana, Princess of Wales, his mother has ushered in a new spirit of "glasnost", the Prince said.

Primakov warned against shifting Moscow's policy

CHICAGO, Oct 3: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Friday warned Russian premier Yevgeny Primakov against shifting Moscow's policy toward the West from cooperation to "opposition and defiance for its own sake", reports AFP.

In her first comprehensive review of US-Russian relations since Primakov was confirmed as premier last month, Albright told a business luncheon here she was concerned about recent signals from Moscow.

She said Washington's top priorities were to ensure that Russia does not pose a military threat and to support economic reforms there.

"Our initial reaction to some of the direction (Primakov's going) has not been particularly positive," she told 250 business leaders attending the US-Russia Business Council.

She noted that when Primakov was Foreign Minister she had been able to work with him to "advance our cooperation where our interests converge and manage our differences honestly and constructively."

"The question now is whether that cooperation can continue," she said.

"There are many voices in Russia who want to shift the emphasis in Russia's interaction with America and our allies from one of partnership to one of assertiveness, opposition and defiance for its own sake."

Launch of first modules of ISS to go ahead

WASHINGTON, Oct 3: The launch of the first modules of the International Space Station (ISS) will go ahead as planned on November 20 and December 3, NASA said on Friday, reports AFP.

The announcement followed a meeting of partner states involved in the building of the station held in Moscow earlier Friday.

The first module, the "Zarya" Energy Block, will be launched on November 20 from the Baikonour Space Centre in Kazakhstan on a Russian Proton rocket, the block is Russian built but US funded.

The second module the "Unity Connector," will be launched by a US space shuttle on December 3.

BRIEFLY

**Chopper crash kills 6 in Canada:** A Canadian Forces Labrador helicopter crashed in Quebec's Gaspere region on Friday afternoon, exploding on impact, AP reports from Ste-Anne-Des-Monts, Quebec. All six people on board were killed, said Lt Stave Hebert of Canadian Forces Base Greenwood in Nova Scotia. The accident happened in the town of Marsouit, about 400 KM northeast of Quebec City. The crash ignited a forest fire, which was extinguished by firefighting aircraft. The names of the dead were not being released.

**Clinton, Jiang meet in next month:** US President Bill Clinton and his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin will meet on the sidelines of the APEC summit in Malaysia next month, the official China Daily reported yesterday, AFP says from Beijing.

The two leaders last met on Clinton's tour of China in June and July. Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright agreed at the start of the week in Washington that the "common understanding" reached between the two countries "should be implemented quickly."

**5 kidnapers killed in Malaysia:** Police shot to death five people suspected of kidnapping a politician's son and recovered the 3 million ringgit (790,000 dollars) ransom that had been paid for the 11-year-old's freedom, reports said on Saturday, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Selangor state police chief Kamaruddin Hamzah said the boy was abducted Monday as he was being driven to school in the capital by his father's chauffeur. After being held at a house for four days, he was left uninjured at a roadside Friday evening about a half hour after the ransom had been paid to the kidnapers at a hotel, according to newspaper reports. Kamaruddin said police received information that led them to raid a single-story, terraced house two hours after the boy was freed. Shots were fired at the police, who returned fire, killing two women and three men in the house, Kamaruddin said. He said another suspect remained at large.

**Bus plunge kills 34 in China:** Thirty-four people were killed when a bus plunged into a ravine in Fujian province in eastern coastal China, a report said on Saturday, AFP says from Hong Kong.

Another seven passengers were seriously injured when the bus skidded off the mountain road and plunged down a 50-meter ravine (165 feet) in Zabehnghe county on Wednesday, the Beijing-backed Ta Kung Pao said. The bus was on its way to Pingting in northern Fujian province. The cause of the accident was being investigated.

**One jailed in China for nude dance:** The boss of a privately-run dance troupe in southwest China has been sentenced to a one-year jail term for staging nude shows which also starred his daughter-in-law, it was reported on Saturday, AFP says from Hong Kong.

The troupe operator, identified only as Wang, was also fined 5,000 yuan (610 dollars), for ordering six women including his daughter-in-law to perform naked in Chengdu, the Oriental Daily News said.

**Quakes hit China:** Two moderately strong earthquakes have struck remote regions in southwestern and northwestern China, but there were no immediate reports of casualties, local officials said Saturday, AP reports from Beijing.

A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Jiashi County, in northwestern Xinjiang, at 1:01 am (1701 GMT Friday) Saturday, jolting residents from their sleep, but causing little damage, said an official with the Xinjiang Seismology Bureau who gave her surname, Liu. A magnitude 5.3 earthquake jostled Ningland Yi Autonomous County, a region of rugged terrain along Yunnan's border with Sichuan province, on Friday evening, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported.

**Peruvian FM resigns:** Peru's Foreign Minister Eduardo Ferrero Costa confirmed Friday that he would resign on the eve of a meeting between the Peruvian and Ecuador presidents aimed at formally ending a 1995 conflict, AFP reports from Lima.

I have given my letter of resignation to Cabinet President Alberto Pandolfi, said Ferrero Costa who gave no reason for his resignation after a little more than a year on the job. A Foreign Ministry spokesman refused to comment other than to say the resignation was a real surprise.

**Mongolian democracy leader slain:** A prominent member of Mongolia's democratic movement who was a potential candidate for prime minister has been assassinated, AP reports from Ulan Bator.

The prime minister's office said Sanjaasuegjin Zorig, minister for infrastructure in the ruling Democratic Coalition, was axed and stabbed to death at his home by two masked assailants at about 10:30 pm (1430 GMT) on Friday.

Indonesia revokes status of Irian Jaya province

JAKARTA, Oct 3: Indonesia has revoked the status of its restive eastern province of Irian Jaya as a military operations zone, the official Antara news agency said today, reports Reuters.

"The military operation status has been revoked and our activities will be shifted to safeguard vulnerable areas," Amir Sembiring, commander of the Irian Jaya military region in Irian Jaya, was quoted as saying.

Most combat troops would be removed but some would remain due to the territory's vast size, he was quoted as saying. Sembiring last week said a cease-fire had been agreed between the military and separatist rebels in the province.

A low-level separatist insurgency has been under way in Irian Jaya since 1969 when the mineral-rich province was incorporated into Indonesia. Unrest flared in the province in July this year during separatist protests, with human rights groups saying several people were killed in clashes with troops.

Airstrikes in less than 2 weeks if needed: Cohen Serbs move to evade NATO intervention in Kosovo

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia, Oct 3: Anxious to avoid NATO airstrikes, Serb authorities are scrambling to show they are making progress toward ending the conflict in Kosovo by complying with UN orders to withdraw their troops from the troubled province, reports AP.

But ethnic Albanian political leaders have rebuffed their offer to hold talks, saying they won't sit down with the Serbs until NATO intervenes.

The bombing of Serb forces and positions is a necessary step to create conditions for truthful negotiations, said the Democratic League for Kosovo, the leading ethnic Albanian political party, on Friday. "Experience from Bosnia shows Serbia accepts dialogue only when forced to."

Low-grade talks between the two sides, which the Serbs say could lead to restoring some of the autonomy they took away from Kosovo in 1989, broke off last May.

Despite the Serbs' claims that forces have been withdrawn and fighting is over, there are reports of continuing clashes in the separatist province of southern Serbia.

The Kosovo Information Centre, close to the province's ethnic Albanian leadership, said Serb forces attacked two villages Friday near Malisevo in southwestern Kosovo, then sent in reinforcements when Kosovo Liberation Army rebels

fought back. For its part, the pro-Serb Media Centre said Yugoslav army border guards came under grenade-launcher fire from inside Albania's territory near the Pogaj border outpost opposite Prizren, Kosovo.

Besides asking the ethnic Albanian negotiating team to resume a political dialogue, the Serbs invited UN Secretary-

Dengue fever kills 300 so far in Philippines

MANILA, Oct 3: An epidemic of dengue fever in the Philippines has killed 300 people dead and affected 19,000 so far, health secretary Albert Romualdez said today, reports Reuters.

"But we think the peak of the dengue incidences has passed. This happened in the months of August and September and it looks like the number of new cases is decreasing...," Romualdez told private radio station DSMM.

The Philippines declared an epidemic of dengue fever in five areas last month after the disease killed more than 2000 people.

The health department also classified 18 other areas, including capital Manila, as "hot spots" but not epidemic zones.

General Kofi Annan to visit Kosovo, removed a key police roadblock and showed reporters heavy equipment they said has been withdrawn.

But Annan, who is to deliver a report Monday on whether Milosevic has complied, turned down the offer.

AFP adds from Washington: NATO military action in Kosovo will come in less than two weeks if it is needed to compel Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to meet all UN demands for an end to the bloodshed US Defence Secretary William Cohen said on Friday.

Cohen emphasized that NATO allies would not be satisfied if Milosevic "stops the killing momentarily." There is a report that two weeks are contemplated before any such action will take place, I believe action, if it is required, will take place before that time, Cohen told reporters at the Pentagon.

The US Defence Secretary is planning to travel to Brussels for a crucial NATO meeting on Wednesday that could authorise military commanders to carry out a phased air campaign against Serbian military targets.

Meanwhile, UN chief Kofi Annan is expected to conclude in a report on Monday that Belgrade has failed to comply with UN demands on Kosovo, UN officials and diplomats said.



A Palestinian injured by a rubber bullet during clashes with Israeli troops is evacuated from the scene of the disturbances in the centre of the West Bank town of Hebron on Friday. Israel sealed its borders with the West Bank and Gaza indefinitely following warnings by the defence minister that the Islamic militant group Hamas plotted an "unprecedented horrific" attack in Israel. — AP/UNB photo

Lankan troops kill 10 LTTE rebels

COLOMBO, Oct 3: Sri Lankan armed forces killed 10 Tamil Tiger guerrillas in clashes near two northern towns where at least 1,200 people died earlier this week in some of the heaviest fighting of the 15-year ethnic war, officials said Saturday, reports AP.

The rebels were killed in three encounters near the Mankulam and Kilinochchi on Friday, said Major Kumar Dewage, a military spokesman. There were no casualties on the government side, he said.

The rebels did not immediately comment on the incident.

The guerrillas captured Kilinochchi on Sunday, but the military hit back by taking the smaller rebel-held town of Mankulam on Wednesday. Kilinochchi is 275 kilometers (170 miles) north of the capital, Colombo, and Mankulam is 30 kilometers (18 miles) south of Kilinochchi.

The two towns are along a strategic highway that would link the isolated military-controlled northern town of Jaffna with the southern part of the Indian Ocean island. The military has rested two-thirds of the war-scarred highway from the rebels in a bruising offensive that has been inching forward since May 1997.

Detailed account of Hewitt-Diana relationship stolen from car

LONDON, Oct 3: A detailed account by former army officer James Hewitt of his relationship with Diana, Princess of Wales has been stolen from his car, it was reported today, says AFP.

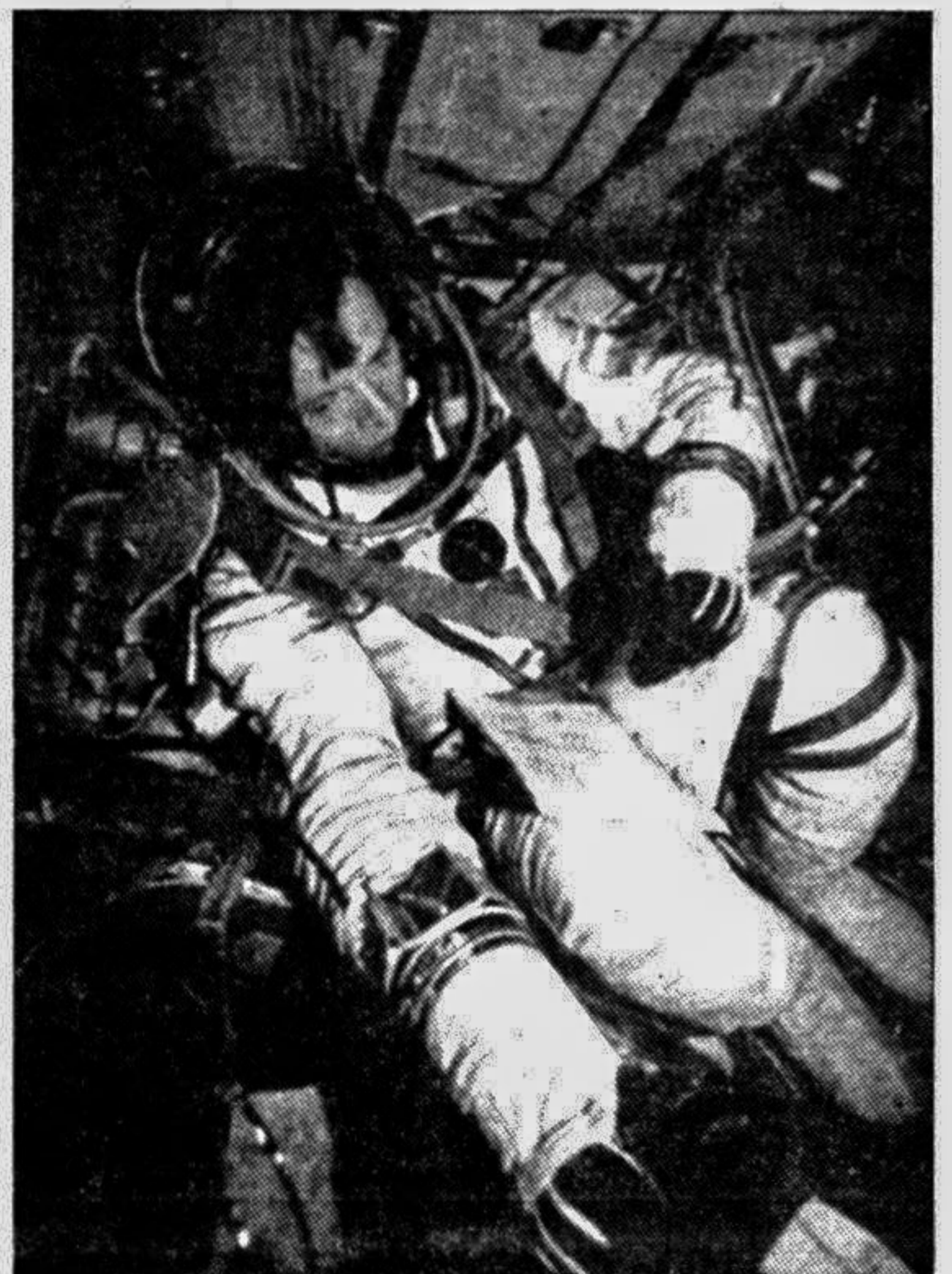
Chapters of a manuscript outlining Hewitt's relationship with the late Princess plus personal items linked to her are believed to have been stolen from Hewitt's green Jaguar XJS, the Daily Mail newspaper reported.

About 50,000 pounds (85,000 dollars) in cash, cheques totalling around 20,000 pounds and credit cards are also believed to have been stolen from the boot (trunk) of his car in west London.

According to the Daily Mail, Hewitt, 40, dubbed "love rat" by the press for previous kiss-and-tell revelations, is rumoured to be writing a no-holds barred account of his love affair with the princess that could net him more than a million pounds (1.7 million dollars).

Hewitt, who is reported to have sold his 350,000 pound country home in England because of financial difficulties, has so far not given full, intimate details of his affair with the princess.

He admitted to the Mirror newspaper last month that he was paid for cooperation with journalists Anna Pasternak on her book about his relationship with Diana.



European Space Agency astronaut Christer Fuglesang of Sweden undergoes test in the Soyuz simulator during training in Star City near Moscow on Friday. Fuglesang received the "Soyuz Return Commander" certificate at the Yuri Gagarin Training Centre in Star City, qualifying him to be the commander of a three-person Soyuz capsule during its return from space. — AP/UNB photo

Polling begins in Australia to choose govt for 21st century

SYDNEY, Oct 3: Australian voters went to the polls on Saturday to choose between a conservative incumbent promising an unpopular new tax and a Labour Party that they had cast into the political wilderness just 2 and a half years earlier, reports AP.

About 12 million registered voters began casting their ballots at about 2230 GMT. Thousands of polling booths were set up in public buildings in towns from the nation's desert Outback to its tropical north and in its modern, bustling cities in the southeast.

Counting will begin about 0800 GMT, but the closeness of the race means the final results may not be known for days.

Prime Minister John Howard has staked his government's fate on what he calls "economically radical" tax reforms — simplifying an antiquated tax structure that has built up since the 1930s.

Whether Howard retains power rests on voters' willingness to accept a 10 per cent tax on all goods and services.

Howard's main opponent, Labour Party leader Kim Beazley, is promising something far less painful: "To create 500,000

new jobs. And he has used a "no tax" promise to pull Labour close enough to snuff victory.

Labour was thrown out in a landslide victory for Howard in 1996 and the historical odds are against Beazley.

Labour must hold all its current electorates and win 27 more to seize a majority in the House of Representatives, the more powerful chamber in Australia's bicameral Parliament.

If it succeeds, Labour will have achieved the largest comeback in Australian election history, and Howard's will become the first single-term government since the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Labour and the coalition have been in a dead heat for weeks, according to the polls, indicating the most likely outcome may be another Howard government.

But a Newspoll published on Saturday in The Weekend Australian shows a late surge by Labour large enough to restore it to power if repeated at the 2,618 voters a few days before the election put support for Labour at 44 per cent against the coalition's 40 per cent.

Indonesia revokes status of Irian Jaya province

New evidence details Clinton-Tripp efforts to contain Lewinsky scandal

WASHINGTON, Oct 3: In a final salvo before a vote on impeachment, the House has released 4,600 pages of evidence that meticulously detail President Bill Clinton's efforts to contain the Monica Lewinsky scandal as it erupted, reports AP.

"It was not good," Oval Office secretary Betty Currie told the grand jury, recounting a midnight phone call she received from the president in which he warned that a news story about his relationship with Ms. Lewinsky was about to emerge.

The evidence released Friday also lays bare Pentagon worker Linda Tripp's efforts to coach Ms. Lewinsky about her relationship with Clinton — all the while secretly recording their conversations on tapes that would be turned over to Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr.

"You have got to get out of town, big time," Mrs. Tripp is quoted as telling Ms. Lewinsky just before the former intern seeks White House help in finding a job in New York. Another time Mrs. Tripp bristles, "I hate what he (Clinton) has done to you."

The evidence depicts Clinton sending Mrs. Currie on a mad-dash effort to page and call Ms. Lewinsky late at night as the story was breaking. "Do you think you can reach Monica, see what's happening?" the president asked. He also awakened his closest confidant Bruce Lindsey, who refused to tell the grand jury what he and the president discussed that night.

Mrs. Currie eventually reached Ms. Lewinsky — by then already approached by Starr's FBI agents — but the former intern hung up on her. When Mrs. Currie told that to the president, Clinton said, "she probably was told by her lawyers not to talk to you."

Transcripts of the 20 hours of taped conversations depict Mrs. Tripp instructing Mrs. Lewinsky on what to tell the president, intimately discussing sexual encounters and suggesting she hold out for a higher paying job.

The tapes show that Mrs. Tripp at first told Ms. Lewinsky to seek the help of presidential friend Vernon Jordan in her job search, then warned about his motives.

The documents cast Mrs. Tripp as Starr's eager informant. In all, she was interviewed at his offices 23 times between February and June, and testified before the grand jury nine times.

In one interview with Starr's investigators, she gave the names of dozens of people — some that she could identify only phonetically — who knew something about the Clinton-Lewinsky relationship. These included White House steward Bayani Nelvis, who would later tell the grand jury of his own friendship with Ms. Lewinsky.

The evidence, three bound volumes of grand jury transcripts and FBI interviews, discloses the exact words of dozens of grand jury witnesses summoned during Starr's seven-month investigation. Drawing on their testimony and other evidence, the independent counsel reported to Congress

that there were 11 possible grounds for impeachment of the president.

White House adviser Gregory Craig immediately decried Starr's "failure to include or discuss evidence favorable to the president" in his summary report to Congress and accused the prosecutor of "evidentiary manipulation and misdirection."

Starr fired back, calling Craig's statement "disingenuous" and pointing out instances where exculpatory information was included in his report. Starr added that he found it significant that the White House had not challenged the "credibility, or the factual underpinnings of nine of the eleven grounds for impeachment, including the president's perjury in his deposition and before the grand jury."

The conversations with Mrs. Currie were among a series of contacts by Clinton that portray the president's worry upon learning in January that Starr had begun investigating his relationship with Ms. Lewinsky

and the possibility he lied under oath and obstructed justice.

The three new volumes contained no new bombshells but were filled with snippets of evidence certain to be seized upon by both sides in the impeachment debate.

Democrats pointed to testimony by Mrs. Currie that it was Ms. Lewinsky — and not the president — who caused subpoenaed gifts to be retrieved and hidden under Mrs. Currie's bed and that it was Mrs. Currie, not the president, who first asked Jordan to help find a job for Ms. Lewinsky.

"I was doing it on my own," Mrs. Currie testified. Starr alleges the job search was evidence that Clinton sought to buy Mrs. Lewinsky's silence, a charge the former intern denies.

On the flip side, the testimony provided fresh fodder for Republicans to argue that Clinton made a conscious effort to commit perjury in his sworn testimony denying a sexual relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, and may also have influenced

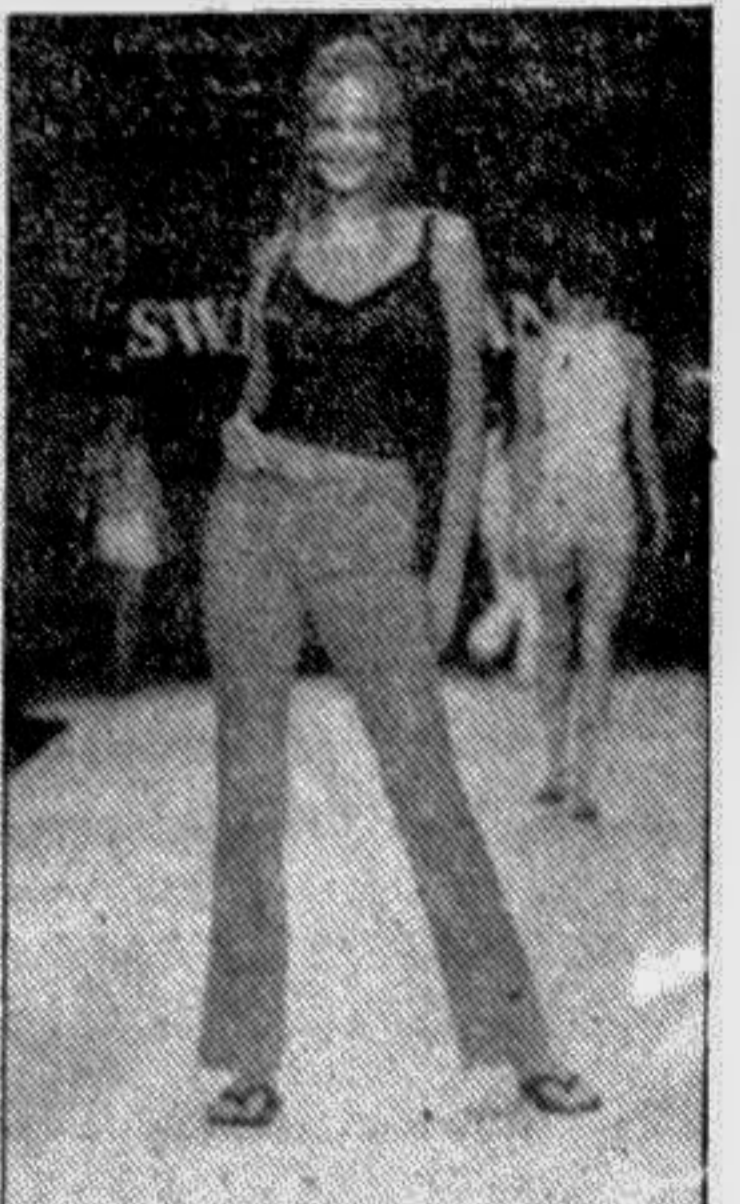
the former intern to do the same.

"If somebody said to him, 'is Monica lying under oath,' he would say yes," Ms. Lewinsky said of Clinton in one of her taped conversations with Mrs. Tripp. "But when he, on his own, thinks about it, he doesn't think of it in those terms. Okay? He thinks of it as, 'We're being safe. We're being smart.'"

Mrs. Currie also provided plenty of evidence against her boss, including testimony about two encounters in which the president tried to get his secretary to agree with some of his false statements.

Republicans acknowledged that the new evidence did not add much to the understanding of the underlying charges made against the president. "I don't think it contributes much," said Republican Charles Canady, a member of the House Judiciary Committee.

The committee is scheduled to vote Monday on whether to recommend an impeachment inquiry.



A silk tank top with embroidery, worn over pink trousers, part of the Swish collection for the Spring/Summer 1999 shown in Milan Friday. — AP/UNB photo