

Friday Times

International

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US again lashes out at Israeli settlements in West Bank



Yellowing Taj Mahal to go under scaffold for 'mud pack'



Malaysian court lets off 'Budgie 9' who partied in swimsuits



MAFRAQ, JORDAN: In this June 20, 2013 file photo, UN refugee chief, Antonio Guterres, second left, along with UNHCR special envoy, actress Angelina Jolie, second right, visit Zaatari refugee camp, near the Syrian border.—AP

UNSC ENDORSES PORTUGAL'S EX-PM

GUTERRES WANTS TO BUILD BRIDGES

UNITED NATIONS: Portugal's former prime minister Antonio Guterres, who is virtually certain to be the next UN secretary-general, says he wants to be "an honest broker, a bridge-builder and someone who tries to create conditions for consensus."

The veteran politician and diplomat, who won unanimous backing from the UN Security Council on Wednesday, said in an interview with The Associated Press and two other news organizations during his campaign that if he got the job his aim would be to work with all countries to help solve the myriad problems on the global agenda.

The Security Council met behind closed doors yesterday morning for a formal vote on Guterres' candidacy. Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, the current council president, expressed hope that the council will recommend Guterres by "acclamation" to the 193-member General Assembly, which must approve a successor to Ban Ki-moon, whose second five-year

term ends Dec. 31. Guterres topped all six informal polls in the council after receiving high marks from almost every diplomat for his performance in the first-ever question-and-answer sessions for candidates in the General Assembly. He was the only candidate of the 10 in the race to receive no "discourage" votes in Wednesday's poll, which was the first to use colored ballots to distinguish the votes of the five veto-wielding permanent members - the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France.

The result disappointed campaigners for a woman or an East European to be the world's top diplomat for the first time. "Antonio Guterres has won this race because he was the best candidate for the race," Britain's UN Ambassador Matthew Rycroft said before entering the meeting. "It was a crowded field, it was a strong field and I'm delighted that seven of the 13 candidates were women but I and others have always been clear that while now is the right time for a woman that we were going

to pick the strongest person."

Woman as Deputy secretary-general

Guterres will almost certainly select a woman as deputy secretary-general and he said in the interview that one of the things that is "crucial" at the male-dominated United Nations is "to have gender parity." He said that his 10 years as the UN high commissioner for refugees, which ended in December, were "excellent preparation" for a secretary-general who needs to be an honest broker and be seen by countries as independent in order to promote consensus and overcome crises.

"I think we are living in a world where we see a multiplication of new conflicts, and you see an enormous difficulty in solving the conflicts," Guterres said. "There is a clear lack of capacity in the international community to prevent and to solve conflicts."

What's needed, he said, is a new "diplomacy for peace" which requires discreet diplomatic

contacts and shuttling among key players in conflicts and disputes. The secretary-general should also engage as much as possible and "act with humility to try to create the conditions for member states that are the crucial actors in any process to be able to come together and overcome their differences," he said.

The 10 years as high commissioner were "the most remarkable experience you can imagine," he said. "It's the most fascinating work you can have, very demanding ... and I gained a lot of experience in dealing with all crises and all governments" involved in crises everywhere. After his term ended, Guterres said, he felt an obligation to do something "having had this dramatic experience of dealing with people that are suffering enormously" as refugees and having no solution to their plight. He said the place where he could probably contribute the most to solve that problem and other global crises was at the United Nations so he decided to apply to be secretary-general.—AP