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in a U.S. television comedy

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Sounding out the experts
on the world's food crisis

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As the crows fly,
the Japanese get fed up

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Tough trial awaits new leader of Russia

Taking helm from Putin, Medvedev faces long list of policy challenges

By C.J. Chivers

MOSCOW: When Dmitri Medvedev, the president-elect, utters the oath of office Wednesday in the czarist splendor of St. Andrew's Hall, the event will be broadcast throughout the Russian-speaking world as an implicit triumph of the leadership of President Vladimir Putin.

Putin, the KGB officer turned head of state who has governed Russia as it regained its footing after a decade of post-Soviet disorder, will have voluntarily left office at the heights of popularity. And Medvedev, his personally selected successor, will be cast as a modernizing figure assuming the presidency of a proud nation freshly saved from poverty and disgrace.

The Kremlin then plans to mark the occasion on Friday with a military parade in Red Square of a sort not seen since the Cold War, complete with flyovers of strategic bombers and rumbling columns of tanks.

Medvedev will be Russia's third post-Soviet president, and newest source of speculation. He has presented a puzzling self-portrait, at times suggesting that major changes are necessary — including attacking the country's manifest corruption and reducing the bloat of its bureaucracy — and other times insisting he will broadly follow the path chosen by his sponsor.

"I fully agree with our president, who said that the quota for revolutions and civil strife in Russia was used up in the last century," he said earlier this year, one of many remarks suggesting that he will not challenge Putin's legacy.

And so as the ceremonies this week will mix Soviet nostalgia, czarist symbols and new Russian strut, Medvedev, 42, will be taking charge of a portfolio and a position more difficult than any celebration will suggest.

The policy challenges are unenviable, even if Russia has recovered from its severely weakened state. Medvedev faces steeply rising inflation, an out-sized bureaucracy, pervasive corrup-

tion, a weak judicial system and a population decline fueled by low birth rates, substandard health care and poor public health.

The country's economy is narrow and many sectors — including agriculture and high-technology — are underdeveloped. Its ruling cliques of bureaucrats, businessmen and former security-service officers, whose loyalties to Medvedev are untested, have been divided by infighting.

Medvedev also faces tensions in the Caucasus, along Russia's mountainous southwestern border, where Georgia, a former Kremlin satellite, has accused Russia of beginning to annex the separatist enclave of Abkhazia, and of risking war.

Moreover, Medvedev, who will appoint Putin as prime minister as soon as Thursday, will rule through a new governing model and with an uncertain power base. His stature has been undermined even before his inauguration office by reports that Putin intends to continue wielding power from the prime minister's suite.

One Russian newspaper reported this week that Putin planned to increase the number of deputy prime ministers almost twofold, providing jobs for his entourage and institutionalizing the notion of a strong prime minister who controls most of the affairs of state.

Stephen Sestanovich, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, a policy research organization based in New York, said that whatever policy choices Medvedev will ultimately make, the degree to which he will be able to pursue his own vision for Russia's future, as opposed to being confined by Putin, is not yet clear.

"Does he have any power?" he said. "Is he a decorative figure?"

He added, "Of course we just don't

RUSSIA, Continued on Page 4

The United States calls on Russia to back off in Georgia. Page 4

Death toll in cyclone hits 22,500



A flooded area Tuesday in Myanmar, where even before the storm, many towns and villages could not be accessed easily. Isolation adds to the challenge of aid delivery. Page 4



A satellite image of the Irrawaddy Delta taken April 15, at left, shows clearly defined rivers and lakes amid a backdrop of vegetation. In an image taken Monday, the coastal plain is flooded and Yangon, marked in red, is almost entirely surrounded by water.



Aid groups mobilize for Myanmar

By Seth Mydans

BANGKOK: The death toll from a powerful cyclone that struck Myanmar over the weekend rose to 22,500 on Tuesday, and foreign governments and aid organizations began mobilizing for a major relief operation.

The number was the latest in a steadily escalating official toll since Cyclone Nargis struck early Saturday, devastating much of the fertile Irrawaddy Delta and the nation's major city, Yangon. At a news conference in Yangon, the minister for relief and resettlement, Maung Maung Swe, said 41,000 people were still missing from the cyclone, which triggered a surge of water inland from the sea.

"More deaths were caused by the tidal wave than the storm itself," the minister said, in the first official description of the destruction.

"The wave was up to 12 feet high," or 3.6 meters, "and it swept away and inundated half the houses in low-lying villages. They did not have anywhere to flee."

A spokesman for the United Nations World Food Program said that as many as one million people might have lost their homes and that some villages had been almost totally destroyed.

Shaken by the scope of the disaster, the government said it would delay, in hard-hit areas, a vote on a new constitution that is meant to legitimize the military's grip on power.

The constitutional referendum was still to go ahead on May 10 in other parts of the country but would be delayed until May 24 in the worst-affected regions, where more than one-third of the population live.

The postponement of the referendum was announced Tuesday.

MYANMAR, Continued on Page 4

For Israel's Arabs, 60 years of regret

By Ethan Bronner

JERUSALEM: As Israel toasts its 60th anniversary in the coming weeks, rejoicing in Jewish national rebirth and democratic values, the Arabs who make up 20 percent of its citizens will not be celebrating. Better off and better integrated than ever in their history, freer than the vast majority of other Arabs, Israel's 1.3 million Arab citizens are still far less well off than Israeli Jews and feel increasingly unwanted.

On Independence Day, this Thursday, thousands of Israeli Arabs will gather in their former villages to protest what they have come to call the

nakba, or catastrophe, meaning Israel's birth. For most Israelis, Jewish identity is central to the state, the reason they are proud to live here, the link they feel with history. But Israeli Arabs, including the most successfully integrated ones, say a new identity must be found for the country's long-term survival.

"I am not a Jew," protested Eman Kassem-Sleiman, a prominent Arab radio journalist with impeccable Hebrew whose children attend a predominantly Jewish school in Jerusalem. "How can I belong to a Jewish state? If they define this as a Jewish state, they deny that I am here."

The clash between the cherished

heritage of the majority and the hopes of the minority is more than friction. Even more than during the huge half-century festivities a decade ago, now the left and the right increasingly see Israeli Arabs as one of the central challenges for Israel's future — one intractably bound to the search for an overall settlement between Jews and Arabs here. Jews fear ultimately losing the demographic battle to Arabs, both inside Israel's borders and in the larger territory the nation controls.

Most say that while an end to its Jewish identity would mean an end to Israel, equally, failure to instill in Arab citizens a sense of belonging is dangerous because many Arabs promote the idea that, 60 years or no 60 years, Israel is a passing phenomenon.

"I want to convince the Jewish people that having a Jewish state is bad for them," said Abir Koptay, an Israeli Arab advocate.

Land is an especially sore point. Across Israel, especially in the north, the remains of dozens of Palestinian villages sit partly unused, scars on the landscape from the conflict that gave birth to the state in 1948.

Yet some of the original Arab inhabitants and their descendants, all Israeli citizens, live in packed towns and villages often next door and remain barred from resettling the vacant areas, while Jewish communities around them are urged to expand.

One recent warm afternoon, Jamal Abdulhadi Mahameed drove past kibbutz fields of wheat and watermelon, up a dirt road surrounded by pine trees

ARABS, Continued on Page 2

From 2 primaries, a range of scenarios

The Democratic primaries on Tuesday allocated almost as many delegates as all the six contests that remain, but that does not mean the rest will be irrelevant — or that the race will necessarily end with the last of them on June 3. Page 5



iht.com/uselections

UPDATED COVERAGE: Results from the Indiana and North Carolina primaries, plus news analysis, live blogging, photographs and video.

CURRENCIES | New York

	Tuesday 2 p.m.	Previous
€1 =	\$1.5533	\$1.5517
£1 =	\$1.9732	\$1.9726
¥1 =	¥104.607	¥104.764
₱1 =	SF1.0491	SF1.0512

Full currency rates | Page 16

OIL | New York

	Tuesday 2 p.m.	
Light sweet crude	\$121.60	↑ \$1.60

STOCK INDEXES

	Tuesday	
The Dow 2 p.m.	12,997.79	↑ 0.22%
FTSE 100 close	6,215.20	↓ 0.00%
Nikkei 225		closed

More pain ahead for UBS

As it takes steps to clean up the damage caused by the credit crunch, the Swiss bank faces new challenges elsewhere. The private banking business, for example, "will get worse before it gets better," an analyst said. Page 11

Cleaning up corruption

Compliance with global anticorruption standards has accelerated as executives realize the damage that can be done to their reputations and their brands. Troubles at Alstom of France provide their latest example. Page 11

■ Oil futures soar to a record of more than \$122 a barrel as investors worry about higher prices ahead. Page 14

■ Airlines are warned of further delays in the Airbus A380. Page 11

■ U.S. mortgage giants deny that they, too, are vulnerable to crisis. Page 12

■ As parliamentary elections approach, Serbs face a crossroads. Page 3



Mohammed Ali Saïd Horani, 84, in his former village, Hit'in. Across Israel, Arabs live in crowded cities and towns near Palestinian villages left in ruins in 1948.

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After long swoon, dollar shows some life

By Steven R. Weisman

WASHINGTON: After six years of stumbling, the dollar may be showing signs of getting back on its feet.

Two weeks ago, the dollar hit a new low, with the euro trading above \$1.60 amid expectations of lower interest rates in the United States and possibly higher rates in Europe. President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and other European leaders expressed alarm about the dollar's decline and its devastating effect on European exports.

Since then, the dollar has strengthened — it traded at \$1.55 on Tuesday — and some economists believe that, even if it creeps down slightly, the dangers of a precipitous

fall, at least against the euro, have subsided.

Economists point out that U.S. policy makers, particularly Ben Bernanke, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, have begun to voice concern about the dollar's fall and its inflationary effect in the United States, where a weak dollar has increased the cost of oil and other imports of consumer goods.

"I am struck by Bernanke's concern about prices when he talks about the dollar as a factor in inflation," said Vincent Reinhart, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and former director of monetary affairs at the Fed. "The balance is shifting toward a little more concern about the dollar."

Although many economists consider

an all-out collapse of the dollar unlikely, they acknowledge that such a collapse could occur if investors outside the United States, fearing a relentless decline of the currency, start dumping dollars from their portfolios — accelerating exactly what they fear might happen.

While concerned about the dollar's value against the euro, of course, the United States has taken the opposite approach toward China and some other Asian economies.

The administration of President George W. Bush, for example, continues to press China to let its currency, the yuan, appreciate against the dollar.

DOLLAR, Continued on Page 13

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