

Pope to visit the Wailing Wall

POPE John Paul is to go ahead with a visit to the Holy Land, despite a recent flare-up between the Vatican and Israel, and will be the first Pope ever to visit the Wailing Wall, Judaism's most sacred spot.

The Vatican announced yesterday that the 79-year-old pontiff will spend nearly a week in the region, beginning on March 20, and unveiled an ambitious itinerary that takes him to some of the most disputed and sensitive religious and political sites.

By PHIL REEVES
in Jerusalem

His visit will be seen as evidence of the slow warming of relations between the Catholic Church and Israel, which for decades have been characterised by mutual dislike and suspicion. But it also will mean taking the Pope through a diplomatic minefield.

Although John Paul is generally regarded by Jewish opinion as the most favourable pope to date, resentment lingers on across an array of fronts — including Pope Pius XII's silence during the Holocaust.

However, this does not appear to have deterred the Pope's plans. His itinerary includes a visit to the east bank of the Jordan River, where — and much scholarly teeth-sucking — the Jordanians are claiming to have unearthed the true site of the baptism.

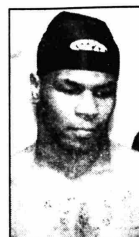
It also takes him to the scene of Catholicism's latest squabble with the Jewish state — the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, a Catholic church marking the spot where Gabriel is believed to have appeared to the Virgin Mary.

This became the subject of an angry dispute between Christian churches and the Israeli government after the latter agreed to allow a mosque to be built next door.

The Pope's trip to Jerusalem — the first papal visit to the Holy City since Paul VI put in an uneasy appearance in 1964 — is hardly likely to be any easier.

He plans to go to the Temple Mount, the city's most volatile spot, including the Wailing Wall and the al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam.

He is also scheduled to meet Yasser Arafat in Bethlehem. ● Independent News Service



● Mike Tyson: flight booked

Tyson heads for Heathrow 'bout'

BOXER Mike Tyson was last night still planning to fly to London despite warnings that he will be refused entry because of his criminal convictions.

The former heavyweight champion was still booked on a flight this weekend. His American advisers are confident that he can beat immigration rules barring criminals with heavy sentences from entering Britain.

Tyson, a convicted rapist, and his 30-strong entourage are due to arrive by Concorde on Sunday. Their determination raises the prospect of Heathrow head-to-head with immigration officials. A Tyson spokesman confirmed the 34-year-old boxer's plans to travel to London for final training before a £5m bout against Julius Francis, the British champion, in Manchester on January 29. (© The Times, London)

Fury as report on Pinochet's health 'buried'

BRITISH Home Secretary Jack Straw faced fierce criticism last night as it emerged that the medical report which saved General Augusto Pinochet from being deported to face trial on torture charges will remain secret.

Anger over the "suppression" of the report was fuelled by a statement in the House of Commons by the Home Secretary that he had been "misled" to release Pinochet because the former Chilean dictator was mentally unable to follow court proceedings.

Mr Straw also said the general had decided to exercise his right of privacy on medical matters, and he had no power to overrule it.

The general's probable senility had been the key factor in Mr Straw's decision.

But the Spanish lawyers who have masterminded the case against Pinochet declared the medical report ordered by Mr Straw was suspect and demanded to be allowed to see it.

They claimed Pinochet could easily have changed his own state of health in hours and days before the check-up and demanded that a second, surprise check-up be carried out and the results made public.

"There are signs that his state of health could have been altered for the medical check-up," Enrique Sandoval, a prosecution lawyer from Spain's United Left political party, claimed.

"I imagine that if you know

By KIM SENGUPTA

that someone has to take neurological tests you feed him amphetamines and make sure he does not sleep for a couple of days so that the neurological report is catastrophic," he said.

Judge Baltasar Garzon, the investigating magistrate who requested the extradition, made no official comment on the moves to send Pinochet home but told legal colleagues that Mr Straw would look "ridiculous" if the former dictator suddenly recovered his health in Chile.

"Straw will look a fool if Pinochet goes home, throws away his walking stick and goes off to review the troops," said one source close to the magistrate.

Judge Garzon was today expected to send instructions to the Crown Prosecution Service lawyers representing Spain in London. He gave prosecution lawyers 24 hours yesterday to make their presentations as to what the next moves should be.

The lawyers said they were outraged that, although Mr Straw had given them the right to argue against the decision to free Pinochet, they had nothing to base their arguments on unless he handed over the medical report.

Human rights groups voiced suspicion that Pinochet may have "pulled an Ernest Saunders". The former Guinness executive was released early from prison after claiming to be suffering from pre-seizure dementia.

They condemned the Home Secretary for agreeing to keep the results of the medical examinations confidential.

Amnesty International, Chile Democracy, the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture and Human Rights Watch said they were considering carefully whether there were any other grounds to mount a legal challenge.

A panel of four doctors who examined the general last week at Northwick Park Hospital, north London, found he was suffering from lack of lucidity regarding events around him.

He also has diabetes, and symptoms resulting from two mild strokes and heart disease. There was also the possibility of microvascular disease and ischaemia, which could leave him permanently unable to walk. He is also said to be suffering from severe depression.

His condition, the doctors found, deteriorated suddenly last October — just after he lost his legal fight against extradition proceedings at London's Bow Street magistrates.

Human rights groups and former political prisoners of the Pinochet regime now face the possibility that the former dictator will not stand trial despite 15 months of legal action estimated to have cost £10m.

Before last October, Mr Straw had stressed he had had "no reason to doubt" Pinochet's fitness to stand trial.

It was only after representations from the Chilean Embassy, that claimed emergence of a recent and significant deterioration in Pinochet's medical condition.

As a result, he had a "clear legal duty" under extradition law to get the "true facts about his health". ● Independent News Service

STARS GET A DRESSING DOWN



● Dull, dowdy and dreary... Cher (above), Celine Dion (left) and Cameron Diaz (right) fall foul of former fashion designer Blackwell. The queen was described as a royal clown in her multi-coloured outfits.



Fashion frumps derided for lack of style

By PADRAIC FLANAGAN

THEY'RE the stars with a lot in common — wealth, good looks, and an appalling dress sense.

The eagerly-awaited 40th annual "worst dressed" fashion list from Mr Blackwell was published last night, and it was as biting as ever.

Mr Blackwell is a former fashion designer who writes a column for a tabloid.

The list was as follows:

1. Cher: "A million heads and one overexposed derriere."
2. Celine Dion: "In her backward tuxedo there's no way of knowing whether Dia Diva is coming or going — a profusion of confusion."
3. The Queen: "Was she the palace Christmas tree or just a royal clown?"
4. Martha Stewart: "Dresses like the centrefold for the Farmer's Almanac."
5. Fiona Apple: "A knicker and curled Kewpie Doll wrapped in a collection of yesterday's fatal fashion frights."
6. Britney Spears: "This belly-baring songbird is better heard than seen."
7. Sarah Jessica Parker: "From 'Sex and the City' Sarah's fashions are a mix-and-match pity."
8. Jennifer Aniston: "She's a fashion bore and a snore."
9. Cameron Diaz: "On 'Any Given Sunday' Cameron falls prey to a freaky fashion curse — and as the week continues, she just slips from bad to worse."
10. The Dixie Chicks: "They look like a trio of truckstop fashion tragedies trapped in a typhoon."

WORLD DIGEST

New twist for Cuban boy

US Attorney General Janet Reno yesterday upheld a decision giving custody of Elian Gonzalez to his Cuban father and said any challenge to that ruling must come in federal rather than state court.

To allow the six-year-old boy's Florida relatives time to challenge the federal decision, Ms Reno wrote to their lawyers the government was postponing its Friday deadline for turning him over for return to Cuba.

Swim doc convicted

THE former chief doctor of the East German women's swimming team received a suspended sentence yesterday for the damage he inflicted on athletes by forcing them to take anabolic steroids.

Lothar Kipke (72) was convicted on 58 counts of causing grievous bodily harm. He was found guilty of feeding women swimmers muscle-building drugs without their knowledge. Some grew beards and gave birth to handicapped children after taking what they thought were vitamin pills.

It's Nurse Robot

ROBOT nurses may soon be helping the sick and elderly by telling them when to take their pills and recording their temperature and pulse. University of Pittsburgh engineers have designed new robots which make life easier for elderly patients. They inform their doctors by e-mail of any problems.

Nazis 'could not have massacred the Jews'

THE Hitler historian David Irving denied yesterday that millions of Jews had been exterminated in concentration camp gas chambers by the Nazis.

He said that while the SS may have carried out gassing experiments, mass murders of that type would have been logistically impossible. Mr Irving (62) said the massacre of Jews that occurred in the East when Germany invaded Russia was not part of any systematic programme of extermination by the Third Reich.

On the second day of his libel trial at London's High Court, he said he had never done anything to exculpate Hitler and in his book, *Hitler's War*, he gave a list of crimes committed by the Führer.

Mr Irving is suing Deborah Lipstadt, the American academic, and Penguin Books, who published her book, *Denying the Holocaust*, which claimed Irving is a "Hitler partisan" who has twisted history by denying the Holocaust occurred.

Mr Irving was questioned at length by defence counsel Richard Rampton QC over the vast numbers of Jews who died at the hands of the Nazis.

Mr Rampton asked him: "Do you accept that the Nazis killed by one means or another murdered, hung, put to death millions of people during World War II?"

"Yes," Mr Irving said. "I hesitate to speculate. It was certainly more than one million, certainly less than four million."

Mr Rampton: "Do you deny the Nazis killed millions of Jews in gas chambers in purpose-built establishments?"

Mr Irving: "Yes, it's logistically impossible."

He added: "One million people weigh 100,000 tonnes. It's a major logistical problem."

He said he paid no attention to Prof Lipstadt's book until 1996 three years after it was published when his own new work, *Goths: Mastermind of the Third Reich*, was being marketed. He found that bookshelves began to show an aversion to him and refused to stock his work. (© The Times, London)

Size really does matter when choosing a boyfriend

By ROGER HIGHFIELD

TALLER men really do get the girls, according to a study which revealed that childless men are about 1.5 inches shorter than fathers.

The discovery that women look down their noses at short men follows decades of research on birds and animals that has put the emphasis on the female when it comes to selecting a mate.

Given that tallness could be linked with factors that suggest a mate is "fit" — the term used by biologists to describe someone who can sire healthy offspring — the study shows how similar evolutionary considerations are at work in humans.

"Taller men are reproductively more successful than shorter men, indicating that there is active selection for stature in male partners by women," said Dr Robin Dunbar, of Liverpool University, who carried out the research with colleagues at Poland's Wroclaw University.

In earlier research, Prof Dunbar trawled through lonely heart columns to find what qualities people look for in a partner. He noted that men only revealed their heights if tall. "Men never say, 'I'm a 5ft 2 Danny DeVito lookalike,'" he said.

For his follow-up study reported in yesterday's *Nature* journal, he studied the medical records of nearly 4,500 Polish men. (© Daily Telegraph, London)



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