

## News

# Strauss-Kahn case 'to be dropped' as maid doubts grow

Tim Teeman New York  
Charles Bremner Paris  
Nico Hines Washington

New York's district attorney is expected to drop the criminal case against Dominique Strauss-Kahn after the chambermaid who accused him of

sexual assault was alleged to be married to a drug dealer who sought to make money from the charges.

The former head of the International Monetary Fund was arrested in New York in May and charged with seven counts of sexual assault, attempted rape and false imprisonment. The



Balloons sent by a well-wisher, below, as Mr Strauss-Kahn and wife celebrate

on the political scene in future" but 45 per cent want him never to return. Privately, President Sarkozy's ministers spoke of Mr Strauss-Kahn as being politically dead.

While still restricted to stay within the US, Mr Strauss-Kahn was released from house arrest on Friday. He and his wife, Anne Sinclair, ate a celebratory four-course \$600 (£370) supper with another couple. Mr Strauss-Kahn, 62, was photographed at Scalinata Ristorante on East 61st Street where he ordered prosciutto and "orange flesh melon" and a glass of Pinot Grigio before eating pappardelle with truffles (\$100) served with an Italian red wine, a Brunello di Montalcino (\$116 a bottle). A diner said Mr Strauss-Kahn appeared "in a very good mood".

On Saturday afternoon, the Strauss-Kahns left their Tribeca townhouse

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Frenchman was put under house arrest after the 32-year-old African maid claimed that he attacked her while she was cleaning his room at the Sofitel Hotel in Manhattan. Mr Strauss-Kahn has denied all charges.

At the end of last week, Cyrus Vance Jr, the district attorney, admitted that the alleged victim had lied about the day of the attack. The prosecution team also said they had uncovered inconsistencies concerning her immigration documents. Mr Vance Jr is thought unlikely to move to a trial on any charge because of the ease with which the defence would demolish the maid's credibility.

It has also emerged that last Wednesday Mr Vance Jr received a translation of the transcript of a telephone call which the accuser made to a man in jail awaiting trial on charges of drug dealing. During the conversation, in Fulani, a dialect of the accuser's native Guinea, she said: "Don't worry, this guy has a lot of money. I know what I'm doing."

As Mr Vance Jr attempted to salvage his career from what is emerging as a botched prosecution, a poll yesterday for *Le Parisien* newspaper found that 49 per cent of French people want Mr Strauss-Kahn to "play a role

## 'Don't worry, this guy has a lot of money. I know what I'm doing'

pursued by media crews. They visited the Time-Warner Centre before going to the Museum of Modern Art before returning home at about 5.30pm.

A ferocious character assassination against the Guinean maid dominated the New York tabloids at the weekend. She was accused of demanding money immediately after the sexual encounter with Mr Strauss-Kahn.

Whatever happens, the maid is expected to take him to court with a demand for civil damages, Kenneth Thompson, her lawyer, indicated. His client had suffered injuries in the alleged attack, including a torn shoulder ligament, bruises, and abrasions to her vagina, he said. DNA evidence shows that a sexual encounter did take place between the maid and the politician. He admits having sex with her but claims it was consensual.

For now, Mr Vance Jr is saying only that prosecutors will keep investigating. "Sometimes the road to get to the truth has twists and turns in it, which are not always apparent at the outset," he said

## Bail danger for battered women

Anushka Asthana, Sean O'Neill

Thousands of men accused of domestic violence are being freed to return to the homes of their victims because of chaos over the bail laws, Yvette Cooper, the Shadow Home Secretary, claimed yesterday.

A ruling by a Manchester district judge in April, upheld by the High Court in June, appears to curb the ability of police to arrest suspects, bail them while they investigate the case, then recall them to be charged.

Ms Cooper said the situation was acute in domestic violence cases where bail could be used to impose restrictions to stop suspects going near their victim's address or workplace. She said Theresa May, the Home Secretary, needed to "get a grip" on the situation, which may be resolved by emergency legislation next week.

Labour said there were more than 91,000 defendants suspected of domestic violence offences in England and Wales last year, the vast majority of whom would have been released on bail. Ms Cooper said: "If bail conditions can't be enforced, that could make it harder to protect people's safety as well as jeopardising prosecutions."

The Supreme Court will be asked today to put a stay on the judgment that would allow police to use bail until emergency legislation or an appeal.

## Lib Dem fight on benefit curb

Anushka Asthana

Chief Political Correspondent

Liberal Democrats have warned that they want the "unintended consequences" of the Government's benefits cap, which will be set at around £26,000 a year, addressed before the policy is implemented.

A letter from the office of Eric Pickles, the Communities and Local Government Secretary, to Downing Street has revealed concerns that welfare reforms could drive 40,000 people out of their homes. The note, written in January and leaked to *The Observer*, suggested that half of the additional homelessness would be caused by the cap.

It stressed that dealing with families in that position made it "likely" that the policy would not save money but "generate a net cost". Jenny Willott, who co-chairs the Lib Dems' backbench policy committee on work and pensions, said she had serious reservations about the policy, in particular how it hit some areas far worse than others. London is likely to see the worst effects.

A spokeswoman for the Department for Work and Pensions argued that the cap was about fairness — making sure that people were not getting more on benefits than if they went to work. "Many working families live on this amount of money," she said.