

Strauss-Kahn could hold office in France-party rival
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PARIS (Aug 22, 2011): Former IMF director Dominique Strauss-Kahn could return to public life and hold office again in France if sexual assault charges against him are dropped, the frontrunner for the French presidential elections said.

Francois Hollande, who became the leading Socialist candidate for the 2012 elections after Strauss-Kahn's arrest in May, said it was up to the former finance minister to decide if he would try to compete in party primaries if the case were abandoned.

Speculation intensified over the weekend that the case against Strauss-Kahn was about to be dropped.

A lawyer for the New York hotel maid who accused him of attempted rape said at the weekend that she had been summoned to a meeting with prosecutors today, in what he said was a sign that the case could be abandoned. .

"Whatever has been said, a man with the abilities of Dominique Strauss-Kahn can be useful to his country in the months and years to come," Hollande told France Inter radio.

Asked whether Strauss-Kahn could be a challenger for the presidential election in April, Hollande replied: "That depends on him."

Socialist politicians had until July 13 to present their candidacy and the authority in charge of the vote has selected six of them to compete in the party primary in October.

Strauss-Kahn's political supporters, many of whom stood by him in the days after his arrest, have since dropped the idea of his candidacy and supported other party hopefuls.

Hollande said he had already launched his candidacy before Strauss-Kahn's arrest and the former IMF chief's possible return to the race would not affect his position.

He also ruled out any political pact with Strauss-Kahn.

"There was no pact, no arrangement. I undertook to run (for the presidency) because I had a message, an approach, a commitment to the country," Hollande said.

The New York Post reported on Sunday, citing unnamed sources, that prosecutors would ask a judge tomorrow to dismiss all charges in the criminal case against Strauss-Kahn.

The maid, Nafissatou Diallo, 32, filed a civil claim against Strauss-Kahn last week in New York, and The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that her lawyers had been exploring a deal to scuttle the criminal case in exchange for a monetary settlement in the civil lawsuit. Her lawyers strongly denied the report. Reuters