

**ISRAELI ECONOMY GROWS 7 PERCENT,
ONE OF HIGHEST RATES IN THE WORLD**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- The Israeli economy grew by 7 percent in 1994, representing one of the highest growth rates in the world, according to preliminary figures released this week by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

On the negative side, inflation for the year topped 14 percent, substantially higher than the target set at the beginning of 1994 by the Finance Ministry and the Bank of Israel.

The Finance Ministry is forecasting an annual growth rate of 5 percent in the coming year.

In other economic news, Israel has announced it will eliminate all remaining customs on U.S. imports starting Jan. 1. The move marks the final phase of a free trade agreement signed by Israel and the United States in 1985.

The action will eliminate duties of some 10 to 20 percent on refrigerators, telephones, air conditioners and other items.

Israeli Customs Authority spokeswoman Idit Lev-Zrahia said the move is expected to increase Israeli imports from the United States, which totaled roughly \$3.6 billion in 1993 and is expected to total \$3.8 billion in 1994.

**RABIN ORDERS REVIEW OF BUILDING PLANS
IN WAKE OF EFRAT SETTLEMENT DISPUTE**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- As a dispute over expanding the West Bank Jewish settlement of Efrat broadened this week, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered a review of the legality of the building plans.

At the prime minister's request, Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair began investigating the legality of building 500 housing units on a 150-acre plot south of Bethlehem.

Palestinian residents of the nearby village of Al-Khader claim the land belongs to them. And several Palestinian officials have claimed that such an expansion would violate the Palestinian self-rule accord.

The plot in dispute was earmarked for Efrat by the previous Likud government. It was later bought by Israeli settlers for private development.

According to a decision made several years ago by then-Defense Minister Ariel Sharon of Likud, private building can take place on state land. But it can be halted for two reasons: security or what is described as "public order."

Since coming to power, the Rabin government has adopted a policy freezing all government construction projects in the territories. But questions arose this week over what steps the government can take to stop the construction, since a private contractor has the building rights.

The issue has been seen as a test of Rabin's willingness to risk a showdown with the 120,000 Jewish residents of the West Bank.

Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres

held consultations this week on the matter and the issue was expected to come up at the next weekly Cabinet meeting.

On Wednesday, a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman retracted earlier reports that the government had ordered a halt to construction at the site.

Meanwhile, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat called a special meeting Wednesday of the Palestinian Authority to discuss the issue.

Several Palestinian officials called for a cutoff of the ongoing negotiations with Israel because of the dispute.

Meretz coalition members sided strongly with the Palestinians in calling for an immediate end to the construction. "It's impossible on one hand to conduct negotiations with the Palestinians and at the same time create the impression that lands are being taken from the Palestinians and settlements put up," Environment Minister Yossi Sarid told Army Radio.

Sarid said that until the precise status of the disputed land is clarified "the situation must be frozen and the status quo maintained."

Bulldozers continued to clear the land on Wednesday, as Palestinians from the area pitched tents nearby and raised Palestinian flags in continuation of their protest.

On Tuesday, Israeli army officials, declaring the area a closed military zone, evicted Arab protesters and Israeli peace activists from the site.

There were some minor scuffles when the army attempted to clear the area. Some 44 demonstrators were detained, including 13 Israelis.

NEWS ANALYSIS:**CONTROVERSY OVER EFRAT EXPANSION
RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT SELF-RULE**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- A new storm over the building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank is threatening both the peace process and the Israeli government's stability.

The dispute over settlement construction is also deepening doubts about the wisdom of the original Israeli-Palestinian self-rule accord.

That agreement prescribes an "interim agreement" on Palestinian autonomy for a period of five years, while purporting to leave such thorny issues as the settlements to later negotiations on the "permanent status" of the territories.

This week's dramatic events on a hill between Efrat, one of several Jewish settlements in the area known as Gush Etzion, and a neighboring Arab village of Al-Khader, seemed to show that settlements cannot be postponed.

They are living -- and growing -- entities that force themselves onto the political agenda.

At the heart of the dispute are plans for Efrat to build 500 new housing units on a plot of land near Bethlehem that residents of Al-Khader say belong to them.

The news this week was dominated by re-

peated ugly scenes of jostling between settlers, soldiers and Arab villagers, while bulldozers went about their noisy business under the guard of the Israeli army.

By midweek, government ministers braced for a tense and strident Cabinet meeting set for Monday.

And all the while, Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip warned ominously of irreversible damage to the peace process.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered the attorney general to present the Cabinet with a clear and comprehensive legal overview of rights at the disputed site.

Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met alone Tuesday night to discuss the rapidly burgeoning crisis.

But Cabinet ministers on the left insisted that the issue was essentially political, not legal.

Ministers Call To Stop Construction Work

Ministers Shulamit Aloni and Yossi Sarid, both of Meretz, demanded categorically that the Cabinet act to stop the new settlement work -- even if the settlers are within their strict legal rights in flattening the disputed barren hilltop where they plan to build the new homes.

At the same time, however, two Labor Knesset members were winning cheers and hugs in Alon Shevut, near Efrat, from assembled Jewish settlers.

"I represent a platform that plighted its troth to Greater Jerusalem -- and that includes Gush Etzion," declared Labor Knesset member Avigdor Kahalani, as his colleague Emanuel Zismann stood alongside him.

Several other Laborites, among them at least one minister, Economics Minister Shimon Shetreet, are known to share those sentiments.

Kahalani compared the Etzion settlers' cause to that of settlers in the Golan Heights. Kahalani is also active in the movement formed there earlier this year to oppose any Israeli withdrawal made in an effort to achieve peace with Syria.

The comparison is significant: The Golan and Etzion settlement areas were, for decades, both considered to be within an unarticulated national consensus on borders, uniting most mainstream Israeli politicians.

That, at any rate, was the situation until the cataclysmic agreement between Rabin and Arafat in September 1993, when another pillar of the consensus -- no negotiating with the Palestine Liberation Organization -- came tumbling down.

But while the entire Labor Party accepted the 180-degree turnabout regarding the PLO, some of the party's traditional hardliners remain uncomfortable both with the prospect of a Golan pullback and with the idea of an army redeployment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as required in the 1993 agreement.

The Efrat standoff, indeed, dovetails into a growing controversy over the redeployment scenario.

Recently leaked reports have top policy-makers contemplating an initial redeployment from some of the West Bank towns.

Bethlehem and Jenin are said to be likely first candidates.

The Etzion settlers, considered relative moderates, are up in arms -- almost literally.

Their leader, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, formerly of New York, says they will set up their own armed militia to patrol the area if the army leaves Bethlehem.

This ongoing dispute has been greatly exacerbated by the Efrat clash.

The settlers -- nearly all of them modern Orthodox, many of them recent immigrants from Western countries -- feel that if the expansion program at Efrat is stopped by government order this will signal to Jews and Arabs alike that the planned redeployment is indeed the beginning of the end of the Jewish presence in the West Bank.

The Palestinians, for their part, say if the work is not stopped, they will see in this the beginning of the end of the peace process.

"Things would be put back by two years," Palestinian Authority official Nabil Sha'ath said Wednesday.

Because the settlement question has burst through attempts to keep it in abeyance during the interim period, the whole rationale of the interim agreement has inevitably taken a beating.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin is not the only member of the governing coalition to have suggested in recent weeks that Rabin and Arafat set aside their efforts to create an interim arrangement and instead immediately begin the permanent status talks.

He is, though, the only one to have dared to say so publicly. And he has incurred the prime minister's wrath for his pains.

But this week's events at Efrat, and Rabin's obvious political distress, have reinforced such heretical thinking in the government camp.

CELLULAR PHONE CRAZE HITS ISRAEL AS CONSUMERS LINE UP FOR THE CALL By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Israel's second cellular phone company, Cellcom, entered the market this week as thousands of Israeli consumers descended upon the company's four stores in the Tel Aviv area.

They were eager to realize Communication Minister Shulamit Aloni's promise of "a (cellular) phone for every worker."

However, hundreds of people went home empty-handed because stores were unable to meet the demand. At one branch, police were called in when a scuffle broke out among aggravated would-be phone owners.

Cellcom's entrance to the cellular phone market broke the monopoly previously held by Pelephone. Its service charges are significantly cheaper than those of Pelephone.

Meanwhile, lines were forming outside Cellcom stores the night before the Tuesday opening. Even if many of those waiting had lived just fine without a cellular phone until then, it suddenly seemed imperative to get the phone on opening day.

"The truth is that I have to get the phone today," one young businessman told the Hebrew daily Maariv. "Tomorrow I'll be outside the office, and I have to make a lot of overseas calls."

Of course, "everybody else on line is crazy," he added. "Why do they have to stand on line for hours? Can't they wait a week?"

CLINTON TAPS KANSAS LAWMAKER TO FILL LATEST CABINET OPENING

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- President Clinton has nominated former Democratic Congressman Dan Glickman to serve as Secretary of Agriculture, making the Kansas native the fourth Jew in the Cabinet.

If confirmed, Glickman will join Labor Secretary Robert Reich, U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor and Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin as the Jewish members of the Cabinet.

Glickman, 50, a key player in agriculture policy on Capitol Hill during 18 years in Congress, would succeed Mike Espy.

Espy resigned earlier this year in the face of an investigation into alleged ethical violations.

President Clinton formally nominated Glickman on Wednesday. His confirmation is not expected to encounter significant opposition.

Glickman lost his seat in Congress in November, after voters in his Wichita-area district swept him out of office.

TERRORIST BOMB IN SOUTHERN FRANCE FOILED BY NEIGHBORS AND FAULTY DEVICE

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- An attempted terrorist attack against a synagogue in the southeastern French city of Lyon was foiled this week thanks to some observant neighbors.

A stolen car, loaded with four tanks of propane gas linked to a detonating device, was timed to explode in front of the synagogue Sunday night. But the timer was apparently not working properly, and the detonation failed to take place.

Instead, a fire started in the car, and a neighbor summoned firefighters and police. A bomb squad later arrived at the scene and defused the detonator. No group claimed responsibility for the bombing attempt, and police are continuing their search for suspects.

CRIF, the umbrella organization of France's secular Jewish organizations, said it was the first known attempt against a Jewish place of worship or cultural establishment in Lyon.

Linking the attempted attack to an upsurge in Islamic fundamentalist terror, CRIF said in a statement that it was "upset and indignant at this criminal act (and) afraid it constitutes proof that terrorist fanaticism is gaining ground in France."

CRIF called on the police to find those responsible for the attempted bombing and urged French authorities to "protect the offices of the Jewish community and ban groups which are turning France into a land of confrontations."

Police officials said they would beef up patrols around some 24 synagogues in the Lyon area.

POLICE MINISTER TURNS DOWN NEW POST AMID PUBLIC OUTCRY OVER ITS PROPRIETY

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Amid a sharp public outcry, Police Minister Moshe Shahal has turned down the post of information minister.

He announced his decision Tuesday, just two days after being given the appointment in a Cabinet reshuffle.

On Sunday, in an effort to bring the break-away faction of the right-wing Tsomet into the Labor-led coalition, the Cabinet narrowly approved the appointment of Gonen Segev, leader of the Yi'ud faction, as energy minister.

The post was previously held by Shahal, who was given the information portfolio, a newly created Cabinet position, to add to his position as head of the police ministry.

Several Cabinet ministers said that having a police minister who is also information minister smacked of a totalitarian government.

Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein said the whole idea reminded him of something "straight out of 1984," the George Orwell classic about a totalitarian society.

In a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Tuesday, Shahal said he had decided to turn down the post.

The decision, he said, came as a result of public criticism that the new Information Ministry was a waste of taxpayer's money and that his holding the post would be a conflict of interest with his responsibilities as police minister.

Rabin, who unsuccessfully tried to persuade Shahal to change his mind, maintained that an information ministry was needed to communicate government policy to the public.

The Meretz Party, which had strongly opposed making Shahal information minister, welcomed his decision.

"It is a good sign that he was sensitive enough to listen to criticism, and quick enough to do something about it," Knesset member Dedi Zucker told Israel Radio.

ISRAELI ARMY ISSUES 'COMMANDMENTS' DETAILING MILITARY'S CODE OF ETHICS

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- The Israeli army this week unveiled what it describes as its "commandments" of military ethics, norms and values.

The document released this week, called the "IDF Spirit -- Values and Basic Rules," explains the army's code of ethics in daily routine during peacetime and war.

The document was three years in the making, during which time a committee of senior Israel Defense Force officers and civilians conferred with officers and soldiers.

The panel included the head of the IDF's manpower division, its chief education officer and a Tel Aviv University professor of ethics.

The 10-page document, which has already been distributed to the IDF officer corps and will be sent to servicemen and women soon, is divided into three sections.

The preamble is a descriptive characterization of the "IDF Spirit."

The second part contains a list of core "values" that include: operation, persistence, responsibility, reliability, personal example, human life, purity of arms, professionalism, discipline, loyalty, representation and camaraderie.

The third section deals with basic rules of behavior for officers and enlisted soldiers, including behavior during military service and in the face of the enemy, and adherence to international war codes and law.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
TROUBLED TEEN-AGE ISRAELI GIRLS
FIND REFUGE IN SPECIAL REHAB PROGRAM**
By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Yonina Stern is a tall, pretty 16-year-old, but for all her life experience, she could easily be twice that age.

A truant since the age of 11, Stern (not her real name) ran away from home at least a dozen times.

Living on the streets for months on end, smoking pot and crack, she would inevitably be picked up by the police and sent home -- only to run away again.

This vicious cycle was finally broken three months ago, when the courts placed Yonina in Magen, a one-of-a-kind rehabilitation program for teen-age girls in trouble.

Supported by the ministries of social welfare and education, with assistance from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Rashi Foundation and the Elem Association for Youth, Magen, which in Hebrew means shield, runs two live-in facilities for girls from troubled, often abusive homes.

The first home, Mesilla, provides on-site housing and schooling for 24 teens.

Though the premises, on a moshav on the outskirts of the capital, are enclosed by a high fence, the residents are free to roam the grounds and are permitted to visit their parents once every three weeks.

The second facility, located in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramot, is a half-way house.

Here, eight Mesilla graduates who are well on their way to leading "normal" lives, reside in a more open, yet still nurturing environment.

Those who break the house rules or fail to behave in school are sent back to Mesilla for a few days or weeks.

Shlomo Shoham, the stern but good-natured principal of Mesilla, says the Ministry of Social Welfare, which deals with dysfunctional families, has already identified 5,000 Israeli girls considered to be at risk.

Too Few Rehabilitation Facilities

While the majority of adolescents identified as high-risk receive counseling and other services within their communities, several hundred have been removed from their homes and sent to special boarding schools.

Unfortunately, experts say, there are too few rehabilitation facilities and too many girls who are in need of help. Of the 40 live-in programs around the country for adolescents, only a quarter serve girls.

In most instances, Shoham says, "the teens have been subjected to various kinds of abuse -- physical, sexual, emotional.

"Some have experienced rape by family members or neighbors. Some have been gang raped. Often their parents consider them damaged goods," he says.

"Half of our students have at least one parent in prison. Two have both of their parents in detox. Many have dropped out of school and have behavioral problems. Is it any wonder that they have the least skills and are the least motivated?" Shoham asks.

As a rule, he says, "the girls suffer from extremely low self-esteem and, since they have not spent much time in school, lack the basic social and educational skills needed to function in mainstream Israeli society."

Thanks to Magen, the girls at Mesilla are managing to learn a trade, as well as receiving an education.

With the cooperation of the Ministry of Labor, the students are encouraged to study hair-dressing, cosmetology and other marketable skills that will give them an advantage when they need to support themselves.

Though Mesilla looks like any other Israeli high school --except for the locked front gate -- what goes on inside is far from usual.

First, the student/teacher ratio is an impressive 6-to-1, and sometimes less.

The average ratio in mainstream Israeli schools is 40-to-1.

Discipline is key. Though amiable and accessible to all his students, "Shlomo," as the girls call their principal, is a tough disciplinarian.

Working on a point system, the principal and teachers deduct points whenever a student runs away, disrupts class or refuses to do assigned tasks.

Edna Ron, a math teacher, explains that "without enough points, the girls won't be allowed to leave the school for their once-a-month visits home. Very soon, the girls learn that being late for class or fighting with other students just isn't worthwhile."

Sara Cohen (not her real name), one of Ron's math students, nods her head in agreement.

"I'm living in the half-way house in Ramot, but I was caught smoking at school and they sent me back here for three days," she says.

Learning From Mistakes

Cohen, 17, says she is eager to return to the half-way house "because it feels like home."

Abused by her mother, she says she ran away to an army base when she was 12 to be near her boyfriend.

Caught by the military police, she was sent to a shelter, then back to her mother.

She was sent to Mesilla, against her will, two years ago.

"It's okay here," she says. "It's given me the skills I need to advance in life. I learned how to be a hairdresser, and maybe that is what I'll be once I get out of the army."

"They want us to learn from our mistakes," says Yonina Stern, "and it's not so easy. I used to go to the disco with my friends, stay out all night and go to bed at 8 a.m. Now, suddenly, that world is closed to me."

Still, she says, "this place has helped me think about my life, what I've done wrong and how I can improve things."

Though life has offered few good things until now for these teen-agers, the girls say they are optimistic that they can turn their lives around.

"I want to serve in the army and then be a wife and mother with a normal husband," Stern says.

There will be no JTA Daily News Bulletin published Monday, Jan. 2.
