

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **President Clinton urged Middle East leaders to move forward with the peace process.** Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with his Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts as well as with a top official of the Palestine Liberation Organization in an effort to overcome current obstacles. The Israelis and Palestinians agreed to build six industrial parks as an economic boost to the process. [Page 1]

■ **The Israeli Cabinet extended the closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip for at least another week.** Israeli officials said a tougher Palestinian stand against terrorism would ease the closure and lead to further progress. [Page 2]

■ **Jordanian King Hussein told leaders of the American Jewish Committee in Amman that he is optimistic about the future of peace in the region.** The meeting with AJCommittee's leaders was broadcast live on Jordanian television.

■ **A group of European Union ministers met Palestinian officials at Orient House, the Palestine Liberation Organization's headquarters in eastern Jerusalem, despite protests from opposition members and some members of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government.** Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin had asked the E.U. ministers not to visit Orient House, but they refused. [Page 4]

■ **A Japanese fashion designer said she was taking a line of men's striped pajamas off the market after outraged Jewish officials said the clothing resembled Nazi concentration camp uniforms.** Leaders of the European Jewish Congress said Comme des Garçons president and designer Rei Kawakubo trivialized the Holocaust by including the striped pajamas in a show on the day last month when Jews marked the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp. [Page 3]

■ **A Socialist member of the Federal Assembly has proposed that the Swiss government apologize for introducing in 1938 a rubber stamp — bearing the letter "J" — that was applied to the passports of all Jewish citizens.** Some view the "J" stamp as a dark point in Swiss history. [Page 3]

Clinton seeks to jump-start stalled Middle East peace talks

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12 (JTA) — President Clinton threw his political weight behind the floundering Middle East peace process this week, urging a summit of leaders from the region to push ahead with their efforts.

Joined by Vice President Al Gore, Clinton urged Israel and its peace partners not to "let people believe that they can disrupt the rational, humane, decent course of history by terror."

Sunday's one-day summit here included Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa, Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Nabil Sha'ath, the Palestinian Authority's minister of planning.

The summit concluded with a joint communique that pledged a "strong commitment to honoring those agreements already concluded" and "to accelerate negotiations on all tracks."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake also attended the sessions, as did Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvalyuk, about 50 Israeli and Arab diplomats, and American officials.

The summit was the latest in a series of high-level meetings among regional leaders in recent weeks to jump-start the stalled talks, particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian front.

The talks here came at a particularly fragile point in the peace process.

On the Israeli-Palestinian track, negotiations have stalled in the wake of terrorist attacks against Israelis. Israel's decision to close off the territories, preventing the entry of tens of thousands of Palestinian workers, has prompted protests from the Palestinians, who say the move only fuels those opposed to peace.

President seeks duty-free imports from free-trade zones

The Israeli Cabinet decided Sunday to extend the 3-week-old closure of Gaza. The closure is supported by nearly 80 percent of the Israeli public, according to a recent poll.

Relations with Egypt have also been strained in recent weeks, with Egypt threatening to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty unless Israel signs the global pact.

Prior to the full summit Sunday afternoon, Israel, Egypt and the United States met privately. Israel reaffirmed its pledge not to sign the treaty, Peres told reporters Sunday afternoon.

"Parties shall pursue a mutually verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction," according to the joint communique issued by the parties.

In his meeting with the Israeli, Egyptian, Jordanian and Palestinian leaders, Clinton called for cooperation to bring the economic benefits of peace to the people of the Middle East.

As an example of American support, Clinton told the parties that he would ask Congress to allow into the United States duty-free imports from proposed economic free-trade zones in Jordan and Egypt as well as from Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"In the end the economic and political cooperation among all of you will be the most important thing in reaping economic progress," Clinton said.

In a separate meeting with Christopher, the Israelis and Palestinians agreed to build six industrial parks on the borders between the territories and Israel, Peres told reporters.

Peres said such U.S.-supported economic developments were much appreciated.

When asked whether these industrial parks negated the notion of a separation between Israel and the Palestinians, Peres said, "You can separate people, but not economies."

"We are at a critical moment in the peace process," Clinton told the gathered parties. He pledged to "redouble our efforts to get the peace process back in full gear."

Clinton called on the parties to work out their security differences in

order to move the process forward.

"Even though we must have enhanced security to create enhanced economic benefits, it is obvious that our attempt to do that is impaired when the movement of goods is limited by boycott, by closure or by any other action," Clinton said.

During his speech to the parties gathered around a table in the Garden Room of the Blair House, the presidential guest quarters across from the White House, Clinton thanked Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak for convening the Cairo summit earlier this month.

Clinton quoted Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat's statement last week that the parties should not let terror "destroy the Palestinian dream."

Clinton also reaffirmed American support for the Declaration of Principles and called on Israel and the Palestinians to "complete phase two" of the agreement, which calls for Israel to withdraw from heavily populated Palestinian areas in the West Bank in advance of Palestinian elections.

Clinton also said he wishes that representatives of Syria and Lebanon were "at this table."

"Our work will never be completed until we are all around the table as partners working for peace," he said.

His words came as Syrian and Lebanese officials were reportedly meeting in Damascus to declare that peace in the region would not be possible without them.

Clinton said he is "absolutely convinced that we have to move as quickly as we can to see economic benefits of peace."

"We all have to do this together," the president said. □

Cabinet extends closure amid ongoing terror concerns

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) — The Israeli Cabinet has decided to extend the closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip for at least another week.

The move came amid reports of more planned terrorist attacks against Israel.

No details were released.

The decision on the closure, made at the weekly Cabinet session here, came as the foreign ministers of Israel, Egypt, and Jordan and a senior Palestinian Authority official convened in Washington to discuss the impasse in peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

An official present at the Cabinet meeting said Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin restated Israel's demand that the Palestinian Authority crack down on Islamic terror as a condition for lifting the closure.

The closure was imposed more than three weeks ago after a suicide bombing attack near Netanya that killed 21 Israelis.

In his meeting with PLO leader Yasser Arafat last week in Gaza, Rabin proposed the establishment of a court system that would try individuals suspected of terrorist activities.

The prime minister also proposed that the Palestinians institute a registration of all arms inside the areas of self-rule, the disarmament of Palestinian groups that are opposed to the Israel-PLO peace accord and the turning over to Israel of Palestinians who are suspected of murdering Israelis.

Last week's talks made no apparent progress and Rabin and Arafat agreed to meet again, possibly later this week.

In Washington, however, Foreign Minister Shimon

Peres said he had secured an agreement from Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha'ath to establish emergency courts that would try suspected terrorists.

Peres said that despite the closure, Israel would allow exports and imports between Gaza and the rest of the world.

He said Israel would judge the Palestinians "by their deeds, not by their words."

There can be "many opinions but only one rifle," he said, referring to the need to reign in militants opposed to the peace process.

Peres also said Israel does not expect "100 percent success, but a clear, visible effort to try to end terrorism."

Back in Jerusalem, Environment Minister Yossi Sarid, a leading negotiator in the talks with the PLO and a member of the left-wing Meretz bloc, said a tougher stand against terror by Arafat could lead to more flexibility on Israel's part in the self-rule negotiations.

"I'm quite sure that if Chairman Arafat will do his obligation with regard to terror and be much more strict with regard to terror and terrorists, we'll be much more flexible with regard to elections in the occupied territories and redeployment," Sarid said, referring to the issues currently under negotiation.

Reports of Palestinian police thwarting terror

Economics Minister Shimon Shetreet said recent reports that Palestinian police had thwarted planned terrorist attacks were not enough to justify lifting the closure.

"Here and there they happened to catch a car that had ammunition, so they stopped it. This is not preventing [terror]," he said.

"I have not heard that they have disarmed the Islamic Jihad or the Hamas [fundamentalist groups], that train themselves openly, that dance when there is a terrorist activity in our cities and that burn as a matter of daily activity the flag of Israel."

The Palestinian police have to prove themselves, he said, adding, "They not only have to arrest, but to prevent."

A senior Palestinian Authority official criticized Israel for prolonging the impasse in negotiations by refusing to lift the closure. The closure has prevented tens of thousands of Palestinians from reaching their jobs in Israel.

Last week, Prime Minister Rabin told visiting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown that the Palestinians derive 40 percent of their gross domestic product from jobs inside Israel.

"The longer the Israelis maintain the closure, the longer the stalemate in the peace process," said Saeb Erekat, who heads the committee on negotiations for Palestinian elections in the territories.

But Sarid said the closure would not be lifted in coming days.

"There is no other choice," he said. "We have to continue with the closure because we have solid information about possible terrorist events during this week."

At the prime minister's request, the Meretz Cabinet members postponed until next week an appeal they planned to submit over a ministerial committee's decision to approve construction in the Jerusalem satellite communities of Ma'aleh Adumim and Betar.

In another development, Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer requested that some 9,000 additional foreign workers be allowed into Israel to make up for the Palestinian laborers unable to reach construction jobs because of the closure.

The additional workers would bring to 60,000 the number of foreign workers in the building industry. □

Designer pulls pajamas called similar to death camp uniforms

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Feb. 12 (JTA) — A Japanese fashion designer has decided to take a line of men's striped pajamas off the market after outraged Jewish officials said the clothing resembled Nazi concentration camp uniforms.

Leaders of the European Jewish Congress said Rei Kawakubo, the designer and president of Comme des Garçons, had trivialized the Holocaust by including the striped pajamas in a show held here on the same day that the world was marking the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp.

Following the protest, Comme des Garçons (Just like Boys) issued a release last week, saying: "Reo Kawakubo has decided, as a measure of respect to those people who have been shocked, to withdraw from the collection the striped pajamas in question as well as all other clothes made with the same fabric."

The Jan. 27 show featured several striped types of pajamas, including one pair modeled by an emaciated model with closely cropped hair and protruding ears. Some jackets had boot marks and numbers painted on them.

The EJC called the show "deeply disturbing" and said the appearance of an emaciated model in a striped outfit was "particularly shocking."

Kawakubo had said in an earlier statement that the theme of the collection was relaxation and sleep.

"The fact that it was so completely misunderstood has caught me by surprise and made me very sad," she said at the time. "Personally, I have always deeply respected the Jewish people and felt close to them in my heart."

Adrian Joffe, Kawakubo's husband and managing director of Comme des Garçons, said he had not made the connection with Auschwitz as they were preparing the collection. Joffe, who is Jewish, said, "It is so far from anything she wanted to say." □

Parliament head: Joint effort needed to fight anti-Semitism

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Feb. 12 (JTA) — The European Parliament president, Klaus Hansch, called for a common struggle against anti-Semitism when he spoke before members of a special council devoted to the issue.

"No member state of the union can keep right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism under control single-handedly," Hansch said this month in the eastern French city of Strasbourg at the opening conference of a section of the Parliament that combats anti-Semitism.

He added that a directive, based on the most stringent legislation in force in the member states, was needed.

The president also said in his opening remarks, "We must indeed prevent another Auschwitz. But at the same time, we cannot tolerate isolated acts which may appear harmless.

"They are an expression of the same old anti-Semitism. I have in mind the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, neo-Nazi graffiti, swastikas, the defamation and abuse of victims, and the secret practices of brownshirted violence in certain circles."

The Parliament's president continued, "The old messages have found new prophets. We must beware of those who would rewrite history, who seek to minimize what happened and to trivialize evil. We must not blur the line between democracy and totalitarianism."

The council that fights anti-Semitism has devoted

itself to consolidating democracy, he said.

"The most important action we can take in our society is that directed at ourselves. We must resist the re-emergence of the past," Hansch also said. □

Ex-Mossad agent files suit, claiming on-air death plea

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, Feb. 12 (JTA) — A former Mossad agent sentenced in absentia to 30 years imprisonment for treason and breach of contract is suing a Canadian television network.

Victor Ostrovsky, who authored two lucrative books based on his five years with the Israeli secret service, accused the CTV Television Network of "airing a solicitation for his murder" last year.

CTV executives had no comment on the lawsuit, filed Feb. 7 in the Ontario Court General Division.

The lawsuit stems from an Oct. 15 interview by "Canada AM" host Valerie Pringle with Israeli journalist Yosef Lapid.

Two days earlier, Lapid had written in the Israeli daily Ma'ariv that Ostrovsky, who now lives in the Ottawa suburb of Nepean, should not be allowed to live.

Lapid said during the interview that the Mossad would not assassinate Ostrovsky because the action could strain relations between Canada and Israel. But he added that he hoped that "a decent Jew in Canada" would do it instead.

Ostrovsky, who was born in 1948 in Edmonton, Alberta, moved to Israel at the age of 1. He grew up in Holon.

In 1990, with Ottawa journalist Claire Hoy, he released "By Way of Deception." In the expose, Ostrovsky describes his experience with the Mossad from when he was recruited in 1982 to when he was drummed out for insubordination in 1986. He fled to Canada that year rather than face a dangerous reserve duty tour in southern Lebanon.

Among Ostrovsky's allegations is that the Mossad had a stash of more than 1,000 blank stolen Canadian passports.

Three years later, having earned nearly \$2 million in royalties, Ostrovsky released a Middle East espionage novel called "The Lion of Judah."

In a 1993 interview with Toronto's Jewish Life, Ostrovsky said: "Every spy is a traitor in potentia. You are working on the edge. You have information that nobody else has." □

Lawmaker asks Swiss leaders to offer apology for 'J' stamp

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Feb. 12 (JTA) — A Socialist member of the Federal Assembly has proposed that the Swiss government apologize for introducing in 1938 a rubber stamp — bearing the letter "J" — that was applied to the passports of all Jewish citizens.

The move comes as the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II is being commemorated across Europe.

Helmut Hubacher, also a former Socialist Party president, has submitted the request to the Federal Council, which has executive power.

The Federal Council has asked Carl Ludwig, a professor in Switzerland, to prepare a study of the Swiss policy for refugees from 1933 to 1955, a response that some see as positive start.

Some view the "J" stamp as a dark point in Swiss history that has yet to be addressed. □

E.U. visit to Orient House sparks protest from Israelis*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) — Despite protests from Israeli government officials, a group of European Union ministers met Palestinian officials last week at Orient House, the Palestine Liberation Organization's headquarters in eastern Jerusalem.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin had asked the E.U. ministers not to visit Orient House, but they refused.

The Feb. 9 visit was then termed a "courtesy call."

The visit to Orient House was part of an official E.U. visit to the region.

E.U. ministers from France, Germany and Spain met with Israeli officials for a series of talks on a proposed trade agreement between Israel and the European Union.

The two sides were reported to be at odds over the terms of a free-trade agreement.

The E.U. senior diplomats had arrived from Damascus, where they held talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad and Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa on the stalled peace talks with Israel.

Palestinian official Faisal Husseini, who headed the Palestinian delegation that met the E.U. ministers, said the two sides discussed "the peace process and problems facing Jerusalem."

Visits to Orient House by foreign diplomats have become a sensitive issue.

The Knesset recently passed a law barring the Palestinian Authority from engaging in official activities inside Israel, with a specific reference to Jerusalem.

The Israelis have said that Jerusalem will never again be divided. In the 1967 war, Israel captured eastern Jerusalem and annexed it to become part of the country's capital.

The Palestinians want eastern Jerusalem to serve as their future capital.

Palestinian official Ziad Abu-Ziad said Orient House is the headquarters of the Palestinian peace delegation, not the Palestinian Authority.

"I don't understand why the Israelis made a big fuss about this meeting," he told Israel Radio. "This kind of thing was happening in the past, and the Israeli government accepted it."

"I don't understand why now, under pressure from the right wing in Israel, the Israeli government is surrendering to the right wing and making an issue out of this thing."

Israel and the Palestinians are due to begin negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem in 1996. □

10-shekel coin to replace bill of same denomination*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) — The Bank of Israel has announced it is issuing a new 10-shekel coin, which will gradually replace the bill of the same denomination.

The coin is a reproduction of an ancient Hebrew coin from 69 C.E., one year before the destruction of the Second Temple and the fourth year of the war between the Romans and the Jews.

The new coin would lower production costs significantly, as the coin would last longer than the bill, a coin department official said.

The new coin consists of two metals — an inner circle of bronze surrounded by an outer ring of nickel. □

Netanyahu offers his own plan for self-rule in the West Bank*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) — Likud opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu last week offered his own proposal for extending Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank.

Netanyahu, in an interview with Israel Radio, said he would favor giving Palestinian residents of the West Bank self-rule in all respects except in the areas of security and foreign affairs.

His proposal also called for the formation of a political axis that would involve Likud, the Palestinians and Jordan.

The Likud leader noted that his plan, which he said was based on the Camp David Accords of 1978, was the only way to prevent a Palestinian state from being established.

He claimed to have discussed the proposal with Palestinian officials who he said had reached the conclusion that Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat could not be relied upon to lead the Palestinian cause.

He refused to name the officials, but said, "They may speak the PLO-line now, but the minute the PLO falls from power, you will hear a different tune. Everyone understands that the current situation cannot continue."

Netanyahu also said that in his view, the Palestinians would accept much less than what the Rabin government is currently offering them.

"The idea is to give self-rule to the Arab residents, while keeping security under Israeli control," Netanyahu said.

His proposal, he added, "can ensure security and allow for gradual advances toward a new reality in the Middle East."

His plan includes a proposal for sealing off the Gaza Strip with a wire fence and creating a protective minefield to prevent Palestinian laborers from working in Israel.

Netanyahu said he would permit the entry of tens of thousands of foreign workers into Israel to make up for the loss in the labor force.

The Likud leader's proposal drew a strong reaction from Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who said it was not a plan, but "a joke."

Rabin said he doubts that any Palestinian leaders will support the proposal.

He added that the Likud leader is proposing keeping the Israel Defense Force in "the cities and towns in Judea and Samaria."

Rabin said, "If the civil administration he is proposing to the Palestinians is under Israeli control, then that is the current situation."

"He should just say he wants to keep things as they are now, with control in the hands of a different people — and that is the source of terrorism."

Police Minister Moshe Shahal called Netanyahu's idea the "most superficial Middle East proposal" he had heard.

Shahal said that if it were possible to have a no-confidence vote in the opposition, this plan would make him do it.

Netanyahu was also criticized by Likud rival and former Foreign Minister David Levy, who said that Netanyahu had not consulted with his colleagues about the idea.

In response, Netanyahu, who is on a speaking tour in the United States, said his proposal was based on the tenets of the Likud platform. □