



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The results of Labor's primaries showed that the party's rank and file support the peace process policies pursued by the government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Israeli Tourism Minister Uzi Baram, a leading dove, emerged as a surprise winner. [Page 3]

■ Construction of a mini-mall near the Auschwitz death camp was suspended after a Polish company announced that it was abandoning the effort because of the controversy surrounding the venture. The Auschwitz Museum Council will take up the matter in April. [Page 2]

■ The Islamic Movement in Israel launched an initiative to encourage all Arab parties to run on a joint list in the Knesset elections. The historic decision marked a break from the movement's traditional shunning of national politics. [Page 4]

■ Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu met with Crown Prince Hassan in Jordan and told him that if he is elected prime minister of Israel, his government would continue the peace process with the Palestinians. Hassan said he would continue Israeli-Jordanian ties, regardless of the government elected.

■ Former U.S. President George Bush met with Syrian President Hafez Assad in Damascus. His visit to Syria was part of a Middle East tour that already took him to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain.

■ Israel's population reached 5.6 million, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics, which reported preliminary results of a 1995 census. The bureau said the number of settlers living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip grew to 134,000, compared with 24,000 in 1983, when the last census was taken.

■ The Israel Defense Force said 20 soldiers died in accidents in 1995, compared with 25 the previous year. Of the 20, half died in traffic accidents, seven during training exercises and three during operational missions. Another 25 soldiers died in traffic accidents while on leave from the army.

Four agencies join to bolster number of kids visiting Israel

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — The heavy hitters of the organized Jewish world are joining forces to try to double or triple the number of North American youths visiting Israel each year through organized programs.

Data repeatedly have shown in recent years that "Israel Experience" programs strengthen Jewish identity, but the number of participants has been flat since 1987, said David Harman, director general of the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education, part of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

An agreement signed this week in Jerusalem formally establishes a consortium whose central purpose is to market Israel programs for youths in cooperation with local federations across North America.

Its members are the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal, the Charles R. Bronfman Foundation and the Jewish Agency.

The consortium will be headed by Charles Bronfman and have an initial annual budget of \$2 million.

It has commitments of between \$7 million and \$10 million over the next five years, said Martin Kraar, CJF executive vice president.

Between 7,500 and 10,000 North American youth now participate in Israel Experience programs.

"With all the fanfare" attached to the Israel Experience, "we've been surprised" by these low numbers, Harman said.

Last summer, 42 percent of "the appropriate age group" from England visited Israel, while the comparable figure from the United States was less than 2 percent, he said.

"It is tragic that the tool which appears to work best to enhance Jewish continuity and identity is so underutilized," Harman added.

Even families who can easily afford the programs, which are subsidized, are not sending their children, "and we're concerned that one of the major problems is marketing," Harman said.

The consortium is emerging on the heels of the still-sensitive and acrimonious demise at the end of December of the American Zionist Youth Foundation.

Founded by the World Zionist Organization, the AZYF for decades was responsible for arranging Israel Experience programs for youth groups and movements.

The AZYF also ran the annual Salute to Israel Parade in New York City.

AZYF leaders and loyalists say they were shocked and disappointed by the decision in November by the Joint Authority to stop doing business with them.

Because nearly all the Israel Experience programs go through the authority, that delivered the deathblow to the AZYF, which was left with \$1.2 million in severance pay and other debts.

The authority has agreed to take responsibility for the debts with help from the Jewish Agency and the WZO, according to the AZYF and other informed sources.

Putting Israel on the communities' agenda

The new consortium evolved from three years of aggressive pilot marketing projects with 11 federations.

The projects were sponsored by the Charles Bronfman Foundation, Jewish communal organizations and the Joint Authority.

"We learned that if you could mobilize federations on the issue of the Israel Experience, you could [increase] the number of kids enrolled as well as the whole community's orientation toward Israel," said Peter Geffen, director of the CRB Foundation's Israel Experience Programs.

"We learned there was an unexpected degree of distance between active and affiliated American Jewry and Israel, both in reality and conceptually, as a center of Jewish life," Geffen said.

Making all the federations "the central address" for the Israel programs, as the consortium will do, "puts Israel on the communities' agenda," he said.

Harman conceded that for some families, the \$5,000 the programs

typically now cost is out of range. But he said that with aggressive and creative marketing, the consortium aims to remedy the fact that many families choose to spend the same amount of money on other summer activities and programs outside of the Jewish state.

Carefully measuring his words, Julius Berman, AZYF board chairman, said he wished the consortium members success.

Indeed, he said he expected it, "in light of the fact there will be substantial additional resources devoted to the cause."

"I do feel, however, it wasn't necessary to waste over a million dollars in closing down AZYF," he added, referring to the debts that had to be paid.

For his part, Harman is philosophical.

"AZYF did its job for many years in a certain climate and that climate has changed.

"We thought it was no longer the appropriate tool for the kind of aggressive marketing that is needed to increase participation."

Berman said, "Our marketing was not pro-active. We had no money."

His organization had a roughly \$1 million annual budget.

The CJF's Kraar rejects the characterization of the new consortium as a successor to the AZYF, saying that its role will be much broader.

He said federations' involvement reflects their concern for transmitting Jewish identity "from generation to generation."

Meanwhile, the consortium is "another step for the Israel-Diaspora relationship," Kraar said.

"It's a partnership of equals sharing an agenda," he added.

Jewish Agency Chairman Avraham Burg also emphasized the theme of partnership at the signing of the agreement in Jerusalem.

In a statement, he said the Jewish Agency was working "to best meet the needs of world Jewry in full partnership in the field with world Jewry."

One Jewish organizational insider, who asked to remain anonymous, said he had several concerns as the consortium was launched.

He said it would be important to watch whether the initiative would be adequately funded and whether the money would be used effectively.

For instance, he said, research has shown that in order for the Israel trips to be "more than a marketing scheme," they must be accompanied by strong educational programs before and after the visits.

He also voiced concern that the consortium does not include synagogue movements, which supply the vast majority of participants in the youth trips. □

Auschwitz mini-mall project halted by widespread criticism

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — In the wake of criticism from Jewish leaders and the Polish government, construction of a mini-mall across the street from the Auschwitz death camp has been halted.

The project came to a stop this week when a Polish retailing outfit, Krakchemia SA, withdrew its participation from the controversial plan to sell food and other services to visitors to Auschwitz.

The mini-mall was to include a supermarket, fast-food restaurant, clothing store and parking lot on the renovated site of a factory.

Jewish leaders described the proposed shopping center as inappropriate and tasteless when word of the

project surfaced earlier this month. Polish government officials, including President Aleksander Kwasniewski, joined in the criticisms.

Last week, the government called for a halt in construction until late April, when the matter is to be brought before the Auschwitz Museum Council, the body charged with protecting the integrity of the Auschwitz grounds, said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

Steinberg described as "rubbish" earlier reports that the council had given its approval to the planned mini-mall.

He added that the council was not aware of the shopping center until it was reported by the media.

Steinberg would not rule out the possibility that some food services may yet be offered to Auschwitz visitors.

But, he added, he was "confident that the fast one they tried to pull on us is not going to happen.

"People may well need a place to eat at Auschwitz — but not this kind of profit-making venture," Steinberg added. □

Grandson of Nazi war criminal may donate funds to survivors

By Jenni Frazer

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON (JTA) — The German millionaire grandson of a convicted Nazi war criminal has hinted at the possibility that his family might donate funds to Holocaust survivors.

Dr. Gert-Rudolf Flick, who spoke of the potential donation, is the grandson of Friedrich Flick, a convicted Nazi war criminal who served three years of a seven-year sentence that was imposed by the Nuremburg tribunals in 1947.

Friedrich Flick's companies employed at least 48,000 slave laborers during World War II, including Jews from Nazi concentration camps.

Gert-Rudolf Flick said in an interview last week that he thought it was "absolutely possible" that donations would be made to Holocaust survivors.

But, he added, "I am only one member of the Flick family and I have inherited only 10 percent of the fortune.

"It should be a family affair, and while it is possible I might put this suggestion, I don't think a family council on this matter is feasible at the moment.

"I realize the seriousness of the matter. The problem is of such magnitude. How can you compensate for human tragedy with money?"

Flick recently created a controversy here with his sponsorship of an endowed chair at Oxford University that bore his family name.

Jewish groups and others argued that the use of the family name was an attempt to rehabilitate the grandfather's reputation.

Oxford responded to the controversy by agreeing to name the chair the Gert-Rudolf Flick professorship, thereby removing a possible association with the grandfather.

Flick said in the interview that when the controversy over the Oxford chair arose earlier this month, he had been outside Great Britain, which has served as his home for the past 10 years.

He had been amazed, he said, because he had "never encountered that problem.

"The naming of the chair was perhaps not clear enough, in that it was never intended that it should honor my grandfather. This is absurd." □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Labor Party's primary results show support for peace policy

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The victory of a longtime and outspoken dove in the Labor Party primaries is certain to have a pronounced effect on the party's national election campaign.

Tourism Minister Uzi Baram's unexpected win in Monday's primary comes at a time when Labor had been seen as deliberately adopting a more hardline posture in the wake of the recent wave of Hamas suicide bombings against Israel.

Labor officials adopted this stance to position the party closer to the center of the political spectrum at a time when Israelis were beginning to question the fruits of the peace process with the Palestinians.

But the estimated 200,000 rank-and-file Labor Party members who voted in the primaries set aside official party posture and gave their overwhelming support to a pronounced dove.

The results will presumably be welcomed by Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who has often contended that his peace policies are more popular among the general public than some politicians and pundits imagine. The results will also likely oblige Peres — if he wins the race for prime minister — to offer Baram a senior job in the new Cabinet.

Israelis will go to the polls May 29 to elect a new Knesset and, in a separate ballot, the prime minister.

Baram, for his part, noted pointedly in interviews Tuesday that his interests extend to "foreign and domestic affairs," a hint that he would consider the Foreign Ministry suitable recognition of his now-proven strength in the party. Baram, 59, emerged as the second most popular figure in Israel's ruling Labor Party, defeating two self-proclaimed future prime ministerial hopefuls, Foreign Minister Ehud Barak and Interior Minister Haim Ramon.

Baram took the No. 2 spot behind Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who was already chosen the party's candidate for prime minister and was therefore assured the top slot. Rounding out the top five Labor slots after Peres and Baram were Barak, Housing Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer and Ramon.

Dyed-in-the-wool dovishness

The results for Ramon, 46, were something of a disappointment. But he took it in stride, insisting that his goal had been to reach one of the first five places.

Baram made it clear that he no longer necessarily accepted the conventional wisdom that Barak, the former Israel Defense Force chief of staff, and Ramon, the former Histadrut chairman, would battle between themselves for the succession to the prime ministership when Peres, if re-elected, steps down in 1999.

"If Haim Ramon shows leadership qualities, I will support him," Baram said Tuesday.

But if things work out differently in the years ahead, he added, he would see himself as a possible alternative.

Significantly, Baram signaled that he would not support the harder-line Barak for the party leadership.

Baram's dyed-in-the-wool dovishness attracted public attention in the late 1980s, when he refused to join a Likud-Labor government of national unity on the grounds that the Likud's opposition to peace moves would paralyze the government. He was among the first of Labor's Knesset members to call openly for mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

A onetime secretary general of Labor, Baram is a second-generation party activist. His father, Moshe Baram,

led the socialist movement in Jerusalem for decades and served as a minister under Prime Ministers Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin in the 1970s.

Political observers attributed Baram's unexpected success to his nonconfrontational personality. He is universally liked within the party and highly regarded in his post at the Tourism Ministry. While Barak and Ramon were going at each other as the primary campaign drew to its close, Baram seemed to rise above the maelstrom, projecting an image of tranquil solidarity.

Finishing in sixth place in the Labor primary was Finance Minister Avraham Shochat, followed by Nissim Zvilli — a spot protected for the party's secretary general — and Health Minister Ephraim Sneh. Ninth place, a spot promised to the woman who finished first in the primary, was taken by Dalia Itzik; Deputy Defense Minister Ori Orr came in next, followed by Minister Yossi Beilin, Peres' closest adviser on foreign policy matters.

Voters in the primary "punished" some lackluster Cabinet figures, including Trade Minister Michael Harish, who was squeezed out of the list of so-called "safe seats," positions that are expected to win seats in the next Knesset.

For Labor, that magic number is between 44 and 46, according to recent opinion polls. Voters also dealt a blow to Minister of Religious Affairs Shimon Shetreet, who has embarrassed the prime minister by some high-profile moves against the Orthodox establishment.

He dropped to No. 42 and might find himself even lower if the party leadership decides to advance a representative of the immigrant population to a safe slot.

Likud spokesmen were quick to brand the Labor results as reflecting "a lurch to the left."

The Labor primary produced 14 "new faces" among the first 44 names on the list, and the party's campaign is now expected to accentuate the new blood injected into the party's veins.

Among the salient new names:

- Shlomo Ben-Ami, Moroccan-born professor of history at Tel Aviv University and former Israeli ambassador to Madrid.

Ben-Ami is seen as the ultimate Israeli success story: a poor immigrant child from North Africa who went on to win the highest academic accolades, recently combining research with diplomacy.

Peres will almost certainly offer him a Cabinet seat if the prime minister wins the May election.

- Tsalli Reshef, Jerusalem attorney, wealthy businessman and longtime leader of Peace Now. An accomplished public speaker, he is expected to rise quickly through the Labor ranks.

Expected to remain active

- Ron Huldai, highly regarded head of the leading "Herzliya" high school in Tel Aviv. He dramatically resigned to embark on a political career, declaring that he believes that he can make a genuinely original contribution to public life.

- Addis Masala, a leading activist in the Ethiopian immigrant community who came to Israel in 1980. He was preferred over several Russian candidates to fill a safe slot allotted to an immigrant candidate.

The secular Meretz bloc, which is in a coalition with the Labor government, held its primary Sunday. The bloc's 10 Knesset incumbents who ran in the primary won the top 10 slots on the Meretz list.

Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni, who helped found Meretz in 1992, decided in January not to run in the current elections after the party leadership was assumed by Environment Minister Yossi Sarid. But she, along with Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban, who also did not run, is expected to remain active in the movement. □

NEWS ANALYSIS**Islamic Movement enters race for Knesset with bid for unity***By Gil Sedan*

KAFR KASIM, Israel (JTA) — For the first time in the political history of Israel's Arab population, the Islamic Movement has decided to enter Israeli national politics.

The historic decision, coming two months before the May 29 Knesset elections, emerged from a meeting last week of the movement's Council of Sages, a group of 25 secular and religious Islamic leaders.

The council met March 23 in a private home here in this Israeli Arab town and its initiative was ratified Monday night by the movement's national convention.

Last May, the convention, composed of some 100 secular and religious activists, had voted to keep the movement out of the national political limelight, as has been the case in previous election years.

The Islamic Movement has avoided running candidates in national elections until now for two reasons.

First, the movement wanted to avoid a situation in which it would be required to swear allegiance to the Jewish state, as is required by all Knesset members.

Second, it wanted to focus on municipal activities, building up a local power base.

Movement members now govern seven Arab municipalities in Israel.

The movement, which adheres to Islamic fundamentalist principles but opposes the use of violence, has gained a following among Israeli Arabs, particularly those living in economically depressed communities.

The centerpiece of the Islamic Movement's decision to enter national politics is an initiative to encourage all Israeli Arab parties to run under a joint list in the upcoming Knesset elections.

The move is similar to the decision made two weeks ago, when David Levy's centrist Geshet Party agreed to run on a joint list with the right-wing Likud Party of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Tsomet Party of Rafael Eitan.

The Islamic Movement's proposed joint list would bring together the Arab Democratic Party of Abdel Wahab Darawshe that now holds two seats in the Knesset; Hadash, a communist grouping of Jews and Arabs also known as the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, which now has three Knesset seats; and the newly formed Arab Movement for Change, led by Dr. Ahmed Tibi, who has won a reputation as Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's adviser.

Joint list could win 8 seats

A number of smaller Arab parties that traditionally do not make the threshold of votes needed to win a Knesset seat also would be encouraged to join.

According to recent polls, the joint Arab list could win eight Knesset seats.

With a population of some 805,000 of Israel's total population of 5.6 million, Israeli Arabs have the potential of electing as many as 14 Knesset members.

But many vote for Zionist parties — recent censuses show a heavy backing for Prime Minister Shimon Peres' Labor Party — thereby lessening the showings of the Arab parties.

If the Islamic Movement's new initiative succeeds, it has the potential of attracting increasing numbers of Israeli Arabs to the joint list, giving it added Knesset strength.

If it fails, the Arab parties would have to go it alone in the elections, where the parties of Darawshe and

Tibi face the danger of not receiving the required 1.5 percent of the total vote needed for a Knesset seat.

In the traditionally factional politics of Israel, where governments are formed with the narrowest of margins in Knesset support, Arab parties have come to play an increasingly pivotal role.

Four years ago, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin gained the support of the two Arab parties to obtain a Knesset majority backing the formation of his new government.

In exchange, Rabin reached an agreement with them to improve the economic and social conditions of Arab citizens.

The danger of Arab parties losing their parliamentary influence was a major reason why the Islamic Movement decided to give the new electoral initiative a try.

The decision also came amid Israel's crackdown on Hamas, launched in the wake of the series of terror bombings that rocked Israel — and the peace process — in late February and early March.

Israel's Islamic Movement has close ties to Hamas; in the wake of the bombings, the movement caught the increasing attention of security services.

The movement's meetings this week came after the recent detention by Israel of Suleiman Ahmad Agbariya, the deputy mayor of Umm el-Fahm, one of seven Israeli Arab towns run by the Islamic Movement.

He was suspected of having extended financial aid to relatives of Hamas terrorists.

The detention of Agbariya, along with the closing of the Islamic Salvation Committee, a self-described humanitarian group he ran, sent a current of fear through the Islamic Movement that it might soon be outlawed, even though that idea is not being seriously considered in government circles.

Still, if a joint Arab list were to include at least one Islamic Movement member elected to the Knesset, the movement could gain added protection.

The decision in Kafr Kasim to seek a joint Knesset list was regarded as a victory for Sheik Abdullah Nimer Darwish, a longtime pragmatist who argued that the Islamic Movement should participate in national Israeli politics.

He faced two daunting opponents, Sheik Raed Salah Mahajneh, the charismatic mayor of Umm el-Fahm, the second largest Arab town in Israel after Nazareth; and Sheik Kamal Khatib, the radical leader of the Islamic Movement in the Galilee. Both maintained that the group should continue to stay out of Israel's national elections.

But even if the Islamic Movement has overcome its own internal difficulties, there is yet another hurdle: bringing together two of the coalition's potential partners, Darawshe and Tibi, who are bitter rivals and barely speak to each other.

"It's going to be a difficult match," said Yossi Elgazi, the Arab affairs expert of the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

But in reference to the recent Likud-Geshet-Tsomet merger, he said, "who would have guessed" that Benjamin Netanyahu would "go along with David Levy?" □

Ben-Gurion opens second terminal*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In an effort to cope with the expected rush of travelers during Passover, a second terminal will start operating at Ben-Gurion Airport.

The terminal, normally used for domestic flights, is being converted to handle international charter flights.

On Sunday alone, some 230 flights carrying more than 40,000 passengers are expected to pass through Ben-Gurion. But most of the traffic will be leaving the country, because many Israelis use the holiday to travel abroad. □