



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israeli surveyors will begin working on Har Homa on Tuesday, a top aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly said.** Anticipating the plan to begin construction, Palestinian officials set up protest tents near the planned Jewish neighborhood, and Israel Defense Force troops were deployed nearby. Jordanian King Hussein, meanwhile, sent his brother, Crown Prince Hassan, to the Gaza Strip to mediate the situation. [Page 1]

■ **Leaders of the Reform movement in Israel launched a campaign against the army ban on visits to Reform synagogues during educational tours.** Reform leaders demanded that the new policy, which also bars visits to churches and mosques, be applied to Orthodox synagogues or be scrapped entirely.

■ **A new survey found that 42 percent of Russian Jews believe that the nation's Jewish population should stay in Russia.** The poll, the most comprehensive up-to-date survey of Russian Jewry, was conducted by the Moscow-based Public Opinion Fund.

■ **Neo-Nazi leaflets denying the Holocaust were found in copies of "The Diary of Anne Frank" at several London bookstores, the Sunday Telegraph reported.**

■ **Vandals knocked over 12 headstones at a Jewish cemetery in Krakow.** The attack was the third on Jewish property in Poland in the last three weeks.

■ **A federal court in Germany rejected American neo-Nazi Gary Lauck's appeal of a four-year sentence a Hamburg court gave him for inciting racial hatred.** Lauck had smuggled extreme right-wing propaganda into Germany, where publishing and distributing neo-Nazi material is illegal.

■ **The American Zionist Movement elected Melvin Salberg its new president.** Salberg, who succeeds Seymour Reich, is the past chairman of the Anti-Defamation League and a candidate for the new chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Diplomats toil to get Israel, Palestinians back on course

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Jordanian King Hussein's condolence visit to Israel has bought a little time for Israelis and Palestinians to step back from the brink of confrontation.

His visits to the families of the seven schoolgirls killed by a Jordanian soldier made for heart-wrenching scenes of simple, person-to-person emotion.

They also provided a dramatic illustration — for the entire region, but especially for Israelis — of what real peace can mean, and of how much stands to be lost if the peace process is derailed.

The royal visit did not, however, defuse the current crisis over Israel's plan to build a new Jewish neighborhood at Har Homa in southeastern Jerusalem.

On the contrary, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used the occasion of a joint news conference with the king at the end of their long day together to reiterate to the world that the building plans would go ahead.

On Monday, speaking to members of the Knesset coalition, Netanyahu continued to be unequivocal.

"The work to prepare the ground [for construction] will go ahead — this week," he said. "What we have announced will be carried out."

Because of his vow to build in Jerusalem, hard-line coalition members backed down from their threat to join with the Knesset opposition in a no-confidence motion, which was defeated Monday.

With the premier's unwillingness to back off from what he views as Israel's right to build anywhere within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, both sides readied themselves for a potentially explosive confrontation.

Palestinian officials set up protest tents Monday near the planned building site, and Israeli troops were deployed near the rocky hilltop as bulldozers waited a short distance away for the green light from the government.

As part of his urgent mediating effort, Hussein sent his brother, Crown Prince Hassan, to the Gaza Strip on Monday to confer with Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat.

On Saturday, Arafat had convened in Gaza a meeting of foreign representatives involved in sponsoring the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, as a way of heightening international pressure on Israel to step back from the Har Homa project.

'Preparing the ground'

U.S. participation in the meeting, despite Israel's requests that the Americans stay away, was seen as a success for Arafat, though the conference itself resulted in no specific decisions.

Instead, the envoys pledged to convey Arafat's protests to their governments and to make them clear to Israel.

International efforts to head off a possible explosion of Palestinian violence, meanwhile, appeared to hinge on the hope that, despite the premier's tough talk, the work of "preparing the ground" initially would involve only surveyors.

This hope is apparently shared by many Israelis.

According to an opinion poll published Monday in the daily Yediot Achronot, half of the Israeli public wants the construction work at Har Homa to be delayed for now. This is a significantly larger percentage than those opposed to the project in principle.

The feeling in the diplomatic community here was that the quiet activities of the surveyors — as distinct from the roar of the heavy equipment — would not necessarily trigger a Palestinian response.

Beyond these vague hopes, American diplomacy was working frantically behind the scenes, during and after Hussein's visit, to put together a package of moves that might assuage Palestinian anger and restore Palestinian honor even as Israel goes ahead with Har Homa.

One such measure was announced by Netanyahu himself Sunday night, and the details of it were quickly negotiated Monday. Arafat, his family and his close entourage will be able to fly in and out of the Palestinian airport

at Dahaniyeh in southern Gaza without Israeli security supervision.

But Israeli guards, working at the airport alongside Palestinians, will be entitled to examine other people aboard Arafat's jet.

Negotiations on a general opening of the airport to civilian traffic — subject to Israel's insistence on exercising security control over passengers — were to continue throughout the week.

Among other items under discussion as possible components of a package that could restore the peace process to health despite Har Homa:

- Progress on a Palestinian seaport in Gaza. Here, too, Israeli security concerns have slowed negotiations so far;

- Progress on creating a "safe passage" for Palestinians traveling between Gaza and the West Bank, a step provided for under the Israeli-Palestinian accords, but not yet implemented;

- A reopening of Israel's recent decision on the first redeployment from rural areas in the West Bank. Israel said it would withdraw from 2 percent of the West Bank that is now under full Israeli control and transfer another 7 percent from areas under joint control to full Palestinian civilian and security control;

- An Israeli undertaking that the scale of the two subsequent redeployments scheduled to be completed by mid-1998 will be determined after consultations with the Palestinians.

Israeli analysts say the government is unlikely to agree to any review of the terms of the first redeployment. Netanyahu has come under fierce criticism from hard-liners in his coalition for agreeing to the 2 percent pullback.

Israel is said to have proposed a construction program for Palestinian residents of eastern Jerusalem, and also has pledged to earmark funds for infrastructure work in the eastern part of the city.

These proposals are seen as attempts to "sweeten the pill" of Har Homa.

'Either a fool or a fool'

However, whether Palestinians would be satisfied by these gestures remains in doubt, as does the likelihood of getting Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to sit down for the final-status talks.

Dr. Ahmed Tibi, Arafat's Israeli Arab adviser, rejected in a telephone interview any speculation that the Palestinian opposition to Har Homa could be "bought" by either pleasing the king or offering Arafat's plane landing rights at the Gaza airport.

"Whoever believes so is either a fool or a fool," Tibi said.

Hussein's visit nonetheless gave diplomats a little more time by making it virtually impossible for Netanyahu to send in the bulldozers the very next morning, as he had reportedly intended.

To do so would have been to deliver a ringing slap in the face of the man who, despite last week's tragedy on the Israeli-Jordanian border, appeared to have won back his position as the most popular public figure in the Jewish state.

The condolence visit, by all accounts, restored the high esteem reserved for Hussein, who only days before had profoundly altered his benign image by writing a highly publicized letter in which he angrily warned Netanyahu of the dangers of building at Har Homa. The March 13 killing of the schoolgirls occurred a day after the letter's publication.

Hussein's visit, however, restored his image as Israel's closest Arab friend.

"You are not just Jordan's king. You are our king,

too. May Allah bless you," an elderly relative of Sivan Fatihi, one of the slain girls, told the monarch at the family's home in Moshav Tslafon.

Perhaps he was exaggerating, but not by much.

The king's outpouring of feeling to each of the bereaved families sent a shiver through this tough but troubled land of raw emotions.

His kneeling in front of them as they sat on the floor, as mourning rites require, was seen as a quintessential act of humility and contrition.

Commentators in the Israeli media, lauding the king, noted that his simple gestures had not belittled his regal bearing. To the contrary, they had enhanced it.

Sivan's father, Yisrael, seemed to speak for many when he urged the king and Netanyahu to work harder together for the cause of peace.

Yisrael Fatihi, who has made numerous visits to the Jordanian capital of Amman, promised to return there despite the tragedy that struck his family.

The king was visibly moved to hear this declaration, which was made in fluent English. □

Furor erupts in Israel over parole board action

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A furor has erupted in Israel over a decision to release a former air force attache who was convicted of embezzling \$12 million when he was overseeing military procurements in the United States.

Rami Dotan, who was sentenced to 13 years in prison, has served about six and a half years.

According to his conviction, Dotan reported higher purchase prices than the actual costs, and pocketed the differences. Some of the purchases were made with funds provided by U.S. military assistance to Israel.

In its decision this week to free Dotan, the military parole board cited two minor strokes Dotan had suffered and said that he was chronically ill.

The decision prompted angry responses in political and defense circles.

Security officials voiced concern that after his release, Dotan would approach American officials and argue that Israel was behind his actions, the daily Ha'aretz reported Monday.

Gadi Waterman, an official responsible for security in the defense establishment, told the military parole board that the United States still has an international arrest warrant out for Dotan, and that as soon as he is released, efforts would be made to apprehend him.

Waterman said the only way out for Dotan would be to cut some sort of deal with U.S. officials that would suggest Israel was involved in the embezzlement.

Waterman described Dotan as "totally untrustworthy" and someone who would not hesitate to make such a deal.

President Ezer Weizman said Dotan's release could damage U.S.-Israel relations.

Israel's attorney general is considering whether to appeal the parole board's decision. □

Israelis return from Malaysia

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A group of 14 Israeli high school students returned from a trip to Malaysia, an Islamic state in southern Asia that does not have diplomatic ties with Israel.

The students, who are studying Arabic and Islamic culture, said they had been invited by the prime minister to see "another side of Islam." □

Legislation seeks full protection for those with breast-cancer gene

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Sharon has always feared developing breast cancer.

The disease has already struck her mother, an aunt and a cousin, as well as three great aunts, who died from it.

“Knowing my family history, I’ve come to believe that I could have inherited the gene that causes breast cancer,” says Sharon, a Jewish mother of two in her mid-30s.

But she refuses to be tested — or reveal her full identity — “because of the risks that I believe exist for me and my immediate family if genetic information about myself were to become public knowledge.”

Simply put, she fears losing her health care.

With the advent of testing for breast-cancer genes, health insurance companies have begun to deny coverage to — or impose higher premiums on — women who test positive for a mutated gene that can cause breast cancer.

Angered by what they point to as evidence of genetic discrimination, health-care advocates for women are now leading a charge to ban the practice.

“No American should have to worry that their genes — which they did not choose, and over which they have no control — will be used against them,” said Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.), who has introduced legislation in the House known as the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

Some Jewish groups, including Hadassah and the American Jewish Congress’ Commission on Women’s Equality, have been at the forefront of the effort for such legislation.

In addition to their concern with issues relating to women’s health care in general, breast cancer strikes a particularly scary note.

Sharon is not alone. Other Jewish women believe that they have a heightened risk of developing the disease.

Last year, researchers identified two cancer-causing genes found to occur with higher frequency in women of Ashkenazi descent. The mutations, in genes known as BRCA1 and BRCA2, affect as many as one in 50 Jewish women of Eastern European descent.

One of the researchers involved in the study of cancer-causing genes, Dr. Mary-Claire King, is launching a major study this month to further last year’s findings.

90 percent chance

The four-year study will include 1,000 Jewish women in the New York area.

Ashkenazi women thus have a distinct and potentially heightened hereditary susceptibility to breast and ovarian cancers.

Some studies indicate that those carrying the genes have a 90 percent chance of developing cancer.

Jewish women in general, however, are only slightly more at risk of developing breast cancer than the general population.

After last year’s discovery, many Jewish women rushed to get tested, unaware of potential pitfalls.

“It quickly became clear that if women either got a genetic test or participated in a research study, there was no sure way to protect them against insurance or employment discrimination based on genetic information,” said Judith Palkovitz, national vice president of Hadassah.

Those who test positive for the genes face the prospect of health insurers raising their rates or denying coverage, or employers refusing to hire or promote them.

All this has given rise to fear in the Jewish com-

munity that some Jewish women could become part of an insurance underclass.

“I honestly believe that women dread getting breast cancer more than almost any other disease,” Palkovitz said.

“Imagine then, the additional burden on women if there exists the possibility that they will be unable to obtain health insurance to actually treat the problem, solely because they sought more information.”

Slaughter’s bill would prohibit insurance providers from denying, canceling or varying the terms of coverage on the basis of genetic information.

It would also prohibit providers from requiring an individual to disclose genetic tests, or releasing genetic information without prior written consent.

A companion bill, sponsored by Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine), has been introduced in the Senate.

The proposed measure follows health insurance legislation signed into law last year that made some initial strides in addressing the issue.

That bill, known as the Kennedy-Kassebaum health reform bill, includes genetic information under its definition of a pre-existing condition, and prohibits insurers from discriminating on that basis.

However, the reform measure, which goes into effect July 1, limits protections to those covered under group medical plans, provided that they meet certain criteria.

Twenty states have passed laws preventing health insurers from charging people more if they are found to have a genetic mutation.

The state laws, however, only affect state-regulated insurance companies.

This does not include large multistate employers that are regulated by the federal government.

The proposed legislation aims to make the protections universal.

Richard Coorsh, a spokesman for the Health Insurance Association of America, believes that fears of discrimination are overblown.

Most Americans, he points out, are insured under group plans and would retain coverage regardless of any pre-existing genetic condition.

‘All about assessing risk’

Those who must seek coverage as individuals, however, may be faced with higher premiums if they are found to have a cancer-causing gene, Coorsh said.

Health insurers have little choice because “that’s what the industry is all about, assessing risk.”

Meanwhile, women’s health-care advocates, including the Leadership Conference of National Jewish Women’s Organizations — an umbrella for several major groups — are gearing up for a concerted push to pass the legislation this year.

So far, the measure has gained 77 co-sponsors in the House, while the Senate version has yet to attract supporters.

Proponents of the bill, meanwhile, stress that genetic discrimination is not only a women’s health issue.

The Human Genome Project has already identified genes for cystic fibrosis, Huntington’s disease, prostate cancer, multiple sclerosis and other diseases.

People found to be carrying those genes, according to proponents, are equally vulnerable to genetic discrimination.

“As scientists race to map the whole human genome, and as they find genetic ‘markers’ for many diseases, this issue stands to affect each and every one of us — men and women alike, regardless of ethnic heritage,” Palkovitz said. □

Trial opens for neo-Nazis accused of attacking graves

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — Four French neo-Nazis went on trial this week after being accused of going on an anti-Semitic rampage in a Jewish cemetery in 1990.

The four — Yannick Garnier, 27, Bertrand Nouveau, 28, Patrick Laonegro, 31, and Olivier Fimbry, 28 — are accused in the incident in the southern French town of Carpentras.

A fifth suspect has since died in a car accident.

They allegedly damaged 34 graves and unearthed the body of a Jewish man, simulating his sodomy with a beach umbrella.

At the time, the desecration provoked outrage across France and sent hundreds of thousands of people to the streets of Paris in a protest led by President Francois Mitterrand.

On Monday, Garnier told the court that he regretted his acts.

“Morally, I never accepted the desecration of Carpentras,” said Garnier, whose confession last summer led to the arrests. “I had done something that was contrary to what I always believed about life and about myself.”

Nouveau, who also took the stand Monday, was equally remorseful, saying that at the time he “felt hate against everyone.”

“Garnier’s confession relieved me,” Nouveau said. “It was a courageous act. I’m ashamed of what I’ve done. I felt as though I was someone else then.”

All the suspects had been members or sympathizers of the small Nationalist French and European Party, which investigators had described as “a very hard group, often called neo-Nazi.”

The defendants face up to two years in prison.

Madeleine Germon, the widow of Felix Germon, whose body was unearthed, appeared in court surrounded by friends and family.

“I’ve waited seven years for this,” she said.

The attack also prompted widespread castigation of National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, who was blamed for driving others to commit such acts with his anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Le Pen said he was the victim of a witch hunt. □

German compensation omits survivors in Czech Republic

By Randi Druzin

PRAGUE (JTA) — The Czech Jewish community’s enthusiasm about Germany’s recent decision to give direct compensation to the victims of Nazism in Central and Eastern Europe has turned to bitter disappointment.

Compensation from the approximately \$47 million German fund will be given to survivors only in countries that do not have bilateral agreements with Germany, according to Tomas Kraus, general director of the Federation of Jewish Communities.

This would exclude Holocaust survivors in the Czech Republic, which signed a joint reconciliation accord with Germany in January.

“Victims here won’t receive direct compensation from the German government,” Kraus said last Friday. “And many Holocaust survivors in this country will die without having been compensated for their wartime suffering.”

Heiner Horsten, an official at the German Embassy in Prague, confirmed that the \$47 million fund “is not meant for victims of Nazism in the Czech Republic.”

About 9,000 Czech citizens, including 2,000 Jews,

could have received payments from the fund. The German government is expected to decide soon how the new fund will be administered and to begin compensating individuals next year.

The local Jewish community has been pushing for direct compensation from Germany for years.

Czech Holocaust survivors opposed the Czech-German reconciliation accord on the grounds that it did not include provisions to compensate individual Holocaust victims.

Instead, the accord established an approximately \$96.5 million “Fund for the Future” to finance civic initiatives that would benefit victims of Nazi oppression.

The reconciliation accord, which was negotiated for almost two years, was intended to ease long-standing tensions rooted in Germany’s wartime occupation of Czech lands and the subsequent deportation of Sudeten Germans from postwar Czechoslovakia.

The Czech Republic is the only Central European country whose citizens have not received any direct compensation from Germany for wartime sufferings. □

Court rejects plea to shut mosque under Temple Mount

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel’s High Court of Justice ruled last week that a recently established mosque beneath the Temple Mount could remain open.

However, a dissenting member of the three-justice panel recommended that the Israeli government reconsider allowing the mosque to operate.

The petition to shutdown the mosque was submitted by two Israeli groups, the Temple Mount Faithful and Hai v’Kayam. They argued that the creation of a new Muslim prayer site in the area offended the sensitivities of fervently Orthodox Jews.

Chief Justice Aharon Barak and Justice Yitzhak Zamir maintained that the two petitioners had not proved that the presence of Muslims praying under the Temple Mount inflicted harm on the feelings of Jews, who also consider the site holy.

Justice Eliezer Goldberg, who dissented, said Jewish sentiments could be hurt by the continued operation of the mosque. The mosque, which opened in December, is located beneath the Temple Mount in the site known as Solomon’s Stables. □

Survey: Young Israelis prefer to read

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Young adults in Israel would rather curl up with a good book than dance the night away.

According to a survey conducted by an American insurance company that wanted to familiarize itself with the Israeli market, most Israeli young adults would prefer to visit friends or read a book over hanging out in a nightclub or bungee jumping.

American International Group, which will soon begin operations in conjunction with the Israeli Orek group, polled 109 Israeli young men and women who were between 18 and 24 years old. The poll showed that they like to spend their time in what were described as “solid” activities.

Fully 69 percent of those surveyed said meeting with friends at home was their primary social activity; 44 percent chose going out to restaurants and cafes; and 43 percent said they spent their free time reading.

The poll also found that those younger than 18 were more likely to be on the party circuit. □