



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The Senate approved a \$13.2 billion foreign aid bill by a near-record vote of 91-8.** The measure includes more than \$3 billion for Israel, \$2.1 billion for Egypt and \$150 million for Jordan. It also allows up to \$100 million for the Palestinians.

■ **The head of Israel's security service reportedly met with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat to demand that Arafat take action against Palestinian police allegedly involved in an attempted attack on a Jewish settlement.** [Page 3]

■ **A five-nation monitoring group said both Israel and Hezbollah violated a April 1996 cease-fire agreement with attacks this week across the Israeli-Lebanese border.** The group is comprised of the United States, France, Israel, Syria and Lebanon. [Page 4]

■ **Two former Soviet republics are considering legislation that would limit freedom of religion.** It is unclear how Judaism would be affected if Armenia and Belarus adopt the proposed laws. Meanwhile, the Russian Orthodox Church urged Russian President Boris Yeltsin to sign a similar bill, while Pope John Paul II urged Yeltsin to veto it.

■ **The head of the Swiss panel investigating Switzerland's wartime role said the documents rescued by ex-bank guard Christoph Meili would help determine the role of the Union Bank of Switzerland in looting gold from Holocaust victims.** The bank had claimed that the documents were of no significance.

■ **Five members of the Nuremberg city council walked out of a ceremony honoring a 90-year-old industrialist whose company employed concentration camp inmates during the Nazi era.** Karl Diehl claims that the Nazi government forced him to employ the workers.

■ **An Arab American is suing US Airways for an allegedly extensive search at the Cleveland airport.** Arab American groups said these "profile searches," which were instituted after the bombing of TWA Flight 800, have turned Arabs into scapegoats.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Exporting Zionist education: Plan to address unmet needs

By Michele Chabin and Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In the battle for Jewish continuity, American Jews have ammunition to turn to in Israel.

It is an educational institution designed to serve world Jewry — and North American Jews pour tens of millions of dollars a year into it.

But despite its potential, the work of the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education does not make its way into most classrooms in the United States.

Jewish educators in the United States say they would welcome additional educational resources — always a budgetary strain — as they struggle to determine the best way to develop Jewish identity among young people and ensure a Jewish future.

But they say the authority's offerings are often not relevant or appropriate for North American culture.

"The potential contribution is great, the actual contribution is minimal," Rabbi Daniel Freeland, national program director of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said in New York.

He said the movement cooperates with the authority on the curriculum for its summer programs in Israel for about 1,200 youth.

But "there is virtually no impact on synagogue schools, where 95 percent of our kids" are educated, he said. The UAHC has about 850 member congregations.

Materials are not widely used because synagogues "don't know about them," he said.

The question is how the authority can be revamped to play a meaningful role in Jewish and Zionist education around the world.

That puzzle gripped members of the authority board earlier this month following the annual assembly of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Their response has been to develop a restructuring plan that could have a major impact on the way educational services are delivered in the future.

A semi-autonomous body with ties to the World Zionist Organization and its partner, the Jewish Agency, the Joint Authority offers a host of educational services to Diaspora communities worldwide.

Under fire from the Diaspora

Funded largely by money raised in the joint campaigns of the United Jewish Appeal and local federations, the authority:

- runs Israel Experience programs for youths and young adults;
- sends emissaries to camps and communities to teach Hebrew and Zionism;
- trains Jewish studies and Hebrew teachers;
- provides learning materials on Zionism and Hebrew to Hebrew schools and youth groups; and
- provides study material on Judaism, which is used primarily by Orthodox yeshivas.

But the authority has come under fire from Diaspora educators and fund-raisers, especially in North America, for being overly politicized, inefficiently organized and unresponsive to the needs of individual communities.

"Our curriculum needs a strong Israel component, some of which has to be done with Israelis," said Rabbi Robert Abramson, director of the department of education at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

But the relationship with the authority "works best" and produces useful material "when we're engaged in joint development" of projects, he said, echoing the view of many educators here.

"When the group sits in Israel and develops material they think we need, it's less useful."

Although the authority was designed to be a vital link to Diaspora communities, the actual use and usefulness of its services vary widely from one locale to another and its services are viewed as uneven.

The Reform and Conservative movements in the United States, for

instance, rely on the authority for its resources on Hebrew and Zionist education, but not on Judaism, because the latter is approached from an Orthodox vantage point, educators say.

The consensus among most of the Diaspora leaders and their Israeli counterparts in the Jewish Agency is that reform is imperative, including a new emphasis on religious pluralism in education.

Many details of the restructuring plan, which is part of a broader consolidation of the Jewish Agency and the WZO, still need to be worked out before the next Jewish Agency Board of Governors meeting in the fall.

But the plan, scheduled to go into effect Jan. 1, 1998, would give decision-making powers to the agency, which until now has had very little say in the way the authority is run.

The three departments of the authority — now run by three separate department heads — would be transformed into a single department of the Jewish Agency: the Orthodox-run Torah Education Department, which provides religious instruction used primarily by Orthodox institutions; the Jewish Education and Culture Department, which serves non-Orthodox institutions; and the Department of Youth and Hechalutz, which works with youth movements and other institutions seeking informal education.

David Harmon, the authority's director general, hailed the internal reforms as long overdue.

"The authority's structure has been very bifurcated," he said. "It didn't allow us to deal with a country's entire education system" with a "comprehensive plan," but instead led to the duplication of services by the different departments, he added.

Above all, the structural reforms will go far to assuage long-held concerns that the authority be more accountable to the agency and to Diaspora Jews, who fund its \$43 million annual budget.

Another \$27 million comes to the authority annually from fees paid by program participants, such as those on Israel Experience programs.

Many of the Jewish Agency board delegates said the authority has not been attuned to the different needs of the communities it serves.

They also expressed the hope that the restructuring plan would address that problem.

American exceptionalism

"What those in the authority don't understand is that the United States isn't like any other country," Alvin Schiff, chairman of the authority's American advisory council, said following the meetings in Jerusalem.

In the past, Schiff said, "a lot of material was prepared in Israel, with a big investment of funds, and it ended up just sitting on the shelf because it didn't meet our needs."

He cited as an example a videotape about Ethiopian Jews sent by the authority in the Diaspora a few years ago.

"There was one program, one set of teaching materials for everyone, no tailoring for different age groups or streams of education," he said.

"I don't know of a single American school that uses it. It was done without our input, and it should never have been made."

In New York, Eliot Spack, the executive director of CAJE, the national, multid denominational Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, agreed that the authority has to change to be meaningful in North America.

Spack, also on the authority's advisory council, spoke highly of the authority's emissaries, or shlichim, that come to staff Israel program centers or youth movements.

But when asked what sort of impact the authority has here overall on Jewish education, he answered, "very little."

"The prime beneficiaries are the Orthodox day schools, which have a very close relationship to the Torah Education Department," he said.

In contrast, the authority is of tremendous value to Mark Charendoff, director of Jewish educational services at the Jewish Community Centers Association of North America.

Calling the Joint Authority "one of our most important partners in education," he said it was particularly helpful in training 2,500 professional staff in seminars in Israel over the last seven years.

He said the authority also sends more than 200 shlichim to 90 camps across the United States and Canada to "breathe the Hebrew language and Israeli culture" into camp life.

For her part, Shoshana Cardin, chair of the United Israel Appeal, believes that the restructuring will emphasize the "Zionist" part of "Jewish Zionist" education, although not at the expense of religious studies.

Some religious delegates expressed concern that religious education would suffer when the Torah Education Department is dissolved, but most said they would support the restructuring.

"I think anything that unites us and brings about cooperation in Jewish Zionist education is a good thing," said Rabbi Shmuel Sirat, the Orthodox chairman of the Conference of European Rabbis.

However, Sirat warned that religious education must not get short shrift in the reshuffling, and suggested that an adviser on religious Zionist issues be appointed to the authority.

"It would be a pity if religious education and Zionist education are on two separate tracks, without real contact, said Sirat, who is French. "One can learn from the other." □

Barak frees businesswoman detained at Egyptian airport

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Labor Party leader Ehud Barak successfully appealed to Egyptian authorities to release an Israeli businesswoman who had been detained for questioning when she arrived in Cairo this week.

Barak, who was in Egypt on Wednesday for talks on the peace process with President Hosni Mubarak and other Egyptian officials, appealed to authorities to let him bring Dvora Ganani back to Israel with him.

Ganani was detained Tuesday night when she arrived in Cairo on business. She was barred from entering the country and questioned by police.

An airport source was quoted as saying her name was on a blacklist.

Ganani said she had no idea why she was questioned or barred from entering the country. Ganani has worked in recent years to arrange joint Israeli-Egyptian ventures in the plastics, agriculture and cosmetics industry.

"I was a spokesperson for economic cooperation following the signing of the [1979] peace treaty between Israel and Egypt," Ganani told reporters when she returned to Israel.

"I have no idea why they stopped me."

She added that she intended to return to Egypt.

In April, Egypt put on trial Israeli Druse Azam Azam, who was charged with spying for Israel.

Israel has denied the allegations against Azam, an Israeli textile mechanic. His trial is scheduled to resume this weekend. □

Jews hail Clinton push for law against genetic discrimination

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish health care advocates are praising President Clinton's decision to endorse legislation that would bar health insurance companies from discriminating against people on the basis of their genetic backgrounds.

With the advent of genetic testing, health insurance companies have begun to deny coverage to — or impose higher premiums on — those who show a genetic predisposition to diseases such as breast cancer. The legislation would put an end to the practice by barring health providers from disclosing such information.

The issue strikes close to home for many in the Jewish community in light of recent research showing that Ashkenazi Jewish women have a hereditary susceptibility to breast and ovarian cancers.

Fearing that genetic screening information could jeopardize their access to health care, Jewish women and others who believe they may have a heightened risk of developing cancer have simply opted not to be tested.

"Americans should never have to choose between saving their health insurance and taking a test that could save their life," Clinton said during a ceremony Monday in the East Room of the White House.

"It's wrong when someone avoids taking a test that could save a life just because they're so afraid the genetic information will be used against them, and too many women today fear that that will happen when they decide to test or not to test to see if they carry the gene for breast cancer."

Such discrimination, Clinton added, is "a life-threatening abuse of a potentially life-saving discovery." Clinton's announcement provides a shot in the arm to women's health care advocates who have been leading a charge in recent months to address the problem of genetic discrimination.

Hadassah and the American Jewish Congress' Commission on Women's Equality, together with other Jewish groups, have been at the forefront of the effort.

Amy Rutkin, director of American affairs at Hadassah, praised Clinton's announcement, saying the legislation "would end the shameful practice of health insurance discrimination based on genetic information and it will allay the real fear in our community that obtaining one's own genetic information or participating in genetic research could result in the loss of access to health care."

'Badly needed' legislation

Recent studies have confirmed that certain mutations of the BRCA-1 and BRCA-2 breast cancer genes occur with higher-than-expected frequency in Ashkenazi Jewish women than in other population groups.

Scientists estimate that about 1 in 40 Jewish women carry one of these BRCA mutations. The presence of one of these mutations means that an individual has a 50 percent likelihood of developing breast cancer.

However, since most cases of breast cancer are not inherited, Ashkenazi Jewish women only have a slightly higher risk — 1 to 2 percent — of developing breast cancer over their lifetimes than does the general population.

Lois Waldman, director of the AJCongress' Commission on Women's Equality, called the legislation "badly needed," adding that it's "not just about breast and ovarian cancer."

"With the Humane Genome Project uncovering new gene mutations that predispose people to all sorts of diseases, I think it's badly needed for everybody because

health insurance is such an important and basic need," she said. "So long as we don't have universal health care, this is at least plugging some of the gaps."

The White House said Clinton hopes to build on a bill sponsored by Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine). The legislation has bipartisan backing, including support from Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), a heart surgeon.

The president is pushing for a modified version of the legislation which would explicitly state that genetic information cannot be disclosed to insurers, employers or others regulated by state insurance laws.

The bill is designed to close certain loopholes in health insurance legislation signed into law last year that made some initial strides in addressing the issue.

That legislation, 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. But the reform measure, which went into effect on July 1, limits protections to selected individuals covered under group medical plans.

The new legislation would make the protections universal.

The administration's decision to push for heightened protection followed the recommendations of a task force report from Donna Shalala, secretary of Health and Human Services. Addressing Hadassah's national convention in Chicago Monday, Shalala praised Hadassah's efforts to end genetic discrimination by promoting legislation "that gives Americans the protection and peace of mind they deserve." □

Palestinian police suspected of involvement in terror attacks

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has asked Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to get involved in an inquiry into whether Palestinian police are cooperating with Hamas or acting independently to carry out terrorist attacks.

The head of the Shin Bet domestic security service, Ami Ayalon, reportedly met Thursday with Arafat to demand that he take action against Palestinian police allegedly involved in an attempted attack on a Jewish settlement.

The topic of Palestinian police involvement in terror attacks also came up the night before, when Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai met with top Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha'ath.

Mordechai said these actions posed a severe threat to any progress in the peace talks, adding that Israel would find it difficult to ignore the situation.

The topic surfaced after three Palestinian police officers were arrested earlier this week near the West Bank town of Nablus. Israel suspected the three of being on their way to carry out a terror attack on the Jewish settlement of Har Bracha, located near Nablus.

The three are being questioned by Israeli security forces. They have reportedly confessed to opening fire on Jewish settlers and conspiring to commit terrorist acts.

Israel this week asked the Palestinian Authority to question a senior Palestinian police officer in Nablus, Col. Jihad Masini, who Israeli officials believe sent the three on their mission.

The Palestinian Authority rejected the request, but said it was conducting a thorough investigation into whether more Palestinian police are involved in terrorist activities. Palestinian sources stressed that there was no order from the Palestinian Authority to carry out attacks.

Israeli forces are on heightened alert after receiving warnings of possible attacks against Jewish settlers. □

Bank of Canada launches probe into reported link with Nazi gold*By Bram Eisenthal*

MONTREAL (JTA) — The Bank of Canada has responded to demands from Jewish groups that it launch an investigation into allegations that it laundered gold looted by the Nazis.

The demands came in response to a U.S. intelligence document released last week indicating that the central banks of Switzerland and Portugal may have used the Bank of Canada to exchange and transfer looted gold that they had purchased from the German central bank.

Purchases of Nazi gold by Switzerland and Portugal — both seen as neutral during the war — have been well-documented, but there have been recent indications that the Allied nations may have played a part in laundering those purchases.

The U.S. document released last week said Portugal used the Swiss central bank to exchange 20 tons of Nazi gold for untainted gold held in the Bank of Canada and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Switzerland has denied that it helped launder looted gold for Portugal during World War II.

The document prompted the Canadian Jewish Congress to write a letter to the Bank of Canada demanding an investigation.

B'nai Brith Canada sent a similar letter to Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

The governor of the Bank of Canada, Gordon Thiessen, wrote the CJC promising an immediate investigation.

"I can assure you that we will be pursuing our review quickly and thoroughly so that the situation can be clarified as soon as possible," Thiessen wrote.

"We share your concern that the gold of other central banks held for safekeeping in Canada could have been associated in any way, however indirect, with Nazi Germany's gold transactions."

The CJC was satisfied with the response.

"We commend Mr. Thiessen and the Bank of Canada for taking such quick action on this matter," said CJC National President Goldie Hershon.

"A valuable lesson can be learned from the way in which the Bank of Canada has handled this revelation," Hershon said.

A spokesman for the Canadian central bank said the investigation, which would focus on bank records from the wartime period would likely be concluded before the end of the month.

The investigation is expected to focus on whether the Bank of Canada should have suspected Nazi links to the gold.

Officials from the World Jewish Congress, which has spearheaded efforts to throw light on Allied and neutral nations' purchases of Nazi gold, said it was premature to judge the activities of the Canadian and U.S. central banks.

WJC Vice President Kalman Sultanik said no evidence has yet surfaced showing that the Canadian or American banks were aware they were possibly laundering Nazi gold. □

Lebanon monitoring group cites Israel and Hezbollah*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The five-nation group monitoring last year's cease-fire in southern Lebanon has warned both Israel and Hezbollah against continued violations of the accord.

Both sides had agreed in the April 1996 U.S.-

brokered understanding that ended Operation Grapes of Wrath not to target, or launch attacks from, civilian areas.

The understanding came in the wake of Israel's 16-day offensive in southern Lebanon that sought to stop Hezbollah's Katyusha rocket attacks on northern Israeli settlements.

Thursday's strongly worded statement from the monitoring group was issued after the committee met to discuss complaints lodged by both Israel and Lebanon.

Lebanon had cited the killing earlier this week of three Lebanese civilians by Israeli shelling; Israel had cited a series of Katyusha rockets Hezbollah fired at northern Israel also this week.

On Wednesday, Israel warned of a stiff response if Hezbollah gunmen continue to launch attacks on Israeli forces from civilian areas.

"I hope that they will continue to respect the understandings on fire from within villages, and I warn and stress that we will need to exercise self-defense for residents of the north and Israeli soldiers," Brig. Gen. Yom Tov Samia, Israel's top commander in the Galilee, said in remarks broadcast on Israel Radio.

His remarks followed reports that mortars or rockets fired from southern Lebanon landed in northern Israel early Wednesday.

Israeli forces were conducting searches for missile fragments after explosions were heard.

On Tuesday, Hezbollah fighters fired several Katyusha rockets at an Israeli army base on the Israeli-Lebanese border.

One of the rockets fell in northern Israel, landing in an open field in the western Galilee. No one was injured.

Hezbollah said the rocket attacks came in reprisal for the deaths of the three Lebanese civilians after Israel shelled a village in southern Lebanon.

Earlier this month, a series of Katyusha rockets slammed into northern Israel following intense fighting between Israel forces and Hezbollah gunmen in southern Lebanon.

At that time, too, the Katyusha rockets caused no injuries. □

Bridge controversy intensifies*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Controversy over the bridge that collapsed at the Maccabiah Games is intensifying amid reports that police vehicles had driven over the structure.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman, Shai Bazak, confirmed that police and general security service vehicles had driven over the structure.

The lawyer for the contracting firm that built the bridge raised the possibility that the vehicular traffic had damaged the foundations of the bridge, which was intended for pedestrian use only.

A police spokesman refused to comment on the matter.

Two members of the Australian delegation were killed and scores injured when the bridge collapsed as the athletes were leading a march into the Ramat Gan stadium for the opening ceremonies of the games.

The tragedy drew a flurry of accusations and counter-accusations over who was responsible for the collapse.

The lawyers for the two contractors, meanwhile, confirmed that their clients had never built a bridge before. However, they maintained that they had built the bridge to the specifications of the engineer who had approved the project. □