

NEWS AT A GLANCE

- President Clinton will not meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during the premier's U.S. visit scheduled for next week, State Department spokesman James Rubin announced. Rubin said, however, that the two would likely meet before the end of the year in Washington.
- Ramzi Ahmed Yousef was convicted of masterminding the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. The terrorist bombing killed six people and injured more than 1,000.
- Israeli political leaders called for national reconciliation as the Jewish state marked the second anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Ceremonies were held across the country on the Hebrew date of Rabin's assassination. [Page 2]
- Tens of thousands of fervently Orthodox Jews gathered to commemorate the anniversary of the death of the biblical matriarch Rachel and the opening of a fortified complex protecting the tomb. [Page 3]
- Egypt and Morocco announced that they will not participate in next week's regional economic summit in Qatar. Arab countries say they are boycotting the conference to protest the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
- The Likud Party abolished the primaries that determine the party's list of candidates for Knesset elections. Leading Likud ministers called the move undemocratic. [Page 3]
- A women's and pediatric clinic was opened in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. The clinic is the fruit of a partnership among the Jewish communities of Boston and Dnepropetrovsk and officials of the Ukrainian city.
- A Toronto tribunal ruled that a newspaper columnist did not violate anti-hate laws when he accused Jews of orchestrating a "propaganda exercise" on the Holocaust. The Canadian Jewish Congress had filed the complaint against Doug Collins.

FOCUS ON ISSUES**CJF to feature Clinton, Netanyahu amid focus on pluralism, education**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA)—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is certain to hear voices of protest from many North American Jews when he comes to the annual gathering of the Council of Jewish Federations in Indianapolis on Sunday.

But anger over the Orthodox monopoly on religious issues in Israel is not the only subject on the minds of the thousands of activists from across the United States and Canada who are gathering for the General Assembly.

They are set to deal with a panoply of issues, including an initiative on Jewish education and old staples such as the Middle East peace process and U.S. domestic policy.

For many, the G.A., as it is popularly known, is more than anything an opportunity to exchange ideas and to sharpen fund-raising skills. CJF is the coordinating and service organization for more than 200 autonomous local federations in North America.

In addition to Netanyahu, the Nov. 14-19 program will feature a live satellite address by President Clinton and an appearance by Ehud Barak, the head of Israel's Labor Party. Netanyahu, who is scheduled to speak to the delegates Sunday, has told CJF officials that he will focus on religious pluralism, Israel's economic situation and the peace process.

But it is the pluralism issue that is attracting the most attention.

"This isn't about conversions in Israel," said Martin Kraar, executive vice president of CJF. "It's about where the Israel-Diaspora relations will go in the future."

"This very well may determine how our grandchildren relate to Israel."

Netanyahu and his governing coalition have vowed to press ahead with legislation that would codify Orthodox control of conversion and other religious matters in Israel if no compromise is reached with the Reform and Conservative movements. In response to a partially successful legal challenge to the Orthodox, Netanyahu and the religious streams have been working to forge a compromise.

'G.A. would have been explosive'

Netanyahu bought some time last month after the Orthodox political parties in Israel and the Reform and Conservative movements agreed to give the Ne'eman Committee, which has been charged with the task of hammering out a compromise, another three months to do so.

The committee's chairman, Israeli Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman, is scheduled to speak at the G.A. as well.

Without the extension for the committee, "the G.A. would have been explosive," said David Minkin, chairman of the CJF Committee on the Unity of the Jewish People. "There must be a solution found, period," he said. "Anything short of a solution is unacceptable."

In contrast to last year, no new resolution on the matter is slated for debate at this year's G.A., but there are several sessions on the program devoted to the issue. Last year's resolution called on the Israeli government not to pass or change any legislation that would "change the current situation regarding recognition of conversions."

Minkin said he believes that last year's resolution "is just as applicable this year," and if anything, he expects "a reaffirmation."

That resolution generated strong protest from some Orthodox quarters. And the prospect of continuing discussion worries many Orthodox American Jews, who support Orthodox control over religious issues in Israel and worry about the divisiveness of the debate.

Julius Berman, honorary president of the Orthodox Union, said he believes it is a "major mistake" for CJF or any umbrella organization to debate this issue. "All it can do is divide us," he said.

Acknowledging "the reality" that the discussion will come up, Berman called on the participants to "dialogue and debate with less heat and more light."

For his part, Rabbi Raphael Butler, the O.U.'s executive vice

president, said the issue of pluralism "relates to Israeli citizens" and "has absolutely no relation to Jewish life in America."

But federation leaders do not see it that way. They believe a full-fledged discussion of the pluralism issue is the best way to respond to the groundswell of discontent among their constituents. In addition to pluralism, the buzz going into this year's assembly is over a resolution that would encourage all local federations to place a high priority on funding Jewish day schools.

"We've created a day school system that is only available to the Orthodox, who will sacrifice whatever, or those that are very wealthy," said George Hanus, a Chicago-area businessman and chairman of the recently established National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee who has led the fight for increased federation funding for day school tuition.

The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago recently adopted a resolution written by Hanus' group that is slated to be debated at the assembly.

The resolution states that the individual community should "fulfill its commitment to Jewish day school education with dedication and resources consistent with its significant importance to the survival of the Jewish community."

Kraar did not speculate about whether the education resolution would pass, but other CJF officials said they had not heard of any opposition to it.

This year's assembly comes amid a sharply different domestic climate. Last year's gathering came on the heels of drastic cuts in federal social-service spending and Clinton's decision to sign welfare reform into law.

CJF officials vigorously fought the welfare bill, which cut off federal benefits for nearly all legal immigrants, including thousands of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

"People were shell shocked last year," said Diana Aviv, director of the CJF Washington Action Office. "This year, there's a feeling of profound relief" because Congress and the president have restored many of the cuts.

Instead, delegates this year are likely to begin a long-term discussion on how the government will reform Medicare. "We have folks on all sides of the aisle who get Medicare," Aviv said, referring to lower-, middle- and upper-class citizens.

How the system is reformed is likely to have a major impact on the Jewish community, which has the largest proportion of elderly members of any ethnic group in the United States, Aviv said.

Clinton could set the stage for this debate in his live satellite broadcast scheduled for Tuesday afternoon.

Clinton would become the first president to address the assembly. □

Israeli leaders call for harmony on anniversary of assassination

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli leaders issued calls for reconciliation as the nation marked the second anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

But some observers questioned whether the appeals from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leader Ehud Barak contained any real conviction.

At state memorial ceremonies held at the Knesset on Wednesday, the date of the assassination on the Hebrew calendar, Netanyahu said he was "extending a hand" in the name of peace and reconciliation.

Mentioning the names of various members of the coalition and opposition, Netanyahu said, "Everyone must join one team. I especially appeal to the close friends of

Rabin, my political rivals, who know the pain more deeply than anyone."

For his part, Barak called on everyone to "join hands" against extremist elements. "With both arms outstretched, I call on all of us to unite," he said. "We must not let a political assassin's bullet determine policy."

Despite Netanyahu's and Barak's appeals, there were indications that the political divide in Israel remained as entrenched as ever.

Rabin's widow, Leah — who has repeatedly accused Netanyahu of taking part in the heated political climate of incitement that preceded her husband's assassination at the hands of Jewish nationalist Yigal Amir — declined a request from House Speaker Dan Tichenor to meet with the prime minister and his wife prior to the Knesset session.

And hours before the session, Knesset member Benny Alon of the far-right Moledet Party said during a heated debate that he had received a death threat from a leftist — and that a bullet had been included with the letter he received.

On Tuesday, a former head of the Shin Bet domestic intelligence agency, Ya'acov Perry, told a Knesset committee that the atmosphere of intolerance pervading Israeli society could well lead to another assassination.

Memorials were held Wednesday across Israel, and many were marked by appeals for re-establishing unity.

At a ceremony at Rabin's graveside on Mt. Herzl in Jerusalem, former Supreme Court President Meir Shamgar, who headed the commission of inquiry into the assassination, said that while it was natural to feel grief and pain at this time, those feelings should also be turned toward learning the lessons of the assassination.

Avi Filosof, Rabin's son-in-law, said that since the assassination, everything in Israel had changed.

"We now face a choice," he said. "To enter a civil war, or to make amends." □

Russian priest visits son, Israel's absorption minister

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Russian priest who is the father of an Israeli Cabinet minister came to Israel this week.

Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein was in the audience when his father lectured on religion and politics in Russia after the fall of Communism.

Father George Edelstein, who serves in a church near Moscow, is the son of a Jewish father and Christian mother. He and his Jewish wife converted to Christianity in the 1970s. His son, Yuli, remained Jewish and is religiously observant.

Speaking to reporters this week, George Edelstein said that visiting Jerusalem this week had deepened his sense of his past. "I am proud of my Jewish roots. A man with the name Edelstein could not deny them," he said.

He added that he was less than awed by his son's position in the government. "I am not impressed by titles and by the fact that my son is a minister. It's more important to me that he is a man of principles and ethics."

Yuli Edelstein was an aliyah activist and Hebrew teacher in Moscow during the Soviet era. A Prisoner of Zion from 1984-1987, he immigrated to Israel in 1987.

An adviser to then-opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu from 1993-1994, he was one of the cofounders of the immigrant-rights party Yisrael Ba'Aliyah in 1995 and headed the party's election campaign last year.

He was appointed to the Cabinet when Netanyahu formed his government in June 1996. □

Altered Rachel's Tomb reopens as Palestinian youth is wounded*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The appearance of Rachel's Tomb has been dramatically altered as a result of Israeli security concerns.

The familiar white dome of the tomb, located on the outskirts of the West Bank town of Bethlehem, is now hidden from view by a high wall of concrete topped by guard towers.

The \$2 million renovation project, begun more than a year ago by Israel's Religious Affairs Ministry, has resulted in a larger prayer area, which was jammed Tuesday by tens of thousands of Jews, most of them fervently Orthodox.

The area around Rachel's Tomb has been the target of Palestinian protests for more than a year as the peace process foundered. The familiar scenario of those protests was replayed Tuesday, when, a short distance from the tomb, Israeli soldiers clashed with young Palestinian stone-throwers.

A 9-year-old Palestinian boy was struck in the head by a rubber bullet and was reported to be unconscious and in critical condition Wednesday.

Palestinian witnesses said the soldier fired on the boy from a distance of 15 yards while the youths were running away. The Israeli army said the soldier was aiming at an older youth when the victim entered the line of fire.

Army sources said the soldiers opened fire only after Palestinian police in the self-rule town refused to step in to halt the unrest. Three Palestinians were arrested during the clash, the army added.

The reopening of the tomb came on the traditional anniversary marking the death of the biblical matriarch Rachel.

Among those at the opening, which was marked by fervent prayer and religious music coming from loudspeakers, were Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau and Sephardi Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron.

The site, which was built during the period of the Ottoman Empire in the style of Muslim tombs, was last renovated in the 19th century by Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore.

Barren women often pray at the tomb because Rachel was childless for years before bearing children.

She also symbolizes exile because she died along the road and was not buried within any particular city. □

Likud Party cancels primaries, narrowing candidate selection*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Likud Party has abolished the primaries that determine the party's list of candidates for Knesset elections.

The vote to cancel the primaries came early Wednesday at the end of a stormy Likud Party convention.

At the center of the tumult was the question of where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood on the primaries issue.

Observers suggested that the premier was disingenuous when he called Tuesday night for a postponement of the vote and that he really wanted to abolish the primaries to tighten his grip on the party.

As Netanyahu pleaded with the 2,000 delegates to delay the vote, senior aides to the prime minister were reportedly working to ensure the primaries' cancellation.

Some observers suggested that Netanyahu favored the previous system of central committee members choos-

ing the Knesset candidates as a means to block potential challengers from within his party.

Two former Cabinet ministers — Dan Meridor and Ze'ev "Benny" Begin — are among the Likud activists who have been seeking to replace Netanyahu as head of the party.

Several of his current ministers termed the convention's action undemocratic. The move could lead disgruntled Likud activists to break away from the party.

Knesset member Meir Sheerit, who heads the Likud caucus, said he was preparing legislation with his Labor Party counterpart that would require all political parties to hold primaries.

From the outset of the convention, a majority of the party's central committee members called for restoring the old system of patronage used to draw up the list.

Likud introduced primaries for the first time before last year's Knesset elections, enabling the party's 200,000 rank-and-file members to choose the list of candidates. □

Trade Ministry claims Bezek cheated telephone customers*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israelis who used Bezek International for overseas phone service were deliberately misled by the company regarding international call rates, Israel's trade ministry has concluded.

The ministry's anti-trust authority found that as two competing overseas phone-service providers were preparing to enter the market in May, Bezek executives exploited the company's previous standing as a monopoly and deliberately adopted a policy aimed at "obscuring and confusing" the consumer about rates.

To this end, the authority's four-month investigation found that the senior management at Bezek adopted a number of tactics, including selective publication of phone rates, a complicated tariff structure making it difficult for consumers to compare rates between providers, and erratic rate changes.

Internal company documents cited in the authority's report addressed such issues as "implementation of a policy to confuse rates."

Bezek officials denied any wrongdoing.

"Nothing remained from what began as an investigation into claims that Bezek International was price-dumping," said Uri Yogev, the director-general of Bezek International. "Bezek International plans to appeal the other, marginal issues which were raised to prove that it acted in accordance with the law throughout."

The trade ministry has yet to decide whether formal charges will be brought against Bezek. □

IMF gives Israel mixed report card

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The International Monetary Fund has given Israel a mixed report card.

In a report presented this week to Israeli officials, an IMF delegation said the Jewish state's immediate economic outlook was not promising.

The report pointed to disappointing economic growth and a sharp rise in unemployment.

Israel is expected to undergo growth of about 2 percent this year, and treasury officials have forecast only a slight improvement for 1998.

The report attributed the lackluster growth to the security situation in Israel and a drop in immigration.

But IMF officials saw some encouraging signs in the government's efforts to cut deficits, its maintenance of inflationary targets and its continued efforts at privatization. □

Sachsenhausen museum dedicates exhibit to camp's Jewish victims*By Deidre Berger*

FRANKFURT (JTA) — A exhibit devoted to Jewish Holocaust victims has opened at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin amid concerns that right-wing extremism is growing among German youth.

A ceremony dedicating the exhibit on Sunday was one of hundreds of events across Germany that marked Kristallnacht, the nationwide outbreak of Nazi-organized terror against the country's Jews, Jewish property and synagogues on Nov. 9-10, 1938.

Commemorations ranged from official events with speeches by state and local politicians to wreath-laying at cemeteries and street demonstrations against racism and anti-Semitism.

Speaking at the ceremony at Sachsenhausen, Ignatz Bubis, the leader of Germany's Jewish community, said he was appalled at the ease with which racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic ideology is spreading nowadays.

He told a group of visiting dignitaries, including some 60 survivors of Sachsenhausen, that there are still people who "wish to deny past events and forget what has happened."

The Sachsenhausen barracks that contains the exhibit was destroyed five years ago in an arson attack by an extremist youth.

'Signs we should not overlook'

Bubis said 15 percent of younger voters chose right-wing, extremist parties in recent state elections in Hamburg, in northern Germany.

"These are signs we should not overlook," he said.

As if to emphasize his point, unknown assailants sprayed paint on five of seven memorial markers at a site in Bavaria, which was formerly a branch of the Dachau concentration camp.

Members of a citizens' association that maintains the memorial called the spraying a "desecration" of the memorial.

A spokesman said the group suspects right-wing, extremist assailants were responsible for the attack, especially because of the symbolic nature of the yellow paint used to spray the memorial.

Local police, however, said they did not believe the vandalism was meant as a desecration of the memory of concentration camp victims.

The Sachsenhausen museum exhibition, meanwhile, presents the history of the concentration camp, focusing on the fates of individual prisoners.

Many of the 800 objects displayed were donated by former inmates.

Fragments of 500 shoes and other leather goods recently found on the grounds of the camp are also displayed.

The exhibition attempts to correct the historical distortions of the previous exhibit, which was assembled before German unification in 1990, when Sachsenhausen was part of Communist East Germany.

The former exhibition, titled "The History of the Anti-Fascist Resistance Fight and the Suffering of the Jewish People," emphasized Communist resistance against the Nazis.

It touched only superficially on events surrounding the Holocaust.

Israel's ambassador to Germany, Avi Primor, who also spoke at the ceremony, commended the willingness of a majority of Germans to speak out against anti-Semitism and racism.

Tens of thousands of Germans did just that on the anniversary of Kristallnacht.

In the city of Frankfurt an der Oder in eastern Germany, some 3,000 people lit candles and formed a human chain across the German-Polish border crossing.

The demonstration was organized by dozens of local political groups, under the motto "Lights Instead of Violence," to protest repeated attacks by neo-Nazis on foreigners in the city.

In the eastern German town of Gollwitz, several hundred people — most of them young — demonstrated against racism.

In September, the town council passed a resolution to try to prevent the resettlement of some 50 Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union in their town.

The council rescinded the resolution after international protest.

At a Kristallnacht commemoration ceremony in Potsdam, the state cultural minister, Steffen Reiche, announced that the city's rapidly growing Jewish community would soon be given quarters for a synagogue.

The previous synagogue was destroyed during World War II. □

Israel may face difficulty in signing ban on land mines*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel plans to participate in a conference on banning land mines scheduled to take place next month in Ottawa.

Foreign Minister David Levy confirmed the expected Israeli presence at the international conference while meeting Tuesday with his visiting Canadian counterpart, Lloyd Axworthy.

More than 100 countries are expected at the conference to sign an international treaty banning the use of land mines.

But Israel's continuing disputes with its Arab neighbors will make it difficult for the Jewish state to sign on to the agreement, according to an Israeli Foreign Ministry official.

Despite its support for the proposal, Israel would have "difficulty implementing the initiative because of our own problems along our borders," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Aviv Shir-On.

During his visit to Israel, Axworthy again received assurances from Levy that Israeli intelligence agents would never again use Canadian passports while carrying out covert operations.

Israeli-Canadian relations were severely strained after it was revealed that Mossad agents were carrying Canadian passports when they attempted in September to assassinate a Hamas official living in the Jordanian capital of Amman.

The failed attempt brought Israeli-Jordanian relations to what was arguably their lowest point since the two countries signed their historic peace treaty in October 1994.

Canada briefly recalled its ambassador to Israel in October until it received assurances in a communique from Levy saying that Israeli agents would not use Canadian passports again.

"We had further discussions today where the matter was clarified further," Axworthy told reporters. "We were assured that this will not happen again."

Levy said Israel had never intended to embroil Canada in the assassination attempt.

"We have found a way to resolve this matter in a manner satisfying to both sides, and we certainly wish to see this matter behind us," Levy said. □