



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israeli officials increased security in Jerusalem's Old City after one yeshiva student was killed and another seriously wounded in a shooting attack. [Page 3]

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to head off a crisis in his Likud Party despite marathon meetings with rebellious ministers and Knesset members over last week's cancellation of the party's primaries. [Page 3]

■ Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon presented the U.S. national security adviser, Sandy Berger, with detailed maps outlining proposed final-status borders. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has told Israeli officials that there must be a second Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank before accelerated final-status talks can begin.

■ A former Argentine police chief denied knowledge of a \$2.5 million payment allegedly given to the family of a police inspector one week before the 1994 bombing of a Buenos Aires Jewish center. The disclosure of the payment has jump-started the stalled investigation into the AMIA blast, which killed 86 and left more than 300 wounded.

■ Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life established a center to help foster informal Jewish study on college campuses. The Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning — established with a \$5 million endowment gift from the Baltimore philanthropic family — will promote, among other things, text study and opportunities for Jewish learning in dormitories and dining halls.

■ Three groups have made proposals to buy El Al Airlines, Israeli Transport and Energy Minister Yitzhak Levy said. The government is hoping to privatize the airline next year.

■ Lithuania reopened an investigation into the 1941 mass killing of Jews in Kaunas, the Baltic nation's second-largest city. The criminal case was reopened after a request from Emanuelis Zingeris, the only Jewish member of the 141-seat Lithuanian Parliament.

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Environmentalists sound alarm as unfettered growth continues

By Daniel Kurtzman

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Their deaths could be viewed as a wake-up call.

Two Australian athletes, who fell with dozens of others from a collapsed bridge during Israel's Maccabiah Games, died this summer after swallowing water from the Yarkon River that runs through Tel Aviv.

Several others became seriously ill from ingesting what analysts described as a "deadly cocktail of chemicals and pollutants."

In the aftermath of those deaths, outrage has given way to a more sobering reality as the facts about Israel's environmental problems are laid bare. The Yarkon, as it turns out, is hardly an aberration. Virtually all of Israel's rivers are either partially or heavily polluted.

Rivers, however, are just the beginning. Air pollution in Israel's major cities is reaching dangerous new levels, landfills are overflowing, water is growing ever scarcer and open spaces are rapidly disappearing under asphalt and encroaching urbanization.

For years, Israeli environmentalists have warned against impending catastrophe, pointing toward decades of unfettered growth. Now, as Israel nears 50, the Promised Land stands in danger of turning into an environmental wasteland.

"The rate of development and the way it's being done threatens to destroy everything here," said Yoav Sagi, chairman of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, the nation's largest environmental group.

"If we do not act quickly to protect our most important and precious resources, the damage will be irreversible."

Facing a long history of neglect, Israel stands at a critical threshold as it attempts to address a slate of existing or imminent environmental disasters:

- If present consumption patterns continue, Israel will encounter crippling water shortages in the next 10 to 15 years. Agriculture will be hit hardest as more and more water is diverted to meet increasing demand for domestic uses.

- Air pollution in most of Israel's major cities exceeds levels that are appropriate for pregnant women, children, the elderly and sick. Environmentalists say that by 2010, some aspects of Jerusalem's air quality could be as bad as Mexico City's.

- Open spaces are vanishing rapidly. By 2020, northern Israel is expected to become one of the most densely populated regions in the world.

- Disposal of industrial toxic wastes and pesticides have contaminated soil and groundwater throughout the country.

- Landfills are nearing capacity, prompting fears that no landfill space will be available in 10 years. Only 5 percent of reclaimed material is recycled.

While other industrialized nations face similar problems, experts say Israel's situation is exacerbated by its small size and concentrated population, scarce water resources, rapid economic development and lack of regional cooperation on environmental issues.

'Dressing the land in concrete and cement'

The seeds of disaster can be traced to pre-state Palestine, when the Jewish pioneers began establishing a maximum geographical presence, Sagi said. Over time, the principle of expanding and building everywhere became an almost sacred task, and what he terms a "culture of development" became embedded in the nation's fabric.

That mindset was illustrated by Zionist pioneers who sang about "dressing the land in concrete and cement" — a grand design that, today, has a "nightmarish ring," Sagi said.

Israel's meteoric growth — the population has increased seven-fold since 1948 — is only partly to blame. Widespread apathy and a lack of awareness have greatly contributed to the problem.

Environmental issues, moreover, have long been overshadowed by more pressing concerns about the nation's security and survival. Nevertheless,

Sadat's widow recalls historic trip to Jerusalem 20 years ago

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — On the 20th anniversary of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Israel, his widow said she hoped to live to see peace throughout the Middle East.

"Both Arabs and Jews can come together and create a new civilization," Jihan Sadat told Israel Radio on Wednesday.

"I wish really to see this peace," she said, adding, "I am sure I will see it in my lifetime."

Anwar Sadat's trip to Jerusalem and address before the Knesset on Nov. 19, 1977, was the first visit to Israel by an Arab leader and paved the way for direct Israeli-Egyptian peace talks.

As a result of the Camp David accords signed between Israel and Egypt in 1978, Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

He was assassinated on Oct. 6, 1981, as he was reviewing a military parade.

Egypt was the first Arab state to make peace with the Jewish state.

Jordan was the only other Arab state to do so, signing a treaty with Israel in 1994.

Despite the high hopes generated by Egypt's treaty with Israel, in recent years the two countries' relationship has been described as little more than a "cold peace."

Sadat's visit to Jerusalem was a major turning point for Israelis, who became convinced of his seriousness about seeking peace.

Ephraim Katzir, who was Israel's president at the time of the visit, met Sadat at the airport and drove with him to Jerusalem.

He recalled this week the masses of people who lined the roads to greet the Egyptian leader.

"They were lined up, shouting, 'Shalom, peace, salaam,'" Katzir told Israel Radio.

"Sadat was very excited, and very moved.

"He kept trying to lean out the window to wave back, and his security guards would pull him back in right away."

There is still some debate over what motivated Sadat to make the trip to Jerusalem.

Some argue that prior to his visit, during a secret meeting in Morocco between then-Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan and a senior Egyptian official in 1979, Dayan conveyed Israel's intent to return the Sinai Peninsula, which Israel captured in the 1967 war.

Between 1979 and 1982, Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt under the terms of the peace treaty.

But Dan Pattir, who was a senior aide to Begin during the period, said Israel never gave any formal agreement to return the Sinai before Sadat's visit.

"Begin said to me there was never any agreement. Perhaps Sadat had got the sense from the meeting in Morocco of an implicit willingness on Israel's part to return the Sinai.

"But no pre-arranged agreement was made," Pattir told Israel Radio. □

Israeli citrus company cited for violating Helms-Burton Act

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The United States has imposed sanctions against an Israeli citrus company owned by a former Mossad official for doing business in Cuba on land expropriated from Americans.

The State Department announced this week that

officials of the company, BM Group, will be barred from U.S. territory as a result of the company's violation of the 1996 Helms-Burton Act.

The law mandates sanctions against any foreign national who is deemed to be using property confiscated from Americans in Cuba after Fidel Castro took power in 1959.

The BM Group is owned by Rafi Eitan, a former Mossad official who reportedly was involved in the Jonathan Pollard affair.

Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst, is serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison for spying for Israel.

Pollard was arrested in 1985 outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

He pleaded guilty in 1986 to stealing secrets for the Israeli government and, in 1987, was given his sentence.

Pollard's wife, Esther, recently petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice to call on the Israeli government to recognize that Pollard was an agent for Israel.

Eitan headed a secret intelligence unit out of the Prime Minister's Office that recruited and oversaw Pollard's spying activities for Israel from 1984-1986, the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz reported.

Eitan has not been in the United States for more than a decade out of fear that he might be detained for questioning regarding the Pollard affair, according to sources quoted by Ha'aretz.

Spokesman Lee McClenny said the State Department sent letters Nov. 13 telling corporate officers of the company that they were in violation of the act.

As a result, those officers, along with their spouses, minor children and representatives will be denied U.S. visas and excluded from entering the United States for 45 days from the date of the letters.

State Department officials did not provide the names of the individuals affiliated with the company who will be barred entry to the United States.

Israeli officials said only that some of the company's officers were Israeli citizens.

The BM Group, which has no operations in Israel, is the third foreign company to be penalized under the act. The United States has previously cited a Canadian mining company and a Mexican telephone company to be in violation of the law.

Israel, for its part, has consistently backed the U.S. position on Helms-Burton and U.S. efforts to keep Castro's government economically isolated.

"Israel supports the American policy toward Cuba," a spokesman for the Israeli Embassy said. Israel "is one of the countries that always votes with the U.S. in the different U.N. discussions on the issue."

Last month, when the United Nations passed a resolution calling on the Clinton administration to end its economic embargo of Cuba, only Israel and Uzbekistan joined with the United States in voting against it. □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

Cemetery attacked in New Zealand

SYDNEY (JTA) — Three gravestones in the Waikumite Jewish cemetery in Auckland, New Zealand, were damaged by unknown vandals early Tuesday morning.

No graffiti was left at the scene, but the attack has concerned Auckland's Jewish community.

Attacks on Jewish communal property are extremely rare in New Zealand, despite the existence of a number of small anti-Semitic and racist organizations. □