

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is considering a diplomatic initiative to hand over more territory in the West Bank in exchange for a Palestinian pledge to crack down on terrorism and move to final-status negotiations. Both U.S. and Palestinian sources said his proposed transfer of 6 to 8 percent was not acceptable. [Page 1]**

■ **At least two Hezbollah fighters were killed in an overnight clash with Israel Defense Force soldiers in the southern Lebanon security zone. The clash came a day after seven Lebanese civilians from a village in the security zone were killed by Shi'ite shelling. [Page 2]**

■ **The trial of former Vichy official Maurice Papon will likely be delayed again. Officials said Papon, who is in the hospital with double pneumonia, will be unable to appear in court on Thursday, when his trial for crimes against humanity was supposed to have resumed. Papon is charged with allegedly deporting 1,560 Jews during World War II.**

■ **A Polish Jesuit priest sharply condemned the anti-Semitic statements of a fellow Polish priest. Stanislaw Musial wrote that Gdansk priest Henryk Janowski's remarks that Jews should not be allowed in Poland's current government were "an anti-Semitic utterance in the worst, Nazi form."**

■ **Germany will attend a conference in Britain on the fate of gold, jewelry and other assets looted by the Nazis during World War II. More than 40 countries are expected to attend the gathering in early December, which also will discuss issues related to compensation.**

■ **Palestinian prisoners who have been in a Palestinian jail since a roundup following the triple suicide bombing in September launched a hunger strike. The prisoners, who have not had a trial, are demanding to be released.**

Because of Thanksgiving, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Nov. 28.

NEWS ANALYSIS**Clinton day with Peres, Leah Rabin sends clear message to Netanyahu**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — For a few hours last week, the White House remembered an earlier era of Middle East peacemaking.

As President Clinton was receiving an honor from former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and the wife of the slain Yitzhak Rabin, Leah, the sense of longing for those Israeli leaders was palpable in the room filled with more than 100 guests, largely chosen for their support of the Oslo peace process.

In Middle Eastern diplomacy, where symbolism is as important as substance, the message of the day was loud and clear.

Clinton convened a high-profile ceremony and luncheon with the two Labor icons the same week that he said he was too busy to meet with the current Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

"It's clearly a message that this administration wishes that things were different and that the players in Israel were different," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"If nothing else, the luncheon was a very clear statement that the president had four hours to spend on nostalgia, and no time to meet with the prime minister," said Foxman, who attended last Friday's celebration.

At the event, Peres and Rabin presented Clinton with the first Man of Peace award from their respective peace foundations. Clinton returned the \$75,000 prize to fund scholarships for Americans to study in Israel.

Clinton, who veered from his prepared text to reminisce about his special relationship with Yitzhak Rabin, used the ceremony in the ornate East Room to prod Netanyahu's peace policies.

In addition, Clinton used his private time with Peres to criticize Netanyahu. According to U.S. and Israeli sources, Clinton told Peres that the United States has lost faith in the premier and that Clinton's patience is about to run out.

Netanyahu, who has so far resisted Clinton's calls for a settlement freeze and a further redeployment in the West Bank, did not receive a White House invite during his U.S. visit last week.

Clinton was reminded of his perceived snub of the Israeli premier when he disembarked from Air Force One in Los Angeles and came face-to-face with Netanyahu's plane, which was parked nearby on the tarmac.

Netanyahu had already left the airport for a fund-raising dinner in the city.

Clinton's dissatisfaction with Netanyahu peaks

Clinton's dissatisfaction with Netanyahu came to a head last week when the Israeli premier claimed that he would visit the White House on Dec. 8.

According to one U.S. official, the White House was surprised to see Netanyahu announcing on CNN a date for the meeting.

That date was never "in play," the official said, noting that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is scheduled to travel to Africa that week.

Instead, the two are likely to meet later in the month.

Plans are already in the works for the highly anticipated meeting, which the official said would include a specific presidential call for Netanyahu to halt settlement expansion and implement a "credible" withdrawal from the West Bank.

Under the protocols of the Hebron accord signed in January, Israel agreed to withdraw from parts of the territories in three phased redeployments.

The first phase, in which Israel offered to hand over to the Palestinians 2 percent of the West Bank, was rejected by the self-rule authority and was never carried out.

According to the agreements, the third and final stage was to have been completed by the fall of 1998.

Israeli sources said Netanyahu, concerned about coming to Washington empty-handed for a Clinton meeting, has proposed merging two of the remaining three redeployments into one if the Palestinians agree to increase

security cooperation and move directly into accelerated final-status talks.

U.S. officials have reportedly said Netanyahu's current proposal of a 6 to 8 percent withdrawal would not be enough.

Palestinian officials have rejected the proposal as unacceptable.

But whether Netanyahu's government could survive even a 6 percent handover was in doubt. As Knesset member Michael Kleiner of the Geshet faction said, "This is totally against our ideology, against what the prime minister has previously promised."

Kleiner is affiliated with the Land of Israel bloc, whose 17 members, by voting against the prime minister, could break his 66-seat majority in the 120-member Parliament.

Despite the mounting frustration, Clinton sounded a more even-handed tone in public.

In remarks aimed at Netanyahu and at Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, Clinton said at last week's event, "Israelis and Palestinians must embrace the spirit at the heart of the Oslo accords, not jockeying for advantage but working together for the benefit of both sides."

Both sides must realize the "need for urgency," he said.

He added, "The window of progress will become smaller with time."

Clinton said both the Palestinians and Israelis "must refrain from actions that undermine the joint pledge they have made to strengthen security. Both sides must approach each other as partners joined by the prospect of peace and security."

"And both sides must live up to the letter and the spirit of their obligations."

In what his aides later said was a gentle reminder to Netanyahu that Peres and Yitzhak Rabin also focused on Israeli security, Clinton said of the former leaders: "After a lifetime devoted to [Israeli] security, based on their experience and their understanding not only of the particular situation but of human nature, they reached a unique partnership premised on a commitment to peace as ultimately the only guarantor of security."

But in front of an audience of former and current diplomats and Arab and Jewish Americans, it was the tribute to Rabin that carried the day.

Leah Rabin, usually a harsh critic of Netanyahu, instead focused on her fond memories of White House peace ceremonies.

She recalled the "historic scene of the president of the United States with Yasser Arafat on his left and Yitzhak Rabin on his right, towering between the two, as if saying to them, 'Well, kids, the moment has come, be good now and shake your hands.' We have come as a symbol of the hope we have not lost, despite some discouraging events and skies that have darkened things," she said.

'No kissing'

Clinton also spoke of the historic handshake, retelling a story of how it came about.

Before the signing of the Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn in September 1993, Clinton met with Rabin.

"I said when we went out there it was going to be quite an extravaganza," Clinton recalled telling Rabin. "Mr. Arafat was an emotional person, you know, and there was going to have to be a handshake."

According to Clinton, Rabin said, "All right. But no kissing."

Speaking soon after the second anniversary of

Rabin's death, Clinton was emotional about his former peace partner.

He said he keeps in his White House residence a silver tray that Peres gave him.

On it, he said, stands "the yarmulke that I wore at the prime minister's funeral, the little pin I had to wear to go to the grave side and a small stone I took from the grave."

"Above it," he said, "I have the picture of us together the last time I ever saw him, where I'm straightening the bow tie I had to get for him" because he didn't bring one for a black-tie dinner they were attending.

Clinton then shifted to the political realities that will likely bring Netanyahu to the White House before the first of the year, saying: "The only way we can truly honor the memory of our friend, and the continuing work of our friend Shimon Peres, is not to let it go, but to bear down and see it through." □

Shi'ite guerrillas kill civilians in new security zone fighting

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Shi'ite gunmen killed at least seven Lebanese civilians and wounded 15 others this week when their mortar shells missed Israeli targets and hit a Lebanese village instead.

The shelling was part of three days of fighting that ended a monthlong period of relative calm along Israel's tense northern border.

Some of the Lebanese wounded in Sunday's shelling were taken to Israeli hospitals for treatment.

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai condemned the shelling as a breach of the cease-fire understandings reached last year after Israel launched Operation Grapes of Wrath to protect its northern border.

Mordechai charged that the fundamentalist Shi'ite organizations Amal and Hezbollah were openly violating the U.S.-brokered understandings, which were designed to keep civilians out of the circle of hostilities in southern Lebanon.

Two Israeli soldiers were lightly wounded in Sunday's mortar attacks near the Lebanese village of Beit Lif, located about two miles from the Israeli border.

Katyusha rockets also fell inside the Israeli border, but did not cause any damage or injuries.

On Monday, Israel retaliated by launching air and ground assaults on Shi'ite targets in southern Lebanon. Israeli officials said that three Shi'ite gunmen were killed in the ground fighting.

Sunday's violence followed clashes the night before between Israeli forces and Amal fighters in the security zone. Security sources in Lebanon were quoted as saying that four Amal gunmen were believed to have been killed in that fighting.

The renewed violence prompted fresh calls in Israel for a withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

Labor Knesset member Yossi Beilin, who recently founded a movement to lobby for an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, said the latest events were further proof that the security zone was not protecting Israel's northern communities.

The group's platform states that Israel should declare its intent to redeploy along the international border with Lebanon and set up an electronic fence along the border to ensure the safety of the northern settlements.

At the same time, Israel would inform the Lebanese government that it would be held responsible for the situation in the southern part of its territory and that Israel would respond fully if hostile actions are launched from Lebanese territory. □

Debate on prisoners' pardons mars Israel's jubilee preparations

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Plans for Israel's 50th anniversary celebrations hit another snag this week.

Yitzhak Moda'i, chairman of the committee for the jubilee celebrations, sparked a debate with his suggestion that President Ezer Weizman, in consultation with the Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, should consider a general amnesty in conjunction with the jubilee.

Moda'i tried to soften some of the criticisms directed at him by saying that he did not support a sweeping amnesty for all prisoners.

He proposed, instead, the establishment of an apolitical committee, comprised of public figures, to consult with the president on the pardons.

Meanwhile, in the Knesset, a separate amnesty initiative was underway, with attorney Menachem Shizaf lobbying legislators to pass an amnesty bill.

The initiative drew some suggestions that Shizaf was involved in an effort to secure a pardon for Shas Knesset member Aryeh Deri, who is on trial for fraud and corruption charges.

Shizaf categorically denied this, adding that the amnesty would apply only to "criminals convicted of lighter offenses, such as theft, fraud, white collar crime."

"There is no plan to release murderers, rapists or hardened criminals," he said.

For his part, Deri sent a letter to Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein this week in which he said he had no part in the initiative. Deri added that if a general amnesty were granted, he would not want it to apply to him.

Labor Party Knesset member Ophir Pines has introduced a bill that would prevent the president from giving any pardons for the 50th anniversary.

The last time a general amnesty was implemented was following the 1967 Six-Day War, with the release of 501 prisoners, about one-third of the prison population at the time.

The amnesty debate is just one of several problems that have plagued preparations for Israel's 50th anniversary.

Moda'i became chairman after Tourism Minister Moshe Katzav stepped down from the position, saying he had confronted too many obstacles while trying to plan the events.

Some of the anniversary plans were unveiled this week. They include:

- an Israel Defense Force air show in Ramat Gan;
- a rally at the Hebrew University amphitheater in Jerusalem;
- exhibits in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and Beersheba;
- an economic conference in Jerusalem; and
- a Purim parade in Tel Aviv.

Reflecting some of the confusion and disagreements that have marked the preparations, the start of the commemorations, which was recently postponed from Chanukah to Independence Day, has now been rescheduled to its original date, Dec. 23, with a candle-lighting ceremony at the president's residence in Jerusalem. □

Probe of Jewish center bombing focusing on policeman's actions

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — New evidence has surfaced in a long-stalled probe into a 1994 terror bombing of a Jewish center here.

An Argentine congressional commission investigat-

ing the bombing said it had evidence that a high-ranking police officer had received a \$2.5 million payment a week before the attack.

This was not the first time that suspicion has fallen on Juan Jose Ribelli, a former police commissioner in charge of the grand auto theft division of the Buenos Aires provincial police.

Ribelli was arrested last year along with 10 other police officers on charges that they had sold terrorists the van used in the July 18, 1994, bombing of the Argentine Jewish Mutual Aid Association, also known as AMIA.

The attack left 86 dead and more than 300 wounded.

No one is now being held in connection with the attack, which has prompted repeated criticisms by Jewish leaders here and abroad of those carrying out the investigation.

Along with its fruitless probe into the AMIA blast, the Argentine government has also been criticized for its inability to solve the March 17, 1992, bombing of the Israeli Embassy here, which left 29 dead and some 100 wounded.

Investigators have apparently long suspected that Ribelli and other policemen did far more than sell off a stolen van.

"We think those guys knew about the bombing," a member of the congressional committee said in an interview. "We are even considering the idea that they carried it out for money."

According to documents in the hands of the investigators, Ribelli claimed soon after the bombing to have received the money as part of a "living will" from his father.

But police sources called Ribelli's claim "ludicrous" after investigators found that Ribelli's father, a 90-year-old former railroad employee, is almost destitute and living on \$75 a week.

The investigators agree that if the origin of the money can be established, Ribelli could be charged with being a "primary party" to the bombing.

Ribelli has written an open letter declaring his innocence and stating that those responsible for the bombing deserve the death penalty. □

Selection of transsexual singer irks Israeli Orthodox politicians

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Orthodox politicians cried foul this week when a Israeli pop singer who was once a man was chosen to represent Israel at this year's Eurovision song contest.

Politicians said choosing the singer known as Dana International to represent Israel would be a mark against the Jewish people.

"The Eurovision song contest interests me about as much as the weather in Antarctica," Knesset member Shlomo Benizri, a member of the Shas Party, told Israel Radio.

"But as a son of the Jewish people, it offends me. The Jews are supposed to be a light unto the nations, but this is a message of darkness."

International's song, "Diva," was chosen from among 33 entries.

The chairman of the selection committee, Gil Samsonov, said the song was superior to all the other entries.

He added that the singer's transsexuality would, perhaps, help Israel's chances.

"We should be seen as a liberal, free country that chooses songs on their merits," he said. □

Lithuania begins investigation of suspected Nazi war criminal*By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — Lithuania has launched an investigation of a suspected Nazi war criminal living in the Baltic nation.

The decision to investigate Kazys Gimzauskas was given a cautious welcome by Jewish leaders, who said similar moves in the past against suspected war criminals had failed to lead to convictions.

Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Israel office, said in a statement that the move was "long overdue."

But, he added, "In such cases, every day that passes without judicial action against Nazi murderers only increases the likelihood they will never be forced to pay for their crimes."

The statement continued, "The question at present is whether the opening of this investigation represents a sincere attempt to achieve justice or is merely a ploy to gain points in Western public opinion."

Lithuania's willingness to move against suspected war criminals living in their midst has long been questioned by Jewish officials.

Nazi hunters say Lithuania is reluctant to move against suspected war criminals because it would dredge up the issue of local collaboration with the Nazis during the war. Zuroff said earlier this year that Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas' pledge to prosecute alleged war criminals was a hollow declaration.

Brazauskas made the pledge during a 1995 visit to Israel.

Gimzauskas sees himself as patriot

Germany occupied Lithuania from 1941 to 1944, during which time approximately 94 percent of Lithuania's prewar Jewish community of 240,000 died in the Holocaust. Historians say that ordinary Lithuanians helped with the killings.

Gimzauskas, 89, is suspected of having handed Jews over to death squads in the capital of Vilnius during World War II, when he was deputy head of the Nazi-sponsored Lithuanian security police, known as the Saugumas.

Some 55,000 of Vilnius' 60,000 Jews perished during the war.

Gimzauskas moved to the United States in 1956 and lived in St. Petersburg, Fla.

His U.S. citizenship was revoked in June 1996 for having concealed his wartime past.

He returned to Lithuania prior to being deported.

Gimzauskas categorically denies his guilt.

In an interview this week, he described himself and his former superior, Aleksandras Lileikis, as "Lithuanian patriots."

Gimzauskas was the wartime deputy of Lileikis, 90, another suspected war criminal now living in Lithuania.

The Lileikis case has drawn considerable attention, particularly after legal proceedings against him were postponed in July when medical experts determined that he was not fit to stand trial.

Under Lithuanian law, suspects cannot be brought to trial if medical experts rule that they are too ill. Lithuania's Parliament delayed action last month on an amendment that would change that law.

Jewish activists fear that the Parliament may never vote on the measure.

"They are waiting for Lileikis to die," Simonas Davidavicius, chairman of the Jewish community of Kaunas, the Baltic nation's second largest city, said recently. □

Czech survivors send letter, demand money from Germany*By Randi Druzin*

PRAGUE (JTA) — A group of Czech Holocaust survivors has sent a letter to the German government denouncing its refusal to provide individual compensation to survivors in the Czech Republic.

In the Nov. 12 letter, the Petitions Committee of Czech Holocaust Victims called on German legislators to fulfill their "international, legal and moral commitments toward the remaining" Czech survivors or risk sully Germany's reputation.

The letter is part of a campaign by Czech survivors to have Germany go beyond a commitment it made in a German-Czech declaration that was signed in January.

The declaration called for the establishment of a fund to finance community projects for Czech survivors, but did not call for individual compensation.

Germany will provide the fund with about \$76 million, and the Czech government will contribute about \$12.9 million.

The declaration, 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.

Jewish leaders complained at the time of the pact's signing that Germany did not comment on the Holocaust in the declaration, which stated that Germany "regrets the suffering and iniquities inflicted on the Czech people."

German officials are currently negotiating with the Conference on Material Claims Against Germany about compensation payments to Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe.

In August, the German government and officials of the Claims Conference announced the establishment of a joint commission, which is expected to make its proposals before the end of the year.

Germany has paid more than \$54 billion in compensation to Holocaust survivors since World War II.

However, those living in Soviet-bloc countries were unable to apply for compensation during the Cold War.

Czech Jews have speculated that Germany's reluctance to compensate survivors in Eastern Europe stems from fears that such a move would pave the way for compensation requests from non-Jews who suffered under Nazism.

There are about 6,500 Holocaust survivors in the Czech Republic. □

Israel's unemployment rate soars to highest in three years*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's unemployment rate has reached its highest level in three years, soaring to 8.1 percent, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics.

According to the bureau, the third-quarter figures were the highest since the same rate was recorded in the first quarter of 1994.

The number of unemployed rose to 179,000, up from 169,000 in the second quarter of the year. The civilian labor force totaled 2.2 million.

Jacob Frenkel, governor of the Bank of Israel, blamed structural reforms in the economy for the increase in joblessness.

He defended the bank's policy of monetary restraint, saying that it was necessary in order to maintain the government's inflationary goals of 7 to 10 percent. □