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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Likud walks out of talks

The Likud Party walked out of coalition talks with Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak as both sides blamed each other for the breakdown.

At the same time, it appears likely that the fervently Orthodox Shas Party will join Barak's government. [Page 3]

Jewish leaders, Mubarak confer

Some of the 20 U.S. Jewish leaders who attended a meeting with Egypt's president Monday in Washington said they were disappointed with Hosni Mubarak's reluctance to take a firm stand on a number of issues raised.

Those topics included the 13 Iranian Jews accused by Tehran of espionage, anti-Semitism in Egypt and a meeting of parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to discuss Israeli settlements.

Iran statement downplayed

Iran informed German officials that nine of the 13 Jews it is currently detaining on espionage charges are not spies, according to the vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

But Malcolm Hoenlein downplayed the development.

The Iranians have "said so many things," Hoenlein said, "and even trying to pinpoint the blame on [the four other detainees] is not acceptable. There is no evidence that any one" of the detainees is guilty.

Support urged for day schools

A task force launched by the umbrella fundraising and social service organization of the U.S. Jewish community is urging greater national and local support for Jewish day schools.

The United Jewish Communities, joined by other Jewish groups, is calling on local federations to provide more money and other forms of assistance for all forms of Jewish education, "with special emphasis on support that helps to ensure day school viability and vitality."

In a report issued last Friday, the groups urged federations to forge strategic partnerships with philanthropists, foundations, educational organizations and the religious movements to increase funding, raise the quality of instruction and promote day schools.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Northern Israelis angry, fearful after rocket attacks by Hezbollah

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Residents of Israel's northern communities are living with an unsettling mix of anger, frustration and fear.

These emotions roiled to the surface after the most deadly Katyusha rocket attack in more than four years was launched by Hezbollah from across the Lebanese border.

What makes the assault particularly galling for them is that it came amid growing hints that Syrian President Hafez Assad, who according to most accounts controls Hezbollah's every move, is ready to resume peace talks with Israel.

The residents of northern Israel may hope that such talks will lead to quiet along the Lebanese border, but past experience has taught them otherwise.

More likely, they believe, Israeli and Syrian officials may discuss peace in the coming months — while Hezbollah wages war.

This week those who are optimistic regarding the resumption of Israeli-Syrian talks were heartened when word surfaced that Syria has agreed to a visit next month by a group of Jewish and Arab mayors from Israel.

The visit, which is being coordinated through a European mediator, would be the first official trip to Damascus by Israeli Jews.

But, even amid such hopeful signs, Assad has always made a point of drawing a dividing line between events in Syria and Lebanon.

While the Israeli-Syrian border has been quiet for decades, Assad has repeatedly used Hezbollah operations to pressure Israel on the Lebanese front.

Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak got a taste of Assad's inscrutability last week, when he was described favorably during an interview with British journalist Patrick Seale.

In his first public comments about Israel's new leadership, Assad described Barak as "strong and honest."

In a separate interview with Seale, Barak responded in kind, saying that Assad's legacy is a "strong, independent, self-confident Syria."

Two days after Assad complimented the new Israeli leader, Hezbollah launched a massive rocket attack on northern Israel, killing two Israelis — Tony Zanna, 38, and Shimon Elimelech, 45 — and wounding five others.

Some 500 structures and 100 vehicles were also hit, and property damage was estimated at millions of dollars — excluding related economic losses, such as the negative impact on local tourism.

Echoing the often-repeated accusation of Israeli officials, Defense Minister Moshe Arens said Syria is using Hezbollah to pressure Israel.

"There is no doubt that nothing happens in Lebanon unless the Syrians want it," Arens told reporters Sunday.

Indeed, it was only after Israel retaliated last week with air attacks on power stations and bridges near Beirut, killing eight Lebanese and wounding dozens of others, that Syria signaled to Hezbollah that enough was enough.

At least for now.

This is the real dilemma facing the residents of Israel's northern border. They realize that whatever political negotiations with Syria take place, their peace and quiet is far from guaranteed.

"Residents of the north have become hostages in the hands of Hezbollah," said

MIDEAST FOCUS

Sharon protests French reaction

Outgoing Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon snubbed a visiting French envoy to protest what he called French President Jacques Chirac's "one-sided" reaction to last week's Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon.

Chirac condemned the airstrikes, but "didn't even mention, not one word, the two Israelis who had been killed by the Katyusha rockets fired from Lebanon" before Israel launched its reprisal, the Foreign Ministry was quoted as saying Monday.

Political strategists form firm

The U.S. political strategists who helped engineer Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak's election victory over Benjamin Netanyahu are teaming up with Israeli advisers to form a consulting firm.

The new firm, GCS International, is made up of Americans James Carville, Stanley Greenberg and Robert Shrum, and Israelis Moshe Gaon and Tal Zilberstein.

Court rules on soldier's remains

Israel's High Court of Justice ruled Sunday that the grave of a soldier killed along with 11 other soldiers in a raid in Lebanon more than two years ago be opened in order to conduct DNA testing to positively identify the remains.

The Israeli army buried the remains, returned to Israel along with those of two other soldiers received in a prisoner swap with Hezbollah, without the family's knowledge.

Palestinians protest shooting

Some 1,000 Palestinians demonstrated in the West Bank to demand punishment for a Palestinian police officer who killed a teen-ager Sunday.

Several human rights groups have accused Palestinian police and security of misuse of power in the wake of the deaths of several Palestinians at their hands.

Jackie Sabbag, the mayor of the summer resort town of Nahariya, after residents there — as elsewhere in the north — were ordered last week to go to bomb shelters.

This sense of helplessness has generated considerable anger.

"If there is no peace and quiet to allow children of the northern communities to go to summer camps, the IDF should act so that the children of Beirut will not go to summer camps either," said Shlomo Bouhbout, mayor of the northern town of Ma'alot.

When President Ezer Weizman visited the family of one of the Katyusha victims, the relatives of the deceased could not hold back their wrath.

"I have lived in Kiryat Shmona since 1950, and I will not leave the town," said Tikva, Elimelech's sister. "But I am asking for only one thing: security."

The frustration of the northern front residents is compounded by their belief that no one in Jerusalem really cares about their economic losses.

On Sunday, Kiryat Shmona and the other northern communities blocked roads and called a strike to protest what they view as government neglect.

Area leaders also met that day with outgoing Premier Benjamin Netanyahu, who said that promised aid would be forthcoming.

But such promises did not hold much weight with some northern residents, many of whom feel alienated from their government.

"Don't believe any politician," Charlie Peretz, a veteran Kiryat Shmona resident, said this week. "We have suffered for 30 years, received promises from politicians, but those promises have no substance."

It was ironic that they vented their frustrations at Netanyahu, who drew the lion's share of their support in last month's election for prime minister.

In Kiryat Shmona, for example, some 62 percent of the electorate voted for Netanyahu over Barak.

Eager to make their needs known to Israel's incoming premier, the community leaders also met with Barak, who promised to make the economic needs of the northern communities a top priority in his new government. This promise, which will in the short run be measured in terms of shekels, has long-term strategic implications.

Both before and after the election campaign, Barak has committed himself to pull the Israeli forces out of Lebanon within a year.

If negotiations with the Syrians resume, Barak's first priority will be to convince the Syrians to restrain Hezbollah while the negotiations go on.

Assad may agree, but then again he may not.

In the meantime, life in northern Israel returned to normal after the thousands who had fled the region last week returned home this week.

But "normal" includes a great deal of uncertainty. And for many of the residents there, they question how much longer they can live with that uncertainty.

How, they ask, can parents send their children to school knowing that a Katyusha rocket may fall on the school without any prior warning? □

Estonian collaborator buried with honors

MOSCOW (JTA) — The remains of the man who commanded Estonia's Nazi-sponsored SS division during World War II have been reburied in the country's national cemetery alongside the graves of some of the Baltic nation's leading historical figures.

Estonia's top state and military officials attended Saturday's ceremony honoring Alfons Rebane, who is regarded by many Estonians as a fighter against the Soviet occupation that began in 1940 and lasted until the collapse of communism 50 years later. But some experts say that as head of the Nazi division known as the Estonian Legion, Rebane was responsible for killing Jews and Slavs in Estonia and elsewhere in the region.

Saturday's ceremony sparked protests from several organizations in Estonia representing Jews and ethnic Russians, who said the full military honors given Rebane were an insult to the memory of the war's victims.

Rebane spent most of his time after the war in Britain, where he directed the anti-Communist resistance efforts of Estonian expatriates living in the West.

He died in Germany and was originally buried there. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Jews named to Russian Cabinet

A Jewish member of several previous Russian Cabinets was appointed to a position in the new government of Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin.

Alexander Livshits, a former finance minister, will be Russia's special envoy responsible for contacts with the leading Western industrialized countries.

He is the second Jew to serve in the current Cabinet, which also includes Ilya Klebanov, a deputy prime minister responsible for military and industrial affairs.

Court rules on Sabbath case

A U.S. appeals court ruled that a Nevada sheriff's office must try to accommodate a Seventh-Day Adventist employee's desire to observe the Sabbath on Saturdays.

In making the recent ruling, the court overturned a 1996 lower court decision that Judy Balint's lack of seniority could exempt the office from accommodating Sabbath observance. Jewish groups joined with a coalition of other groups in filing a friend-of-the-court brief in support of Balint.

As a result of the ruling, a case in which Balint is suing to get her job back is expected to go to trial.

Agudah leader to be honored

Nearly 200 representatives from Agudath Israel of America are slated to gather on Capitol Hill on Tuesday morning, when the U.S. Senate pays tribute to the Orthodox group's late leader, Rabbi Moshe Sherer.

The delegation is also planning to meet with various administration officials and present awards to lawmakers who have sponsored legislation that seeks to extend greater protections for religious freedom.

Ben-Gurion memorial backed

Washington's mayor expressed support for a proposal by Israel's ambassador to the United States to set aside land in the nation's capital for a monument to honor David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister. Zalman Shoval proposed the idea for a privately funded monument on a donated plot of city land during a meeting last week with Mayor Anthony Williams.

Wiesenthal honored by Czechs

Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal received the Czech Republic's highest state honor from Czech President Vaclav Havel.

During the presentation of the Order of the White Lion over the weekend, Havel described Wiesenthal as a "physical symbol of human memory." Wiesenthal said he accepted the award not only for himself, but for the 6 million who died during the Holocaust.

Likud will likely stay in opposition, as Shas predicted to join coalition

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak appears to be moving toward forming a moderate-left government.

Though Barak had initially said he hoped to form a government that also includes the Likud Party, this became unlikely Monday, when coalition talks with Likud broke down.

At the same time, there were signs that the fervently Orthodox Shas Party would be joining the new government.

A meeting between Barak and acting Likud Chairman Ariel Sharon lasted only several minutes.

"I don't see a way for the Likud to join the government," Sharon told reporters Monday. "We will fight this government from the opposition."

The Likud had sought an equal voice in deciding policy, particularly on the political process.

"A full partnership was necessary — that kind of partnership was not proposed to us," Sharon added.

Sharon, the outgoing foreign minister, cited differences with Barak regarding the future of the Golan Heights, which Syria demands in exchange for peace with Israel, and Jewish housing construction in predominantly Arab eastern Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, progress in talks with the Shas Party appeared to clear the way for its entry into the coalition. Negotiating teams began discussing a coalition package for Shas after the fervently Orthodox party met Barak's key demands to oust its corruption-tainted leader, Aryeh Deri, and forgo its demand for control of the interior ministry.

According to reports, Shas would be offered the Labor, Health and Infrastructure ministries, as well as some control of the Religious Affairs Ministry, possibly involving a rotation arrangement with the National Religious Party.

"In the opinion of the prime minister-elect, Shas joining the coalition is necessary and workable," said Meretz party leader Yossi Sarid.

Meretz, a champion of secular rights, had initially said it would refuse to sit on a government with Shas, citing the bribery and fraud conviction of its former leader, Aryeh Deri.

Meretz officials, who have already concluded an agreement with Barak, met Monday night to decide whether to remain in the government if Shas joins. In addition to Meretz, Barak signed agreements over the weekend with the immigrants rights Yisrael Ba'Aliyah Party and the National Religious Party, a champion of Jewish settlers. Along with Barak's own One Israel list, the emerging coalition so far numbers 47 seats, still short of a 61-majority in the 120-member Knesset.

Barak is also expected to try to conclude agreements with the Center Party, the One Nation workers party and the fervently Orthodox United Torah Judaism bloc.

If all three join, Barak would have 60 of the 120 legislators behind him. If Shas joins, as expected, the government would hold a comfortable 77-seat majority in the Knesset.

With the signing of coalition agreements, a number of government portfolios were parceled out over the weekend:

- Housing Ministry — National Religious Party. This will help the NRP advance its interests in developing Jewish settlements, but could prove to be a source of tension with dovish parties within the coalition. It may also present difficulties in negotiations with the Palestinians, who have demanded an end to Jewish settlement activity.

- Education — Meretz. This portfolio was held in the outgoing government by the National Religious Party.

- Trade and Industry — Meretz.

- Interior — Yisrael Ba'Aliyah. The Russian immigrants party built its campaign around the demand to wrest control of the ministry from Shas, which Yisrael Ba'Aliyah charged was blocking the entry of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

- Absorption — Yisrael Ba'Aliyah will continue to control this ministry. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Memorial in Berlin does not end debate on guilt and remembrance***By Toby Axelrod*

BERLIN (JTA) — A gray-haired man and woman stood at the wooden fence, reading the posters pasted onto its planks: "This is the site of Germany's future memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe."

Behind the high wall is a sandy lot, big as several football fields, sprinkled with wild flowers and pools of rainwater.

Soon this lot will look much different.

The Holocaust memorial was a common topic this weekend, as it has been off and on during more than a decade of its planning and debate.

Last Friday, more than half a century after the end of World War II, Germany's Parliament finally decided to build a Holocaust memorial here — a vast field of 2,700 cement slabs resembling giant gravestones, designed by American architect Peter Eisenman.

At the site, located near the Brandenburg Gate, pedestrians stopped to read the posters and articles pasted on the fence.

"There are memorials for war heroes and victors, so why not for the murdered people?" said Wolfgang Schoels, 39, a doctor from Heidelberg.

"I have always been for the memorial," said student Daniel Tretter, 25. "But other countries should also think about what happened. There were many helpers" in the genocide, he said.

"It disturbs me that it took so long and that the decision might have been made now under pressure," said student Swenya Maass, 23, who was 12 years old when the memorial was first proposed. She and friend Matthias Temme, 23, had paused here during a bike ride. "But in principle, I think it is a good idea."

"Perhaps it is best that it is gigantic, to show the dimensions of the persecution," said Temme.

"The Eisenman design is not the most beautiful, but maybe the memorial should not be beautiful."

While Maass said many younger people are seeking information about the history of the Holocaust, Temme said he thought more are disinterested or even hostile.

"There is so much hatred of foreigners," he said.

The older couple, who preferred not to give their names, said the memorial will anger younger Germans.

"They say, 'We never killed a Jew and neither did my parents. Why should we be ashamed or sad?'" said the man.

The woman said the memorial would attract dogs and vandals. "And we feel bad that it is only for the Jews. What about the other victims?"

Not all questions have been resolved — such as how to honor the memory of other victims of the Nazis, including homosexuals, slave laborers and the Roma and Sinti, as Gypsies prefer to be known. But in general, politicians and religious leaders expressed relief at the Parliament's decision.

It capped 11 years of public debate, an often painful confrontation with questions of guilt and responsibility that penetrated all levels of German society.

Opting to include an information center at the site, legislators made it clear that the memorial should not end this discussion but rather ensure that it continue after the last survivors and perpe-

tors are gone. Indeed, the discussion — which many have called more revealing and more important than a concrete memorial — is far from over.

Berlin Mayor Eberhard Diepgen, who opposed the Eisenman design as too huge and unrelated to history, now has turned his criticism to the suggestion that separate memorials be built for the other Nazi victims.

Not in Berlin, he has said, gearing up for the next showdown.

For his part, Andreas Nachama, president of Berlin's Jewish community, hopes the planned memorial will speak for other persecuted groups as well.

"The general public speaks about a Holocaust memorial," he said.

"That means it is primarily for the Jews, but it also includes other victims.

"So maybe this is a first step toward seeing that others are included, even if their names are not on it."

Other groups should have their own memorials, said Lea Rosh, who first proposed the memorial.

"But they don't have to be in Berlin. We have already said that there should be one for Roma and Sinti, but in Stuttgart, where they were imprisoned," Rosh said in an interview with JTA.

The 11-year debate about the memorial has reflected advances made in the decades of discussion on questions of guilt and responsibility, particularly in the former West Germany.

Since the days of the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials, where the finger was pointed at major players, there has been a giant leap in public awareness of the role played by ordinary Germans in Nazi crimes. This awareness has grown just as the perpetrator generation passes on. So the postwar generations are the ones busy with the task of remembering.

The parliamentary debate before last Friday's vote mirrored this struggle to come to terms with the past.

"Fifty-four years had to go by before our country had the courage to find a common form of remembering," said one of the youngest legislators, Michael Roth, 28, of the Social Democratic Party. "Why only now?"

"We're not building this memorial for the Jews or for other victims," said the president of Parliament, Wolfgang Thierse, also a Social Democrat.

"We're building it for us. With this memorial there can be no more denial or indifference."

Last Friday's vote was one of the Parliament's last official acts in Bonn before its move to new headquarters in Berlin's newly refurbished Reichstag.

The cost of the memorial is estimated at about \$8 million.

Michael Naumann, cultural adviser to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, says construction should begin next year.

Friday's decision does mean an end to one chapter. And it took way too long, said cultural critic Michael Cullen, who has edited a book documenting the decade of debate.

Just the same, there may be no other place in the world that has a monument dedicated to its own victims.

"Can any response — aesthetic, religious, social, political — ever be adequate to Holocaust memory?" asked James Young, American scholar and expert on memorials, who has been a consultant on the Berlin project.

"Probably not, but we continue to respond nonetheless, adequately or not." □