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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli sales to China targeted

The United States wants Israel to curb weapons sales to China.

The issue was raised because "whenever any of our friends sells sophisticated equipment that might be American in origin, that is inconsistent with the terms under which the transfer was made," President Clinton said.

Clinton's comment came in the wake of Israel's disclosure that it had sold an advanced radar system to the Chinese air force.

Israel has assured U.S. officials that the sale does not involve American technology.

U.S. may own Nazi-looted books

A U.S. commission is looking into whether the Library of Congress has Nazi-looted books in its collection.

Meanwhile, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), the chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, dropped his opposition to another \$2.5 million for the commission. The funding will now be considered by the full Senate. [Page 4]

U.S. envoy to visit Middle East

President Clinton's Middle East envoy is slated to travel to Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas early next week, the State Department said.

Dennis Ross will not visit Syria, but State Department spokesman James Rubin said the United States is working with Israel and Syria "in an effort to restart negotiations and lay a basis that would give each side the confidence that talks would lead to an agreement."

Senator blocks foreign aid bill

A Jewish senator's move to block consideration of virtually all legislation in the Senate has prevented lawmakers from voting on the foreign aid bill, which includes nearly \$3 billion in Israel's annual aid and \$1.2 billion in special aid to the Jewish state to implement last year's Wye agreement.

Sen. Herb Kohl (D-Wis.) blocked the Senate from considering most bills because he is concerned that a provision dealing with dairy issues, which are important to his state, could be attached to one of the bills.

A spokeswoman for Kohl told JTA that he supports the foreign aid bill and has contacted the Israeli Embassy to explain his position.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel's handicapped remind Barak that domestic promises must be kept

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Some Israelis were hoping this week that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat doesn't read Israeli newspapers or watch Israeli television.

That way he wouldn't have seen how Prime Minister Ehud Barak suddenly caved in Sunday to the demands of the country's handicapped population — after he stood firm through a 37-day strike by the disabled at the Finance Ministry.

Only hours earlier, Finance Minister Avraham Shochat and his senior aides were saying negotiations over stipends for the disabled were effectively stalemated and that the government would implement unilaterally what it was prepared to provide.

But ministers at Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting apparently felt the strike was generating too much bad public relations. Shochat — and Barak — were persuaded to back off.

Barak, later welcoming a delegation of wheelchair-bound strikers into his office, said there "has never been a government that has been so sensitive and done so much" for the handicapped population.

While across-the-board increases in benefits for the handicapped will cost the government some \$33 million during the next two years, the strike had taken on a significance beyond money, mainly due to the strikers' heart-wrenching rhetoric.

Their stories of hardship moved the nation. Their obvious discomfort as they milled about the foyer of the Finance Ministry grew into a cause celebre.

Eventually — perhaps belatedly, in the view of some of his supporters — Barak caught on to the potential political significance of this welling up of public sympathy that threatened to turn into outrage. People were beginning to say, on the air and in print, that he was heartless, too coldly calculating and insufficiently aware of how less-fortunate citizens live and struggle.

One day after he backed off, Barak flew off to Paris, where he and Arafat addressed a meeting of Socialists and Social Democrats from 139 nations. Also on Monday, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators launched talks for a final peace agreement in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

Plainly, Barak's spin doctors hoped these diplomatic developments would quickly dull the memory of the awkward strike and its equally awkward conclusion.

In large measure, they did. But observers here are still taking the time to ponder Barak's domestic aims and agenda.

His campaign promises earlier this year, after all, were chock full of social and economic pledges. An elderly hospital patient lying in a corridor came to symbolize, in Barak's television campaign, the crisis in health care services and the candidate's determination to fix it. Barak visiting schools; Barak in university labs; Barak dwelling on the need to drastically overhaul the country's educational infrastructure — these, too, were images from his campaign.

Yet the new government's first budget, now making its way through the Knesset, provides little in the way of immediate relief to pupils, patients, the elderly, students — or indeed the handicapped or the poor.

The leitmotif of the budget is a return to economic growth and to job creation, with the assurance of a "trickle-down" effect that all will eventually feel — in two to three years. For diehard socialists, the Labor-led government's policy is much too mar-

MIDEAST FOCUS

Senate confirms Indyk as envoy

The U.S. Senate on Wednesday confirmed Martin Indyk for a second tour as ambassador to Israel.

Indyk, who is currently serving as the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, was the first Jew to serve as U.S. ambassador to Israel.

Clinton, Barak to meet in Turkey

President Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak are expected to meet next week on the sidelines of a security conference that will bring together members of NATO and the former Warsaw Pact.

During their meeting in Turkey, Clinton and Barak are expected to discuss the latest developments in the Middle East peace process.

Final-status talks resume

Israeli and Palestinian teams held their second round of final-status negotiations in Ramallah.

The two sides have begun discussing Israel's release of a third group of Palestinian prisoners, according to Israel Radio.

Troops guard West Bank hilltop

Israeli troops remained on guard at a West Bank outpost Thursday to ensure that Jewish settlers would not try to reclaim the hill one day after they were forcibly removed. Though the settlers vowed to return after they were evicted from Maon Farm, there were no further incidents reported.

Sentence given in pig incident

An Israeli court sentenced a Jewish extremist to two-and-a-half years in jail for placing a pig's head on the grave of a Palestinian nationalist.

The court also gave Avigdor Eskin an 18-month suspended sentence for conspiring to torch offices belonging to Israeli peace activists. Eskin was cleared of charges of plotting to catapult a pig's head onto the Temple Mount.



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ket-oriented, with too little government intervention on behalf of the underprivileged sectors of society.

Barak is accused in these quarters of basing his economic recovery program first and foremost on making the rich richer still.

Longer school days, more hospital buildings, more classrooms — these dreams are being curtailed for the moment as the new government proceeds more cautiously and conservatively than had been generally expected.

To say, as some argue, that Barak is incapable of conducting a bold peace policy and a vigorous domestic program at the same time is simplistic — as well as insulting to a man noted for his energy and intellectual gifts. Nor is it sufficient just to suggest that Barak has put peace on the front burner and deliberately consigned the economic and social planks of his platform to later in his term.

Rather, the prime minister's options and decisions need to be seen through the prism of his coalition calculations. While his coalition holds a comfortable legislative majority — 73 of the Knesset's 120 members — it is nevertheless based on a balance of diverse and conflicting interests.

Any attempt to erode state funding for the Orthodox sector would risk the loss of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party. Any effort to cut off the settlers from their various channels of state support would drive out the National Religious Party.

Yet those are precisely the budgets Barak would have to trim if and when he undertakes the radical redistribution of government largesse than his platform promised.

A new order of national priorities invariably means less for some and more for others.

At this point, with the hard issues of peacemaking about to be addressed in the final-status talks, Barak is far from eager to shake the boat — for fear some of his coalition partners may fall out. His more pressing priority is to keep the government as large as possible for as long as possible.

In this way, he hopes, if an agreement is eventually achieved, the national referendum that he has promised for any final peace deal with the Palestinians will become a massive vote of confidence in his peace policy.

The last thing he needs now is for his precariously balanced coalition to start wrangling within itself over domestic policy-making. □

Latin American Jews to get a Web site

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Beginning Jan. 1, 2000 — Y2K willing — Latin American Jews will have their first official Internet site.

In a ceremony Monday evening in Buenos Aires, one of the site's directors, Adhemar Faerstein, said, "The portal will connect individuals and organizations from Ushuaia to Mexico City."

Shalom Online — www.shalomonline.com — will offer Spanish-language content, ranging from history to food recipes, geared toward Latin America Jews. It will provide free e-mail, chat rooms, video conferences and practical information such as how to plan a Jewish wedding, prepare a traditional seder or find a burial site, as well as news and information. The site will also provide a place for individuals and organizations to exchange information and communicate.

"Shalom Online will take advantage of the Internet to shorten distances between communities and serve as a research tool to keep the history of Jews alive," said Sergio Widder, the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Latin American director.

In addition to the center, the site is sponsored by the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires; AMIA and DAIA, the two umbrella Jewish organizations in Argentina; and the Argentine National Library.

Argentina's vice-president-elect, Carlos Alvarez, joined the directors of the organizations in the presentation of the Web site.

"There are more than 2,000 sites that promote hate and intolerance on the Internet," said Widder. "There are close to 40 that operate in Latin America, with groups in Argentina at the forefront."

Jews in Latin America — there are 225,000 in Argentina alone — are especially worried about a neo-Nazi conference scheduled to occur in Chile next April. □

JEWISH WORLD

Envoy slams anti-Israel 'racism'

Israel's treatment at the United Nations amounts to "racism," according to the U.S. ambassador to the world body.

Richard Holbrooke made the comment Wednesday at a dinner in New York hosted by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Citing Israel's exclusion from all U.N. regional groups and the annual "anti-Israel" resolutions brought before the General Assembly, Holbrooke said the only explanation for such "discrimination" is "a deep, subliminal, but undeniable hostility."

House backs 'charitable choice'

The U.S. House of Representatives easily passed a bill that includes a provision which allows faith-based organizations to receive federal grants to promote fatherhood in low-income families.

While groups such as the Orthodox Union praised the bill's passage, several other Jewish groups expressed concern that the "charitable choice" provision violates the separation of church and state.

Warsaw chief rabbi resigns early

The rabbi serving Warsaw's Jewish community resigned just six months into his two-year appointment.

Citing conflict with community leaders, Rabbi Baruch Rabinowicz said, "Neither side fulfilled the expectations they had."

An Orthodox rabbi in his mid-20s, Rabinowicz took up his post last May as the first rabbi to have been hired by the community in at least four decades.

His appointment was viewed as a landmark in the revival of Polish Jewish life.

Bible-in-schools guide issued

Eighteen religious and civil rights groups are backing a new guidebook created to help public schools teach the Bible without breaking the constitutional wall separating church and state.

The American Jewish Congress is among those supporting "The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide," which encourages schools to teach the Bible as literature.

Holocaust denier gets 10 months

A German court sentenced a Holocaust denier to 10 months in prison for denying that the Nazis murdered millions of Jews.

Frederick Toben, 55, was found guilty Wednesday of incitement, slander and insulting the memory of the dead for spreading his ideas on the Internet and in pamphlets.

Holocaust denial is a crime in Germany.

First lady sidesteps controversy during her tour of the Middle East

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton has wrapped up a two-day visit to Israel characterized by careful efforts to sidestep the land mines of Middle East politics.

With Clinton considering a run for a New York seat in the U.S. Senate, her trip was closely watched for any impact it may have on the state's large Jewish population.

As Israel and the Palestinians enter their most difficult phase of negotiations, U.S. State Department officials were reportedly concerned that she not repeat her previous statements favoring the creation of a Palestinian state.

On Thursday, Clinton visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. She then traveled to the West Bank town of Ramallah, where she met with Suha Arafat, wife of the Palestinian Authority president, and presented a U.S. grant of some \$4 million for the establishment of mother-child aid centers in the self-rule areas.

She later visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City.

Despite the first lady's efforts to achieve a careful balance in her comments, controversial remarks by Suha Arafat set off angry protests in Israel.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with Clinton, Arafat accused Israel of polluting the West Bank's water and land.

Israeli officials immediately rejected the claims and accused Arafat of incitement.

"These baseless accusations of Suha Arafat are the only thing poisoning the relations between the two peoples," said Cabinet member Haim Ramon.

Clinton, who did not respond to Arafat's statements, was asked during her stop in Ramallah whether she still supports the creation of a Palestinian state.

She did not respond directly, telling her audience instead, "You can count on the United States and the strong U.S.-Palestinian relationship as you move forward on the path to peace."

Earlier, at a breakfast hosted by Reuma Weizman, wife of the Israeli president, and Nava Barak, wife of the prime minister, Clinton stressed the strong U.S.-Israeli relationship.

She said she was in Israel to "further deepen the already strong bonds between our two countries."

"I am doing everything I can on behalf of my husband and our government and the United States to further the peace process," she added.

Clinton, accompanied by her daughter, Chelsea, continued on to Yad Vashem, where she laid a wreath in memory the victims of the Holocaust.

Most of the stops on Clinton's trip, her fifth to Israel, focused on youth and social issues.

She began her visit to Israel on Wednesday by going to a teen-counseling center in Kfar Saba. She later spoke at a conference on youth in Tel Aviv.

On Thursday, she visited the Sha'are Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem and the Rabin medical center in Tel Aviv.

Her visit later that day to the Western Wall reportedly took place after consultation with Jewish leaders.

Clinton and Barak stood before the wall for several minutes. She placed a note in the wall before leaving, as did her daughter.

Before departing for Jordan, the next stop on her Middle East tour, Clinton gave a lecture at the Rabin peace center in Tel Aviv.

In that speech, she reminisced about peace talks that took place at the White House, focusing on the late leaders of Israel and Jordan, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein.

Clinton related how Rabin had warned her she was "endangering" the peace process when she refused to let him or Hussein smoke in the White House.

"As they would come in and out of the White House, one or the other would turn and chide me that I was sending them out into the cold, I was denying them the comforts of their habits," Clinton recalled. □

Library of Congress may have Nazi-looted books in its collection

By Michael Shapiro

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A U.S. commission is looking into whether the Library of Congress has Nazi-looted books in its collection.

"Books came to the Library of Congress after World War II from Europe," Stu Loeser, the spokesman for the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States, told JTA.

"Undoubtedly these books are there."

Members and staff of the commission met with Library of Congress officials Tuesday, Loeser said.

"They are working cooperatively with us," Loeser said. "They know their collection better than anybody else."

Asked if the commission knows whether books looted from Jewish victims are in the library's collection, Loeser said, "Part of the resolution will be a definitive statement about this."

He said the questions being pursued include whether any of those books held at the library are from Holocaust victims and whether ownership of the books can be traced.

Officials at the Library of Congress could not be reached Thursday because of the Veterans Day holiday.

Meanwhile, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), the chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, dropped his opposition to another \$2.5 million for the commission.

The funding will now be considered by the full Senate. □

Anti-Nazism part of lesson plan for students at N.Y. high school

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — Tuesday was a school day at the Rambam Mesivta on Long Island, but the students didn't stay in the classrooms all day.

Shortly after noon, the 160-odd high school students piled into buses for a two-and-a-half-hour trip to protest at the home of an alleged Nazi war criminal.

Once they arrived in the suburbs north of New York City, the students stood in front of Michael Gruber's house for two hours, holding signs that read "No SS in the U.S." and "Honk If You Hate Nazis."

After protesting for 20 minutes, the students prayed for those Jews killed at Sachsenhausen.

The rally is no isolated event for students at the Lawrence, N.Y., school.

Members of an after-school club that focuses on Jewish activism organized the demonstration against Gruber, who is accused of participating in atrocities when he was an SS guard at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin.

"It's hard, but it's lot of fun," said Tzvi Werblowsky, 14, a member of the club, which has about a dozen core members.

"It gives you a sense that you're doing something that's beneficial."

For the students, the club teaches a multileveled lesson. In addition to learning about the history of the Holocaust and the

atrocities the individuals are accused of committing, they experience firsthand the judicial and political processes, from arranging a police escort to writing press releases and speaking to politicians about the event.

The activism is the brainchild of the school's principal, Rabbi Zev Friedman.

The child of Holocaust survivors, Friedman was motivated by a 1995 article in the Boston Globe about a man who had allegedly committed war crimes in Lithuania.

Friedman mobilized his students, taking them for a rally to the suburb of Boston where alleged war criminal Aleksandras Lileikis lived.

Nor did Friedman stop there.

With the students, he held a rally at the Lithuanian Consulate in New York, calling on them to extradite Lileikis, who is accused of committing crimes when he headed the wartime Lithuanian security police, the Saugamus.

The school also held a meeting with Lithuanian officials at the consulate.

The cause gained the support of then-Rep. Charles Schumer. The Democrat from New York met with the Lithuanian ambassador to the United States, saying the Baltic nation's refusal to extradite him was unacceptable.

In 1996, the students got their wish when Lileikis was extradited to Lithuania.

Since then, a lengthy judicial process has begun. Lileikis' trial was delayed again in September, when a judge suspended the trial, citing the poor health of Lileikis, 92.

In 1996, the students traveled to Philadelphia to protest Jonas Stelmokas, another alleged Lithuanian war criminal. But Stelmokas died before he could be extradited.

"I can't say we get any credit for it, but I would love to believe that he had a lot of sleepless nights because of us," Friedman said, speaking like a man on a crusade.

Since then, the students have protested against several other alleged Nazis living in the United States.

Last year they also called for a tourism boycott of Costa Rica to protest that country's harboring of Bodhan Koziy.

Koziy has lived in the Central American country since 1984, when he learned that he would be deported from the United States to his native Ukraine.

Nazi-hunter Eli Rosenbaum has even addressed the school, telling the students about his work with the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations.

"They do a terrific job of Holocaust education there. They do an excellent job of instilling the students with a sense of civic duty," said Rosenbaum.

The students do much of their work on their own free time. Several students spent part of the weekend and Monday night at the school, making the posters for the protest.

"I view our high school as one that wants to teach more than book knowledge," said Friedman.

"It's one that's training the leaders of the Jewish community. If you want to be a leader in the Jewish community, you have to be active, you have to work through the political process."

For Werblowsky, the club's mission is also a personal one since some of his grandmother's sister and brothers died at Auschwitz.

"Now I feel like I've done something to make her proud." □