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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Jews back McCain, Gore

Jewish Republicans in New York overwhelmingly chose Arizona Sen. John McCain over Texas Gov. George W. Bush, 64 percent to 23 percent, in the Super Tuesday primary, according to exit polls.

Vice President Al Gore, meanwhile, won a resounding vote of confidence from New York Jewish Democrats on Tuesday, capturing 62 percent of the vote against former New Jersey Sen. Bill Bradley's 38 percent.

In California, which has an open primary, exit polls showed Gore with 47 percent of the Jewish vote, Bradley with 23 percent, McCain with 21 percent and Bush with 4 percent. [Page 3]

Israeli court bans discrimination

In a precedent-setting decision, Israel's High Court of Justice prohibited the state from discriminating against citizens by allocating land for the exclusive use of Jews or other groups. [Page 1]

Peace talks to resume in D.C.

Israel and the Palestinians agreed to resume peace negotiations later this month in Washington, according to U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross. The announcement came after Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat held two meetings within 14 hours. [Page 2]

Clinton hopeful on Iran

President Clinton told Iranian Americans he hopes to see movement toward openness and freedom in their native country.

Speaking at a Los Angeles fund-raiser for the Democratic National Committee, Clinton did not discuss the plight of the 13 Iranian Jews who face trial next month on allegations that they spied for Israel and the United States. Ten of the defendants have reportedly selected lawyers for the upcoming trial, which advocates are hoping will be open to journalists and foreign observers.

Poll: Israelis welcome papal visit

Most Israelis are looking forward to welcoming Pope John Paul II when he begins his pilgrimage later this month. According to a Gallup poll released Wednesday, 59 percent of Israeli Jews view the pope's visit "positively" or "very positively." [Page 3]

Israeli court: Jewish settlements cannot discriminate against Arabs

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In a landmark decision, Israel's High Court of Justice has prohibited the state from discriminating against citizens by allocating land for the exclusive use of Jews or other groups.

The ruling came in response to a petition filed on behalf of an Israeli Arab couple whose application to live in the northern settlement of Katzir had been refused because they are Arab.

In its decision Wednesday, the court ruled 4-1 that as a Jewish, democratic state, Israel could not promote policy that discriminates against any of its citizens based on their religion or nationality.

"This is perhaps the most important ruling the high court has made in the past 50 years regarding equality for citizens," said attorney Dan Yakir of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, which filed the petition.

The settlement was established on state land in 1982 by the Jewish Agency for Israel in cooperation with the Katzir Cooperative Society, which accepts only Jewish members.

The chairman of the Jewish Agency, Sallai Meridor, said in the wake of the court decision that the agency is "for equal rights for Arabs and we feel that an effort must be made to allocate land for this sector in order to substantially improve their quality of life."

At the same time, he noted that there are three areas in Israel with high Arab populations — the Triangle in northern Israel, the Negev and the Galilee — and that the government should hold "urgent talks to ensure a Jewish hold on these areas."

In a statement, Meridor warned that "especially during this period, when an independent Palestinian entity is being formed, a real danger arises for the future of the Triangle, the Galilee and the Negev as integral parts of the State of Israel."

The high court's ruling "did not relate," the statement said, "to the reality that in the Triangle it is the Jews who are in fact the minority."

As a result a situation could arise "which would discriminate negatively against Jews."

The legal battle began more than four years ago, after Adel and Iman Ka'adan, of the Arab village of Baqa al-Garbiyeh, were told they could not purchase land and build a home in the community of Katzir, near Hadera, because the land was earmarked for Jews alone.

Iman Ka'adan, a schoolteacher, said she and her husband, a hospital worker, had hoped to improve the standard of living for themselves and their three daughters.

"The situation in Baqa al-Garbiyeh is intolerable," she told Israel Radio. "There is no infrastructure, sewage flows in the streets."

In Katzir, she added, "they have air conditioning, new facilities and every possible advancement."

Meanwhile, right-wing legislators have vowed to initiate legislation to circumvent the ruling.

"I am convinced that most of the nation will open its eyes and stop and say, 'We are crazy, destroying ourselves with our own hands,'" said Zvi Hendel, a member of the right-wing National Unity Party.

Arab Israeli legislators hailed the decision as a breakthrough. "There will no longer be a division of settlements based on being Jewish," said Taleb a-Sana'a of the United

MIDEAST FOCUS

Lebanon won't promise security

Lebanon would not guarantee security for northern Israel until Israel returns the Golan Heights to Syria and solves the Palestinian refugee problem, according to the president of Lebanon.

Reacting to an Israeli Cabinet decision this week to withdraw from southern Lebanon with or without an agreement with Syria, President Emile Lahoud said Wednesday, "Lebanon is not ready to guarantee the comfort of Israel by performing the role that Israel itself has failed to perform since invading Lebanon in 1982."

Meanwhile, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan confirmed that the world body's peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon is preparing for a possible unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops.

Annan said Tuesday the "ideal" solution would be an Israeli withdrawal linked to a peace agreement with Syria and Lebanon.

Poll: U.S. shouldn't defend Israel

A majority of Americans say the U.S. military should not defend Israel if the Jewish state is attacked by another country, according to a recent NewsMax.com/Zogby poll.

Only 41 percent of respondents said the United States should help Israel.

But support for Israel was strongest among Republicans, Southerners and Westerners, and among individuals describing their religious beliefs as "born again."

Palestinian women want equality

About 400 Palestinian women protested in the Gaza Strip to call for equal rights in marriage, divorce and employment.

Naela Ayesh, director of the Gaza Women's Affairs Center, said Palestinian women have been silenced by social norms that prevent them from openly calling for change.



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Arab List. Knesset speaker Avraham Burg, a former chairman of the Jewish Agency, welcomed the ruling.

Burg said the agency should not be put in the position of holding lands for Jewish use only.

"In general, I think that the state of Israel does not do enough for providing equal opportunity in the Arab sector," he said, adding that as a result of the ruling, "we will find ourselves in a slightly better position socially." □

Israelis, Palestinians to try again to reach a deal, with U.S. as host

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The United States will again play host to Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in an attempt to jump-start stalled peace talks.

After a month of mutual recriminations, Prime Minister Ehud Barak held a surprise meeting on Tuesday night with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat at an undisclosed location in central Israel.

This was followed by a second meeting Wednesday in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

During that meeting, U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross — who had returned to the region after failing to restart the talks last week — announced that the two sides had agreed to resume peace negotiations later this month in Washington.

Neither Barak nor Arafat were expected to attend the talks, which Ross said would resume after the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, which begins Thursday and ends March 19. Instead of the two leaders, delegations from the two sides would participate, Ross said.

"The parties made good progress in addressing and resolving" the issues that have led to a monthlong deadlock in the negotiations, Ross said.

"The objective is to achieve a framework agreement as soon as possible, so that all the permanent status issues can be resolved by September 13," he said.

Talks between Israel and the Palestinians have been stalled since February, when they failed to reach agreement on which lands would be included in an Israeli withdrawal from an additional 6.1 percent of the West Bank. The move was originally to have been carried out in January.

The Palestinians have demanded that the handover include areas near Jerusalem, whose eastern half they want as the capital of an independent state.

Israel did not offer those areas, maintaining that it alone would determine which lands were included. In the meantime, the two sides also missed a February deadline for concluding a framework agreement for a final peace accord.

According to Palestinian sources, Barak and Arafat set a new May deadline for the framework agreement during their meetings.

Breaking the monthlong impasse, they also agreed that Israel would carry out the 6.1 percent withdrawal in April. Under the new arrangement, Israel would offer areas totaling 10 percent of the West Bank, from which the Palestinians will choose the 6.1 percent. It was not clear whether any areas near Jerusalem would be included in the Israeli offer.

The two leaders also agreed that Israel would carry out a third and final West Bank redeployment by July, and that the final peace accord would be reached by the original deadline of Sept. 13.

Ross was expected to return to Washington following Wednesday's discussions.

Barak and Arafat were scheduled to hold talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the Sinai resort of Sharm el-Sheik.

Israel Radio reported that Israel is considering a number of confidence-building gestures, including opening a northern safe-passage route for Palestinians traveling between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, releasing Palestinian prisoners and refunding tax revenues to the Palestinians.

The opposition Likud Party criticized the Barak-Arafat meetings, saying Barak was readying a withdrawal that would lay the groundwork for a Palestinian state. □

JEWISH WORLD

Court upholds terror donation ban

A ban on donations to terrorist groups is constitutional even if the donor intends the money to be used for humanitarian activities, a U.S. court ruled.

Citing a brief filed by the Anti-Defamation League, the court said contributions earmarked for "peaceful purposes" may free up resources for terrorist activities or help create an environment that nurtures terrorism. The ban is a key provision of a 1996 anti-terrorism law.

Slave talks remain unresolved

Citing the needs of aging Holocaust survivors, the Claims Conference called for a speedy completion of negotiations aimed at distributing \$5.2 billion to Nazi-era slave laborers.

Two days of talks held in Washington involving the German government, German companies and representatives of Holocaust survivors ended Wednesday with no agreement on how to distribute the fund. Another round of discussions is slated to be held March 20-22 in Germany.

Italian Jew slams Vatican stance

The leader of Italy's Jewish community is dissatisfied with a Vatican document released this week that seeks forgiveness for past errors. The church should be more open about Catholics' behavior during the Holocaust, Amos Luzzatto said.

California subpoenas insurer

California's insurance commissioner subpoenaed a German insurer to appear before a hearing later this month that will investigate the firm's efforts to resolve unpaid Holocaust-era insurance claims.

Chuck Quackenbush said Tuesday he issued the subpoena because of Munich Re's "deliberate foot-dragging" in complying with state requests for information about Holocaust-era policies.

Hungarian cemeteries attacked

Anti-Semitic vandals desecrated two Jewish cemeteries in Hungary. The cemeteries, one located in eastern Hungary and one in the western part of the country, were recently restored after years of neglect.

No Jews live in either of the towns.

Ex-attorney general dies at 88

Edward Levi, the U.S. attorney general after the Watergate scandal, died Tuesday at 88 after a seven-year bout with Alzheimer's disease.

Levi was president of the University of Chicago from 1968 to 1975 — the first Jew to head a major U.S. university, according to school officials — before he took over the attorney general's office.

Jewish vote seen as 'Gore's to lose,' as experts fault Bush's turn to right

By New York Jewish Week staff

NEW YORK (JTA) — Texas Gov. George W. Bush may be cruising toward the Republican nomination and a November showdown with Vice President Al Gore, but he is expected to face an uphill battle for Jewish support.

The persistent attacks on Bush and the GOP's religious fundamentalist wing by Arizona Sen. John McCain seem to have backfired, energizing Bush forces in nine of 13 primary or caucus states. But the assault may have succeeded in redefining Bush as a tool of the party's right wing, damaging his appeal to Jews in the general election.

Jewish Republicans in New York, according to exit polls, overwhelmingly chose McCain over Bush, 64 percent to 23 percent, signaling apparent approval for the Arizona challenger's gambit.

"The national Jewish vote is Al Gore's to lose," said political scientist Gilbert Kahn of Kean University in New Jersey.

Gore won a resounding vote of confidence from New York Jews Tuesday, capturing 62 percent of the vote against former New Jersey Sen. Bill Bradley's 38 percent. New York is believed to be the only state where they break down the Jewish vote in the primaries. In California, where Jews represent 5 percent of the electorate, exit polls showed Gore with 47 percent of the Jewish vote, Bradley with 23 percent, McCain with 21 percent and Bush with 4 percent. California has an open primary.

"Bush is in deep trouble with Jews, Hispanics and blacks," said Kahn. "Maybe he could recover with Jewish voters by putting a Jew on the ticket. Short of that, I don't see what he could do."

Saddled with memories of his father's Middle East policies, questions about his experience and understanding of foreign affairs, and hurt among minority voters by his sharp turn to the right, Bush "will make an effort to get them back," Kahn said.

Historian Allan Lichtman of American University said Bush's weakness with minority voters — and Gore's strength — will pose a "major problem" for the Texas governor as he tunes his campaign for the national electorate.

But the wide gap in domestic issues and the perception that Bush has made his peace with the Christian right, he said, will make any effort to win over significant numbers of Jews very difficult. □

Poll: Most Israelis welcome pope, but many uninformed about Vatican

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Many Israelis will welcome the pope, but they don't know much about the Roman Catholic Church's attitudes toward Jews.

According to a Gallup poll commissioned by the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel and released Wednesday, 59 percent of Israeli Jews view the Pope John Paul II's March 20-26 visit "positively" or "very positively."

Fervently Orthodox Jews have the most negative view of the visit. Only 8 percent of haredim said they view the visit in a positive light.

However, although 63 percent of the total polled know that the Vatican recognizes the State of Israel, only 44 percent said they know that the Vatican opposes anti-Semitism. In addition, only 35 percent know that the Vatican has issued an official apology for the Shoah. After being told that the Vatican has indeed published an official apology for the Holocaust, nearly 48 percent said they believe the apology is sincere while more than 38 percent think the church is not sincere.

Nearly 47 percent of those polled said they believe that the pope was coming to Israel on a personal pilgrimage to Christian holy sites — as he has stated.

More than 40 percent said the pope wants to spread a message of peace and dialogue for the year 2000. □

COMMENTARY**London Holocaust trial links the ancient with the Internet***By Reli Mintz Geffen*

LONDON (JTA) — The ancient meets the modern in the rabbit warren of a courthouse where the Holocaust is being debated in a trial between a self-defined revisionist and a professor.

The libel trial of David Irving against Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt is being held between walls that bear warning signs that one should walk carefully because the floors are uneven due to the age of the building.

But despite the old setting, this is very much a trial in which the Internet Age is a player.

The startling contrast struck me as I watched from my observer perch a judge wearing a wig preside over a debate about Internet hyperlinks.

Professor Richard Evans of Cambridge University, who wrote a 600-plus page evaluation of Irving's work and who appeared as an expert witness for the defense, argued that Irving was associated with an organization called the Institute for Historical Review whose ideology includes denial of the Holocaust.

Evans showed that Irving had attended and lectured at several of their conferences and was therefore associated with them.

"Guilty by association," said Irving, is not fair.

Then Evans pointed out that Irving has a hyperlink on his Web site so that readers can go directly to the materials on the Web site of the Institute for Historical Review.

A debate then ensued over whether providing a link to another group makes the owner of the Internet site an associate of that group.

Irving pointed out that he has links to Nizkor and other Jewish groups on his Web site — surely, he said sarcastically, no one meant to imply that he was associated with those groups.

What he failed to mention is that the Jewish groups are on his Web site as part of an "enemies list."

There is a reason that Irving is so anxious to disassociate himself from groups of Holocaust deniers.

Demonstrating that Irving is a denier is the key to the defense's case.

He has sued for libel claiming that by calling him a denier — as opposed to a revisionist, or one who merely has another legitimate view of history — Lipstadt has deprived him of his livelihood.

Under British law, the lawyers for Penguin and Lipstadt have to prove that what she wrote about Irving in "Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory" is true.

Outside the courtroom, the Internet plays another role. Through numerous online discussion groups, such as HJudaic, the forum of professors of Jewish studies, various communities are briefed daily on the trial.

In addition to first-hand reports, Web addresses are provided for those who want detailed background on the issues.

They, in turn, pass on this information to their colleagues and students.

Anyone around the world can access articles and background information about the trial.

When the Israeli government decided to release the Eichmann

diaries to Lipstadt's lawyers, the news was flashed around the world in a matter of minutes.

Irving's friends and supporters are active as well. There are numerous Web sites spewing hate and putting their "spin" on the trial day by day.

Some, contrary to the judge's orders, have been printing the trial transcripts regularly.

Irving's site is very professional and clever. It shows flattering pictures of him with his young daughter on his lap — the same daughter to whom he admitted he had taught the ditty, "I'm a baby Aryan, not Jewish or sectarian, I have no wish to marry an ape or Rastafarian."

Everyone is so polite, the rhetoric so understated, that it is easy to forget what is at stake here in this dignified courtroom. Occasionally something so outrageous is said that everyone is jarred by it.

It seems that Irving has a prepared line for ending each session.

Before the lunch break one day, he ended his questioning by turning to the judge and saying, "Your Lordship, you know that most of the criminals in the camps were lawyers."

He goads Evans constantly with questions that end with comments like, "Let's see what kind of a spin you can put on this one, Mr. Evans."

Lipstadt, who is a friend and colleague, passes by my seat on her way out to the ladies room after several hours of cross-examination.

As she walks by, she leans over and whispers — "Bruchim habaim l'veit meshugaim," which I translate to myself as, "Welcome to the theater of the absurd."

How can we be listening to someone argue in a serious court of law that Jews tattooed numbers on their arms to get money from the German government for Israel?

Could Irving win a favorable judgment as a result of technicalities of British laws of libel? In a few weeks, we will all know the answer to that question.

Meanwhile, I've got my plane ticket to return for final arguments that are scheduled to begin on Monday.

Though I could tune in through the Internet, I want to be there in person.

Still I can't help but hope that tens of thousands of other supporters will be in the courtroom "virtually" rooting for truth and accurate memory. □

(Reli Mintz Geffen is a professor of sociology at Gratz College in Melrose Park, Pa.)

Anti-cancer drugs developed

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Two researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem School of Pharmacy have developed a new series of drugs that could be used to stop the spread of malignant cancer cells.

They discovered substances that stop the activity of enzymes secreted by cancerous cells and enable the cells to divide and spread in the body.

If the treatment is successful in clinical tests, developers believe patients could continue to enjoy a good quality of life while undergoing treatment that involves neither surgery nor chemotherapy. □