



Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel marks its 52nd birthday

With fireworks and military marching bands, Israel ushered in its 52nd Independence Day at a torch-lighting ceremony at Jerusalem's Mount Herzl. Tuesday night's ceremony also marked the transition from the somber mood of Memorial Day, when Israelis honored the memories of the men and women who fell in defense of the state.

Ceremonies were held across Israel to remember its fallen soldiers. In Israeli Arab and fervently Orthodox neighborhoods, however, many residents ignored the two-minute Memorial Day sirens. [Page 2]

Gore pushes for hate crimes bill

Vice President Al Gore called on Congress to pass hate crimes legislation. "We have to send an unmistakable message that if you commit a hate crime you will be punished," Gore said Tuesday at an Anti-Defamation League conference.

Clinton to discuss Pollard case

President Clinton agreed to discuss the case of Jonathan Pollard with a U.S. congressman. Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.) said Clinton would meet privately with him and discuss possible amnesty for Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst who is serving a life sentence for spying for Israel.

German base named for rescuer

Germany renamed an army base after a soldier who was executed by the Nazis for saving hundreds of Jews from the Holocaust. Before being renamed for Sgt. Anton Schmid, the base had honored an army general who had served as an "honorary judge" for the People's Courts of the Third Reich.

Russian schools go high-tech

Eight Jewish schools in the former Soviet Union are being equipped with technology centers that will help teach Jewish studies using computers.

All eight centers, which are being established by the ORT network with \$1.6 million from U.S. philanthropists, will be operating by the end of 2001, according to Gideon Meyer, deputy director general of the World ORT Union.

The schools, which accept Jewish and non-Jewish students, are run by Russian governments. Israel is providing the Jewish curriculum and teachers.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel's Memorial Day more somber with not-so-quiet Lebanon pullback

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's annual Memorial Day for its fallen soldiers is always a time of somber introspection.

This year, however, the nation's mood seemed particularly subdued because of the latest turn of events in southern Lebanon.

On everyone's mind was the fact that Staff Sgt. Shaked Ozeri had become the latest military fatality — number 19,109 since the 1948 War of Independence, according to statistics released when Memorial Day was held Tuesday.

Ozeri died last weekend in Kiryat Shmona, burned to death in his jeep after Hezbollah gunmen launched a Katyusha missile attack on the northern town.

Compounding the gloom, ministers and army generals say repeatedly they expect more Katyusha attacks, more Israeli casualties in southern Lebanon and possibly more civilian casualties from the rocket attacks before Israel completes its planned troop withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

"They won't let us leave quietly," a senior officer recently said during a Knesset briefing.

Earlier in Barak's premiership, now approaching its first anniversary, the expectations were very different.

Barak had pledged during his election campaign last year that the Israel Defense Force would leave southern Lebanon "with or without an agreement with Syria."

The idea of withdrawal after 18 years of bloodshed was enormously popular.

Late last year, when the Syrians announced they were returning to the negotiating table with Israel after a three-year suspension, Barak and his advisers loudly congratulated themselves on the prime minister's tactical achievement.

They felt that Barak's determination to withdraw, unilaterally if need be, had persuaded Syrian President Hafez Assad to resume the talks.

When the talks collapsed again, following an abortive summit meeting between Assad and President Clinton two months ago in Geneva, Barak was left with his withdrawal pledge. The Israeli public still supports the withdrawal, but much of the original enthusiasm has dissipated.

Originally it had been envisaged as a comfortable, peaceful pullback, ushering in an era of peace with Israel's most implacable neighbor.

But now it is now unfolding as an inelegant retreat by the army from its positions in the security zone — accompanied by sniping and sneering from Hezbollah.

Citing their years of guerrilla actions, the Shi'ite gunmen and their Iranian backers are taking all the credit for Israel's decision to pull back.

In order to give that boast added weight, they are seeking to ensure that the final weeks of Israel's presence in Lebanon be as unhappy as possible.

Israel's stance, until last weekend, was to make some strong threats.

"I don't advise anyone — and I mean anyone — to try us once we're back behind the international border," warned Barak, saying the IDF would retaliate massively to any cross-border attack launched after the withdrawal.

But in fighting that erupted late last week, Hezbollah appeared to pay scant attention to those threats. On May 4, saying it was retaliating for Israeli escalations, Hezbollah launched Katyusha rocket attacks on northern Israel. Those salvos killed Sgt. Ozeri and lightly wounded more than two dozen people. Israeli jets later struck

MIDEAST FOCUS

'Love Bug' virus bites Israeli firms

The "Love Bug" computer virus caused an estimated \$7.5 million to \$12.5 million in damage to Israeli companies, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Most Israeli high-tech firms and all of the nation's cellular phone service providers were affected by the virus, the paper said.

Author: Israeli-Syrian talks 'died'

There is no hope of reviving Israeli-Syrian negotiations anytime soon, according to a British author who is a confidant of Syrian President Hafez Assad.

"The Syrian track of the peace process has died, although no one wants to admit it officially. Only a miracle can bring it to life," Patrick Seale wrote.

Seale made his comments in the London-based Arab daily Al-Hayat.

Israeli population hits 6.3 million

Israel has a population of 6.3 million, according to statistics released on the eve of the nation's 52nd Independence Day.

Of that total, 4.9 million are Jews, 891,000 Muslims, 110,000 Christians and 99,000 Druse.

Another 300,000 people were listed by the country's Central Bureau of Statistics as immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not registered as Jewish.

SLA leader told to surrender

The commander of the Israel-allied South Lebanon Army must surrender and stand trial for treason before asking for amnesty for his men, the Lebanese government said.

The statement came one day after Gen. Antoine Lahad appealed to the Lebanese president to pardon his SLA fighters after Israel's planned troop withdrawal from the region.



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Lebanese infrastructure targets, bombing two power stations, as well as a Hezbollah arms storehouse and the Beirut-Damascus road.

In response, Hezbollah launched even more rockets at northern Israel last Friday, apparently quite oblivious of Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh's threat to "hit even harder" if the rockets kept raining down.

But this time, Israel blinked. At a special Security Cabinet meeting last Friday, Barak proposed that Israel not bomb again, despite its threats.

He noted that the second round of Katyusha salvos had resulted in no further Israeli fatalities. He referred to the intricate diplomacy now under way surrounding the eventual withdrawal and the possible stationing of beefed-up United Nations peacekeeping troops along the border zone now held by Israel.

Some northern residents, however, disagreed with the Cabinet's decision.

After spending a tense weekend in bomb shelters, residents of Kiryat Shmona on Sunday burned tires and blocked the city's main roads as they called for a harsher Israeli response to the Hezbollah rocket attacks.

The mounting trepidation in Israel over the impending unilateral withdrawal is aggravated by fears of what will happen to Israel's ally in the region, the South Lebanon Army.

On Monday, its commander, Gen. Antoine Lahad, appealed dramatically to the Beirut government to pardon all of his men. He himself bore the responsibility for what had taken place over the years, Lahad said, though he did not offer to turn himself in.

Less than a day later, his plea was summarily rejected by the Lebanese prime minister, Salim Hoss, who demanded that Lahad stand trial for treason.

Israel, meanwhile, is facing strong pressure from the United States and France to disarm the SLA, at least of its heavy weapons, before the IDF withdraws.

Failure to do so, according to the French, would be tantamount to Israel's not withdrawing at all. But there is extreme discomfort in Israel at the thought of leaving its former ally stripped of its tanks and artillery.

On the other hand, there is not much enthusiasm for the idea of having Israel absorb large numbers of the SLA fighters and their families.

For their part, many of the SLA fighters are insisting that they will remain on their land whatever happens, fighting whoever fights them with whatever weapons they have at their disposal. Their fatalistic bravery stands in stark contrast to Israel's ambivalent attitude toward them. □

Israel celebrates 52nd birthday with ceremonies and cookouts

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With fireworks and military marching bands, Israel ushered in its 52nd Independence Day at a torch-lighting ceremony at Jerusalem's Mt. Herzl.

Tuesday night's ceremony also marked the transition from the somber mood of Memorial Day, when Israelis honored the memories of the men and women who fell in defense of the state.

The theme of the Mt. Herzl ceremony was "Different but Equal." The individuals chosen to light 12 torches — one for each of the 12 tribes — reflected this idea in their activities and deeds. They included two Israeli girls, a Jew and an Arab, who participate in a co-existence program for youth. They jointly lit the final beacon.

Other torch-lighters included a Druse military officer, an immigrant from Russia who will represent Israel in gymnastics at the upcoming Sydney Olympics and the founder of a center for troubled youth.

Independence Day celebrations were to continue Wednesday, when families flock to public parks and picnic areas for traditional holiday cookouts.

Earlier Tuesday, memorial ceremonies were held at military cemeteries throughout Israel to honor the memories of the 19,109 men and women who have fallen in defense of the state since the 1948 War of Independence.

For the first time, a state ceremony was also held for victims of terrorist acts. □

JEWISH WORLD

German court clears survivors

Two Holocaust survivors who in 1946 tried to poison thousands of Nazi officials in an Allied prison camp can no longer be prosecuted for attempted murder, a German court ruled.

The two survivors, now living in Israel, confessed recently to putting arsenic in bread supplies for the Nuremberg-Langwasser camp in southern Germany, where some 12,000 Nazis were held.

Some 200 inmates were hospitalized, but not enough poison was used to kill anybody.

Although attempted murder is not covered by a statute of limitations in Germany, the court made an exception "because of persecution experienced" by the two during the Holocaust.

Study: Jews care about cooking

Cooking and the Holocaust are the two Jewish topics U.S. Jews are most interested in studying, while Jewish art and music and intermarriage rank lowest, according to a new study on adult Jewish learning.

The study, commissioned by the Jewish Community Centers Association and the Jewish Theological Seminary, also found that Jews younger than 45 are somewhat more likely to be involved in Jewish learning than their elders.

British bank plan earns praise

Jewish leaders praised a plan by British banks to enable Holocaust victims to claim funds that were frozen during World War II.

Earlier this week, the British Bankers' Association published the names of 10,800 dormant bank accounts holding a total of some \$3.5 million.

Insurers rejecting most claims

European insurers are rejecting three out of four claims submitted on behalf of Holocaust victims who purchased policies between 1930 and 1945, according to the Los Angeles Times.

Citing internal documents submitted to the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, the paper said the five insurers participating in the panel agreed to settle 124 of 909 claims that had been submitted.

They rejected 393 claims, with the remaining 392 claims still unresolved.

JAFI official to move to U.S.

The current representative of the Jewish Agency for Israel in the former Soviet Union will become JAFI's representative in the United States, according to JAFI officials.

Alla Levy is slated to begin her new duties this summer.

Barak, Arafat plod on despite remaining gaps

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat have agreed to keep talking, but apparently they agree on little else.

As a result, it looks likely that another deadline in the peace process will come and go with little progress achieved.

During their meeting Sunday night, Barak and Arafat reaffirmed their commitment to the peace process, but they failed to bridge the large gaps separating them.

Last week, Palestinian negotiators broke off talks in Eilat after Israel presented a map of a proposed Palestinian entity covering about two-thirds of the West Bank. Palestinian officials balked at the plan, charging that Israel wanted to annex one-third of the region.

Borders are one of the thorny issues facing the two sides as they try to reach a final peace agreement. Other issues include Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and the fate of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

The two sides had hoped to draw up an outline of a final peace treaty by next week, but few now believe the two sides will meet that deadline.

After meeting for nearly three hours in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Sunday — in what was their first summit since March — Barak and Arafat agreed that the Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams should resume their talks, which they did briefly this week.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, who participated in the Barak-Arafat meeting, gave a sober assessment of where things stand.

"The gaps are large, very large. We shouldn't fool ourselves," Levy told Israel Radio.

Levy said that although it was likely the May deadline would be missed, Israel and the Palestinians hope to keep a Sept. 13 deadline for concluding a full agreement.

Palestinian officials said the Barak-Arafat summit addressed all the contentious issues in the final-status talks.

They also said Arafat called on Barak to stop Jewish settlement activity and to free Palestinian prisoners.

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, who arrived in the region last week to try to help the sides iron out their differences, said this week before returning to Washington that much work remains to be done, but progress is possible.

Ross is expected to return to the region next week. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright may visit Israel next month if there is sufficient progress in the talks, according to American officials.

The United States agreed to play a more active role in the talks following Arafat's meeting with President Clinton in Washington last month.

Meanwhile, Barak has his own domestic problems.

On Monday, the prime minister appeared to backtrack on his earlier statements that he wants to transfer three villages near Jerusalem to full Palestinian control.

He said he may not be able to proceed with the plan for weeks or possibly months because of strong domestic opposition.

The Israeli right wing, along with conservatives in Barak's government, opposes the transfer of power in the villages of Abu Dis, Al-Azariya and Sawahara.

These politicians say the move would only whet the Palestinian appetite for Jerusalem.

The prime minister spent last week fending off threats by two coalition members, the National Religious Party and Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, to quit the government over the transfer issue.

Speaking Monday on Army Radio, Barak said Israel has no interest in annexing the tens of thousands of Palestinians who live in those villages.

"We prayed for 2,000 years, three times a day, for Jerusalem," Barak said. "We never prayed for Al-Azariya. We never prayed for Abu Dis." □

Study: Gene mutation responds better to ovarian cancer therapy

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — There's finally good health news for Jewish women of Eastern and Central European descent.

A genetic mutation that links some Ashkenazi women to ovarian cancer makes these women more responsive to chemotherapy, according to a new study.

Patients with what are known as BRCA mutations who had advanced ovarian cancer lived about two years longer than patients in a similar stage of cancer without the gene, according to the study of 189 Jewish women.

The study was published in last week's edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

In addition, the time for recurrence of the disease in patients with the mutation was about 14 months, as opposed to seven months for those without the mutation.

Eighty-eight of the 189 women studied had the mutation.

The finding "could open up new possibilities of how to treat ovarian cancer," said Jeff Boyd of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, which conducted the 12-year survey, adding, however, that it had no immediate practical applications.

"It's a paradox," said Boyd. "The mutated gene is what leads to the cancer in the first place. But once it's developed, it could be an Achilles' heel for the tumor."

The genetic mutations that are linked to breast and ovarian cancers are more frequently found among Jewish women of Ashkenazi descent than among the general population.

A 1997 study into the risk of breast and ovarian cancers among Ashkenazi Jews found that a person with the genetic mutations has a 56 percent chance of getting breast cancer, and a 17 percent chance of getting ovarian cancer by the age of 70.

Some 2 percent of Ashkenazi Jews carry the BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations, according to the Human Genome Project in Washington. The incidence of cancer among Ashkenazi Jews is not higher than among those in the general population, but more of their cancer risk stems from genetic factors.

Dr. Tammy Peretz, the head of the Sharrett Institute of Oncology at Hadassah Medical Center — Ein Kerem in Jerusalem, welcomed the result.

The finding that cells with the mutated BRCA genes become more sensitive to therapy, suggested Peretz, may also be applicable to those women with one of the BRCA mutations who develop breast cancer as well.

A medical oncologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., was less enthusiastic.

"It confirms what has been observed clinically," Dr. Harry Long said, adding that he would like to see the study replicated because the group with the mutations received a more complete surgical removal of the tumor before receiving chemotherapy and that a higher percentage of patients in the non-BRCA group received an older form of treatment.

Long also said he would like to see the study performed on some of the other BRCA mutations present in non-Jewish women.

Despite his reservations, he said, "For people who feel they've been dealt a bad hand, it's an indication that it's not as bad as previously thought." □

ARTS & CULTURE

Terezin concert features works by composers who died in Shoah

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Hundreds of people packed into the cultural center at Terezin in the Czech Republic on Monday for a concert that brought to life the work of musicians killed by the Nazis.

Japanese pianist Izumi Shimura thrilled her audience with compositions by Gideon Klein, Viktor Ullmann, Pavel Haas and Hans Krasa — all of whom perished after spending time in the former fortress during World War II.

But the performance was made all the more remarkable by the fact that the \$25,000 piano she was using had been donated to the town of Terezin by nearly 900 Japanese citizens, 40 of whom traveled specially for its inaugural concert.

"It was a very moving occasion," said Gaby Flatow of the Hans Krasa Foundation Fund, which has promoted and published the music of Terezin prisoners since 1995. "We have never had such a packed concert at the cultural center. Many people had to stand for the performance."

In contrast to the tribute at Terezin, a concert at another concentration camp site was not universally praised. The Vienna Philharmonic performed Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the quarry of the Mauthausen camp. Critics said Sunday's concert demeaned the memory of those who perished there.

In Terezin, the performance of work written by composers who died in the Holocaust was better received.

It was Shimura herself who raised Japanese interest in a brand-new piano for Terezin.

In a previous performance at the center last year, she had used a small upright piano on which a young Gideon Klein had written a sonata before being sent to his death in Auschwitz. It lacked the quality of a concert instrument so she formed a Japanese association called Grand Piano for Terezin, which raised the money for a new piano.

"I apologized to the artist [Shimura] last year for the quality of the piano and thanked her for her performance in the names of the composers who died," said Flatow. "I think this struck her heart so much because she felt close to them by playing at Terezin."

A plaque was unveiled at the concert dedicating the piano to all the musicians imprisoned in the ghetto established by the Nazis at Terezin, which is also known by its German name of Theresienstadt. It read, "It is the sincere wish of the Japanese association Grand Piano for Terezin that the immortal works of these composers be preserved for the whole world."

The event included performances by Czech and German artists and featured works by Scarlatti, Beethoven and the Japanese contemporary composer Hikaru Hayashi.

"The idea is not to create another music ghetto here in Terezin but to perform a range of works by different international artists," Flatow explained.

Terezin, which lies nearly 40 miles from Prague, was a ghetto that served as a transit point to the Nazi death camps.

By May 1945, the Nazis had transported 140,000 people to Terezin, including some of Europe's most gifted artists, musicians and composers. □