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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Arafat: Summit may soon resume

Israeli-Palestinian summit talks may resume after the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles ends, according to Yasser Arafat.

The Palestinian leader made the comment during a visit to Malaysia, the latest stop on his around-the-world tour.

Knesset to probe bank's actions

Israel's Knesset plans to appoint a panel to investigate allegations that the nation's second largest bank failed to hand over assets from World War II-era bank accounts to the proper authorities and that deposit boxes were later emptied and the contents never returned to their original owners.

Legislator Colette Avital, who heads a parliamentary inquiry into the fate of Holocaust-era assets, has ordered the examination of Bank Leumi, according to the Jerusalem Post.

SS guard ordered deported

A U.S. immigration judge ordered the deportation of an 84-year-old retired auto mechanic after determining that he served as an armed guard at a Nazi concentration camp.

Michael Gruber, who resides in Rockland County, N.Y., admitted serving as an SS guard in Oranienburg, Germany, but denied knowing that there was a concentration camp there.

O.U. praises religion decision

The Orthodox Union is praising a U.S. appeals court decision that says religious schools in a Maryland county should be exempt from some local zoning regulations.

The decision overturned an earlier ruling that deemed this exemption unconstitutional.

Jewish groups generally oppose what they see as unreasonable land-use regulations on religious institutions.

CAJE marks 25th anniversary

The Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education is celebrating its 25th anniversary at a conference in Hempstead, N.Y. The organization is exploring how it can mobilize grass-roots support for such issues as recruiting new teachers and improving working conditions for Jewish educators. [Page 4]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Gore would likely continue Clinton's peacemaking efforts

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Would a President Gore continue his predecessor's commitment to forging peace in the Middle East?

While critics of the current administration accuse President Clinton of being too anxious to conclude an Israeli-Palestinian deal to seal his own political legacy, most peace advocates praise his persistent efforts to do all he can to end the century-old conflict in the region.

By all accounts, Gore has been integrally involved in these efforts, which were launched early in the Clinton administration with the historic 1993 handshake on the White House lawn between former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"No vice president in history has been as involved as Al Gore in foreign policy in general, and the pursuit of peace in the Middle East in particular," said Mel Levine, a former U.S. congressman from California and co-chair of Gore's Middle East advisory committee.

"Al Gore won't need any on-the-job training," Levine said, adding that Gore has a clear grasp of the problems in the Middle East and an absolute commitment to Israel's security.

It is not clear what role his running mate, Sen. Joseph Lieberman, a Jewish lawmaker with strong views on the Middle East, would play in shaping U.S. foreign policy in the region.

Thanks to his long experience not only as vice president but also as senator and congressman, Gore enjoys the confidence and respect of the current Israeli government as well as of its opposition leaders, Levine said.

Middle East analyst Shibley Telhami said there would be no significant differences between a Clinton administration and a Gore administration.

"A Gore administration would be good for both Israel and the Arabs," said Telhami, who holds the Anwar Sadat Chair for Population, Development and Peace at the University of Maryland. Should an agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians be reached, he said, a Gore administration would place the same priority on its implementation as does Clinton's.

Some analysts believe that Clinton's personal engagement in the peace process might not transfer to the Gore administration.

There could be a slight difference in style, but the policy would essentially be the same, said Michael Sonnenfeldt, chair of the Israel Policy Forum, which helps to promote the peace process. "Continuation would be the overwhelming theme," he said.

Sonnenfeldt expects that Gore would maintain an "even-handed" approach to the peace process so America could continue to play a credible role as peace broker.

On the perennial question of moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Levine said that Gore would defer to the Israeli government in deciding when such a move should be made.

The Democratic platform itself speaks of Jerusalem as "the capital of Israel and should remain as an undivided city accessible to all faiths."

Levine's evaluation was confirmed by Lonny Kaplan, national chairman of the board of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby.

"I've discussed the Middle East situation with Al Gore many times over the last 20

MIDEAST FOCUS

Knesset to hear Likud charges

The Israeli Knesset is interrupting its summer recess for a special session called by the Likud opposition.

Likud legislators plan to argue that Prime Minister Ehud Barak lost his mandate to continue negotiations with the Palestinians when he lost his parliamentary majority.

Barak, Meretz hold 'critical' talks

Prime Minister Ehud Barak was slated to meet with Meretz leader Yossi Sarid for talks described by the party as "critical" in determining whether it will return to the government. Meretz officials have grumbled over the slow pace of the contacts, which were seen as a sign Barak is also exploring options with the fervently Orthodox Shas Party.

Artifacts heist halted

Israeli customs officials and archaeologists intercepted a container at the Haifa port containing ancient artifacts apparently destined for sale abroad.

An Antiquities Authority official said the artifacts date from 3000 B.C.E. to 1000 C.E., and were about to be loaded onto a ship headed for the United States.

Minister proclaims tax cut

Israel's finance minister announced a cut in sales taxes on consumer products and said he hoped dealers would pass the savings on to the buying public.

The Likud Party accused Avraham Shochat of trying to implement a popular reform in anticipation of possible early elections.

Three meningitis cases found

Three cases of meningitis were detected among a group of some 400 British youths in Israel, Israel Radio reported. The three are being treated, and the remaining youths are receiving preventive treatment, delaying their return to Britain.



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years," said Kaplan, whose friendship with Gore reaches back to their student days at Harvard.

"He has a long history of supporting the peace process and the security of Israel," said Kaplan. "He accepts that the United States has a responsibility toward Israel, including a guarantee of large financial aid as the binding glue between the two sides."

Gore's votes as a legislator have traditionally been supportive of the U.S.-Israel relationship, said Kaplan. He was one of only 10 Democratic senators — which also included his running mate, Joseph Lieberman — who supported President Bush's use of force against Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War. □

(JTA Washington correspondent Sharon Samber contributed to this report.)

Excerpts from Democratic platform

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Following are excerpts from the official Democratic Party platform, which was scheduled to be endorsed by the convention Tuesday:

HATE CRIMES

The very purpose of hate crimes is to dehumanize and stigmatize — not only to wound the victim, but also to distort the American conscience. Every crime is a danger to Americans' lives and liberty. Hate crimes are more than assault on people, they are assaults on the very idea of America. They should be punished with extra force. Protections should include those against hate violence based on gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

CHOICE

The Democratic Party stands behind the right of every woman to choose, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, and regardless of ability to pay.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND INCLUSION

Al Gore and the Democratic Party continue to lead the fight to end discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation.

MIDDLE EAST

In areas where conflict has raged, comprehensive peace agreements are the foundation for lasting security. Bill Clinton and Al Gore have actively pursued peaceful resolutions to conflicts across the world and have been prepared to go the extra mile on behalf of negotiators seeking peace. Al Gore and the Democratic Party are fundamentally committed to the security of our ally, Israel, and the creation of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors.

We helped broker the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty, the Wye River accords and the Sharm el-Sheik Memorandum, and will continue to work with all parties to make progress towards peace. We will ensure that under all circumstances, Israel retains the qualitative military edge for its national security. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and should remain an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths. In view of the government of Israel's courageous decision to withdraw from Lebanon, we believe special responsibility now resides with Syria to make a contribution toward peace. The Camp David summit, while failing to bridge all the gaps between Israel and the Palestinians, demonstrated President Clinton's resolve to do all the United States could do to bring an end to that long conflict. We call on both parties to avoid unilateral actions, such as a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood, that will prejudice the outcome of negotiations.

IRAN

Al Gore and the Democratic Party recognize the possibility of change in Iran, but we remain focused on the realities. Even as elements in Iran press for reform, the country still supports international terrorism, strives to acquire weapons of mass destruction, and represses its citizens, as evidenced by the immoral trial of 13 Jews in Shiraz. Ultimately, we must judge Iran by its actions. Gore will make an all-out effort to halt Iran's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems. □

JEWISH WORLD

Search ends for Jewish treasure

Members of a salvage operation failed to find a sunken boat believed to be loaded with gold and jewelry taken from Greek Jews during World War II.

After five days of searching, members of the team said they found no sign of the valuables, said to be worth more than \$2 billion.

Moses Constantini, the leader of Greece's Central Board of Jewish Communities, said data gathered during the search would be analyzed before the team would decide whether to seek permission to renew the search off the coast of Greece.

Berlin museum official resigns

The deputy director of the Jewish Museum in Berlin recently resigned because of differences with the museum's executive director, W. Michael Blumenthal, according to The New York Times.

Tom Freudenheim and Blumenthal reportedly clashed over issues including whether the museum should house theatrical and musical productions. The museum is scheduled to open in September 2001, more than a year late.

B'nai B'rith, fraternity team up

B'nai B'rith International and a Jewish college fraternity are forming a partnership.

B'nai B'rith will coordinate a networking group for Alpha Epsilon Pi alumni.

The fraternity, with chapters on 100 North American college campuses, will in turn recruit new members from the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization.

'Jews Rule' cover story probed

Latvian officials are launching a probe of a local business magazine to see if it broke anti-racism laws. The move came after Kapitals magazine ran a cover story in its August issue, "Jews Rule the World."

The magazine's cover had a drawing of an Orthodox Jew holding a globe in his hands.

Slovakia chooses memorial date

The Slovak government selected Sept. 9 as a day of remembrance for victims of the Holocaust. The occasion will mark the day in 1941 when the then-Nazi puppet state introduced its repressive "Jewish Code."

Web site promotes 'love day'

A Web site for Jewish singles is trying to revive the ancient Jewish holiday of Tu B'Av as a "love day."

"Instead of flocking to card stores in February, Jewish Americans need to know they have a holiday of their own to celebrate the power of love," said Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, "matchmaker-in-chief" of JDate.com. Tu B'Av occurs this year from Tuesday evening to Wednesday evening.

Families of JCC victims sue gun makers one year after shooting

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Families of the victims of a white supremacist's 1999 shooting spree at the North Valley Jewish Community Center here have filed a lawsuit against gun makers, saying they should be held responsible for the incident.

The Aug. 9 lawsuit alleges that six firearms manufacturers are liable for "public nuisance and negligence" and failure to take steps to prevent criminals such as alleged gunman Buford O'Neal Furrow Jr. from obtaining guns.

Joining in the lawsuit is the mother of Joseph Iletto, a U.S. mail carrier allegedly killed by Furrow the same day as the JCC shootings with a pistol bought in a pawn shop.

The lawsuit charges that Furrow should not have been able to buy five assault rifles, two handguns and 7,000 rounds of ammunition that were all found in his van after the shootings.

Furrow is an avowed white supremacist and convicted felon with a history of mental instability.

"It's not enough to let guns go out of your factory door and say, Sorry, we don't know where they are headed," said Joshua Horwitz.

Horwitz is the plaintiffs' attorney and executive director of the Washington-based Educational Fund to End Handgun Violence.

Filed one day before the first anniversary of the shooting, the lawsuit is similar to ones brought by various cities against gun makers for social harm inflicted on the public and the costs of crimes.

The difference is that the current lawsuit names specific victims of gun violence, said Horwitz.

The plaintiffs are Lilian Iletto, mother of the slain Filipino American mail carrier; Loren Lieb and Alan Stepakoff, suing on behalf of their son Joshua Stepakoff, who was shot in the leg; David and Donna Finkelstein, on behalf of their daughter Mindy, a teenage counselor, also shot in the leg; and Charles and Eleanor Kadish, whose 6-year-old son, Ben, nearly died from a stomach wound.

In the attack on the North Valley JCC, Furrow allegedly fired 70 bullets from a Norinco, a China-made clone of Israel's Uzi submachine gun.

Also suing are the parents of Nathan Powers, who was in the Jewish center day camp during the shooting.

Though not physically hurt, the lawsuit claims the Powers' son suffered emotional damage.

Horwitz said the Powers' participation may enable others who were not physically harmed to join the legal action.

In a related development, court papers filed by the prosecution Aug. 8 allege that the imprisoned Furrow has threatened to kill his team of public defenders and a Latino inmate, whom he considers to be Satan.

Maria Stratton, head of the federal public defenders' office, said she and her colleagues do not feel threatened by Furrow.

"He is a very mentally ill person, and we see him on a daily basis. He struggles with it, and we struggle with it with him," she said.

Furrow is charged with 16 counts of murder, weapons offenses and hate crimes. His trial is scheduled to begin next February. □

Sentence given in Jewish paper scam

NEW YORK (JTA) — An Illinois man has pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud for selling advertising in a Jewish newspaper.

Maurice Rose, who will be sentenced in November, said he operated a newspaper called the Jewish World News, lied to advertisers about circulation numbers and misled them into believing their advertisements would appear in the longtime Missouri weekly, the St. Louis Jewish Light. □

Democratic delegates practice art of diversity in Jewish program

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Some 30 delegates to the Democratic National Convention took time out from politicking this week to participate in a hands-on workshop in democracy and diversity, initiated by a Jewish institution.

Monday's workshop was based on the youTHink program, in which public school students use the arts to grapple with social issues and then act out their new awareness to initiate projects that will further responsibility and tolerance in their schools and communities.

Progenitors of youTHink are the Zimmer Discovery Children's Museum of the Jewish Community Centers and the Center for American Studies and Culture, an educational think tank.

During a two-hour session, the delegates of diverse ethnic, social and geographical backgrounds were first shown a photo blowup of the Statue of Liberty.

Then one of five people was depicted climbing a "career ladder," with a middle-aged white male on top.

What meanings do the pictures convey, asked Esther Netter, the children's museum's executive director and workshop leader with Bernie Massey, president of the American studies center. The question raised deeply felt passions about gender and race discrimination, the struggles of immigrants, the meaning of American freedom, and the pros and cons of genetic engineering.

After an hour of free-wheeling discussion, the "class" was assigned its own art project, starting with a small white box, scissors, paste, crayons and popular magazines with lots of illustrations to cut out.

One New Hampshire delegate created a white picket fence home on the outside, while on the inside sat a little black child adopted by the family and facing its own struggles in a lily-white New Hampshire town.

A Tennessee lawyer dedicated her box to domestic violence, showing abused adults on the outside who produced abused children on the inside.

Other demonstration creations showed the box in the shape of a pistol to condemn gun violence, while another doubled as Pandora's box, with troubles ready to fly out.

Delegate Linda Garush of Manchester, N.H., interrupted her project to comment that "any vehicle that helps us to understand each other, how we all fit together, is important."

Garush said she would try to get her church to adopt a similar youTHink program.

Annette Shapiro, who as chair of the Jewish Community Foundation in Los Angeles had been involved in launching the project, said she appreciated getting viewpoints from states across the country represented by the delegates.

The youTHink program began almost three years ago and has received a \$1 million grant from the State of California Arts Council. Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation has just announced a \$100,000 grant for a youTHink teacher training program.

So far, some 30,000 students in second to 12th grades have participated in the program. Netter said she hopes to double that number next year. □

Educators hope Lieberman spurs Jewish interest in Judaism

By Julie Wiener

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. (JTA) — Jewish educators hope that Al Gore's selection of Sen. Joseph Lieberman as his running mate will do more than make Judaism more acceptable to non-Jews.

They want it to make Judaism more palatable to Jews.

At the 25th anniversary conference this week of the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, several religious school principals and teachers said they hope Lieberman will become a role model for their students.

They point out that Lieberman is an American Jew who has managed to balance religious commitment with success in the secular world.

Eva Eliason, a teacher in a Reform synagogue in Cedar Grove, N.J., initially expressed skepticism when asked if Lieberman's selection represents a milestone at all — with other Jews like Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan in the upper echelons of power.

But, she said, "because everyone's oohing and ahing" about Lieberman and his religious observance, "maybe people will think about keeping Shabbat."

"It's almost like a fashion," she added.

Stacy Garnick, education director at a Reform temple in Chelmsford, Mass., said Lieberman's appointment shows Jewish kids they "can grow up to be anything as a Jew."

"I hope it strengthens people's pride about their heritage, rather than seeing it as a detriment," she added.

"I'm excited about our kids having a role model," said Merle Steinberg, a religious school director in Cherry Hill, N.J., adding that "it makes it really cool to be Jewish."

"We've always taught the kids that the sky's the limit," said Beverly Goldberg, program director and B'nai Mitzvah coordinator at a Reform congregation in suburban Philadelphia, adding that Lieberman is "such a wonderful role model."

One longtime CAJE activist who did not want his name used because he is a professional fund-raiser for politicians, called Lieberman's selection a "landmark for Jewish education," and asked, "Can you imagine how many Jews will learn about Sukkot when the vice president walks into his sukkah?"

Some doubted, however, that Lieberman will make much of a difference on the identity of assimilated American Jews.

Steven Steinbock, a teacher and Bar Mitzvah tutor in Yarmouth, Maine, said the Lieberman selection represents a "significant change in American society," but predicted his impact on Jewish identity would be "minimal."

"Congressmen have a bigger presence than the vice president," he said. "There's not going to be a huge response." □

Court TV to focus on rabbi's case

NEW YORK (JTA) — A U.S. cable channel plans to air a show examining how a New Jersey rabbi came to face the death penalty for his wife's murder.

"Fred Neulander: The Rabbi and the Hit Man" will air on Court TV on Aug. 20. Neulander's murder trial is slated to begin in the fall. □