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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Sharon holds coalition talks

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon opened contacts Thursday to try to widen his governing coalition. The talks came a day after the Labor Party withdrew from the unity government.

Sharon was expected to turn first to the far-right National Unity-Israel, Our Home bloc, which opposes any negotiations with the Palestinian Authority and advocates harsher reprisals for Palestinian terror attacks.

The bloc had belonged to the coalition but withdrew earlier this year to protest the government's failure to insist on the handover of the Palestinian assassins of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

Members of the bloc were to meet Thursday to consider whether to return to the government. The seven-member party would give Sharon a 62-seat majority in the Knesset.

In another development, outgoing Foreign Minister Shimon Peres rejected an invitation to remain in the government, Israel Radio reported.

Mofaz accepts Cabinet offer

Former Israeli army chief Shaul Mofaz reportedly accepted an offer to serve as defense minister in a restructured Cabinet. Mofaz would replace Labor Party leader Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, who resigned Wednesday after budget negotiations broke down.

3 die in Gaza blast

Explosions tore through the house of a Hamas terrorist in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, killing at least three members of the group. The cause of the blasts was not immediately known, but Hamas officials acknowledged it may have been a "work accident" caused when a bomb went off prematurely.

Israelis blame defense minister

Most Israelis believe the Labor Party should not have dissolved the unity government at this time, according to a new poll.

According to the survey reported Thursday on Israel Radio, two-thirds of respondents believe political considerations relating to the upcoming Labor primaries led Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer to create a crisis.

The survey polled some 500 people and had a 4.5 percent margin of error.

U.S. ELECTIONS 2002

Jewish candidates vie for seats in pivotal congressional elections

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Four Jewish candidates are vying for seats in the U.S. Senate, 35 for seats in the House of Representatives and two for seats in their state's governor's mansion.

For those keeping a Jewish scorecard, it's an average year, as the number of Jewish candidates goes. But on the eve of next week's midterm elections, the political landscape appears anything but typical.

Control of both the Senate and the House are at stake on Nov. 5. And the outcome of the election could affect everything from legislative priorities to who controls powerful congressional committees to how much the Bush administration will drive the agenda.

With a staggering economy, a war with Iraq brewing and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still embroiling the Middle East, the leadership and approach of Congress is significant.

In addition to Jewish candidates, Jewish turnout at the polls often is disproportionately high, and the Jewish vote could prove pivotal in several races. How they cast their votes will be watched with great interest, not only by the candidates themselves but by those who believe that Jews are growing closer to the Republican Party.

"There will be overwhelming Jewish support for Democratic candidates despite the predictions of Jews going to vote Republican," said Mark Mellman, a Democratic pollster.

Mellman did note certain cases of moderate Republicans who might garner "better than average" amounts of support from the Jewish community, but whose Democratic opponents would still likely get the lion's share of Jewish votes. Examples include Govs. George Pataki of New York and Jeb Bush of Florida and Rep. Connie Morella (R-Md.).

As Election Day approaches, Jewish political junkies are watching some key races around the country, some with Jewish candidates, some without.

Among the Senate races:

- In Minnesota, the Senate race with two Jewish candidates came to an abrupt halt with the death last week of Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) in a plane crash. Wellstone had been locked in an extremely tight race against a Jewish Republican, Norm Coleman.

Coleman, who like Wellstone has received financial and political support within the Jewish community, could face even stiffer competition now from Walter Mondale, the former senator and vice president, who will replace Wellstone on the ballot.

Mondale would be expected to take on many of the liberal issues that Wellstone championed, making him an attractive candidate for many Jewish voters.

- In New Jersey, another former senator, this one Jewish, is also hoping to rejoin the Senate. Democrat Frank Lautenberg, who retired from his Senate seat in 2000 and was venerated by the Jewish community, could win the New Jersey seat vacated by Sen. Robert Torricelli, also a Democrat, who quit the race as his campaign faltered following charges of ethics violations.

With more than 450,000 Jews in the state, the Jewish turnout could have some influence.

The outcome of the New Jersey and Minnesota races will determine whether the Senate retains a minyan of 10 Jews.

Only one current Jewish senator, Carl Levin (D-Mich.), is up for re-election — in

MIDEAST FOCUS

2 Israeli soldiers jailed

Two Israeli soldiers were jailed for 10 days for refusing to help dismantle an illegal settlement outpost in the West Bank.

The two were jailed in connection with an army operation at Gilad Farm, site of clashes between settlers and soldiers earlier this month, the army said Wednesday. Before the clashes, some West Bank rabbis had called on soldiers not to obey orders to dismantle outposts.

Israel arrests Hezbollah member

Israel arrested a senior Hezbollah member on charges of planning terror attacks inside Israel. Ayub Fawzi was arrested in June 2002 in Hebron, according to the Prime Minister's Office, which published details of the arrest this week.

According to the office, Ayub spent some years in Canada, where he maintained contact with senior Hezbollah officials and carried out operations. He allegedly entered Israel in October 2000 using a forged passport. A Tel Aviv court was asked Thursday to extend his detention another six months, in accordance with a law permitting the detention of a terror suspect whose release would endanger state security.

Syria blacklists two ships

Syria blacklisted two ships for allegedly dealing with Israel. An official at the Damascus-based Central Office for the Boycott of Israel told The Associated Press that the ships, registered in Malta and in St. Vincent and Grenadines, had visited Israel and therefore were banned from operating in the Arab world.

The 1951 Arab boycott has not been active for almost a decade, since the Oslo peace process began. Recently, however, calls to boycott companies that deal with Israel have been on the rise because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Syria is one of the boycott's most active supporters.

a race he is expected to win.

A fourth Jewish candidate, Alan Blinken of Idaho, is not expected to win against the Republican incumbent, Sen. Larry Craig.

The eight other incumbent senators who will serve in the 108th Congress are: Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Russell Feingold (D-Wisc.), Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Herb Kohl (D-Wisc.), Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.).

- In New Hampshire, the race for the Senate pits Gov. Jean Shaheen against Rep. John Sununu. Shaheen has garnered some Jewish financial support, mostly to block Sununu.

Sununu, who is of Palestinian and Lebanese background, has come under fire for supporting U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority, though he also has voted for U.S. aid to Israel and has returned campaign contributions from Arab leaders who backed Hamas.

At least \$25,000 from pro-Israel political action committees has gone to Shaheen.

In the House of Representatives, some of the most interesting congressional races already played out in the primaries. Reps. Earl Hilliard (D-Ala.) and Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.), both considered anti-Israel figures, lost their primaries after Jews from around the country spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to support their challengers.

A number of other anti-Israel lawmakers are not returning to Capitol Hill for various reasons, raising hopes that this Congress will be highly pro-Israel.

Some House races of note include:

- In the 13th District in Florida, a Jewish Democrat, attorney Jan Schneider, is running against Republican Secretary of State Katherine Harris. Harris received attention during the last presidential election for her role in the post-election chaos.

- In California's 27th District, Democratic incumbent Brad Sherman is pitted against Republican challenger Robert Levy, a family law attorney and past president of his synagogue's Men's Club, in the only "Jew vs. Jew" race in the House.

- Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.) is likely to be the only Jewish Republican to serve in the next Congress, since Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) is retiring, unless Levy pulls off an upset in California.

- Two Jews involved in their local Jewish communities are running on Democratic tickets in two new districts in the South.

Harry Jacobs, an attorney and past president of the Orlando Jewish federation, is running as a Democrat in Florida's 24th District; and Roger Kahn, a businessman active in Atlanta's Jewish community, is running in Georgia's 11th District. Kahn is believed to have a better shot than Jacobs at winning.

- Rahm Emmanuel, a former counselor to President Clinton, will probably win a seat in the heavily Democratic 5th District in Illinois.

- Many prominent Jewish lawmakers are facing token opposition or are running unopposed, including Reps. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), Peter Deutsch (D-Fla.), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), Barney Frank (D-Mass.) and Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.).

When the campaign season began, it looked like it could be the year for Jewish governors, with seven candidates. The number of Jewish candidates now is down to two, but both Democrat Ed Rendell in Pennsylvania and Republican Linda Lingle in Hawaii are thought to have very good chances of winning.

If Rendell and Lingle prevail, they would be the first Jewish governors since 1994, when Bruce Sundlun served as governor of Rhode Island. Lingle would become only the second Jewish woman to serve as governor.

The Jewish vote, meanwhile, could be important in the New York race for governor, where Democrat H. Carl McCall is running against Pataki. In California, Gov. Gray Davis, who received 84 percent of the Jewish vote last time, remains in good stead with California's Jews while he fights off a challenge from Republican Bill Simon.

And in Florida, reminding voters of his brother's solid standing on Israel could help Jeb Bush in his race against Democrat Bill McBride.

In addition to the political races, there are 202 ballot measures across the country but none have become flashpoints in the Jewish community.

There will be voting on such issues as bilingual education in Massachusetts, Colorado and Nebraska, and banning same-sex marriage in Nevada. Local Jewish groups have gotten involved, but there does not appear to be one issue galvanizing the community the way ballot initiatives to promote school vouchers did in 2000. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Sharon aide heckled on campus

A top adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was heckled during a speech at the State University of New York at Albany. "Don't mess with us," Ra'anana Gissin told a protester bearing a sign that said "Free Palestine," according to the Albany Times Union. "When we offer you reason, you offer us the blood trail of suicide bombings and homicide killings."

Outside, a crowd of about 50 stood with signs and a megaphone demonstrating for the rights of Palestinians. "We are in World War III," Gissin also said, referring to Sept. 11, the Bali bombing and the hostage-taking in Moscow. "It's already here, my friends."

U.S. gets shtetl collection

A collection documenting shtetl life in Luboml, Poland, was donated to the U.S. Library of Congress.

New York real estate magnate Aaron Ziegelman, who created the collection of photographs, letters, Judaica, maps and other materials documenting everyday life in a typical shtetl community in Poland, on Wednesday turned over the collection, which will be permanently housed in the library's American Folklife Center.

James Billington, the librarian of Congress, praised Ziegelman for having "kept alive a memory that others sought to destroy."

The materials also were used in a documentary film called "Luboml: My Heart Remembers."

Mass grave found in Belarus

Authorities in the former Soviet republic of Belarus discovered a mass grave with the remains of up to 12,000 people killed during World War II.

Residents of the town of Slutsk, which is located some 60 miles from the capital of Minsk, discovered the grave.

Between 1942 and 1944, they told officials, Nazi troops executed and buried Jews from Slutsk and prisoners from a nearby concentration camp at the site.

Masada a world heritage site

The ancient Jewish fortress at Masada, near the Dead Sea, was declared a world heritage site at a ceremony Thursday.

The designation by UNESCO commits Israel to protect and preserve the site.

If a site on the list begins to lose its value through natural disaster, war, pollution or lack of funds, it is entitled to emergency assistance from nations that have signed the World Heritage Convention.

More than 190 nations have signed the convention, and some 730 sites are on the organization's list.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Survey: Anti-Semitic attitudes are prevalent all across Europe

By Mica Rosenberg

NEW YORK (JTA) — More than one-third of the people in Belgium, Germany, France and Spain hold strongly anti-Semitic views, according to two surveys conducted for the Anti-Defamation League.

The figures show that "all of Europe is infected" with anti-Semitism, said Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director.

Some 39 percent of Belgians and 37 percent of Germans harbor strongly anti-Semitic views, according to the ADL's index of anti-Semitism.

In France, 35 percent were strongly anti-Semitic, and in Spain 34 percent. The figure fell to 23 percent in Italy, 22 percent in Switzerland, 21 percent in Denmark, 19 percent in Austria, 18 percent in the United Kingdom and 7 percent in the Netherlands.

The results of the surveys were discussed this week at an ADL conference on global anti-Semitism in New York.

Anti-Semitic attitudes in France, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom and Belgium were surveyed in June 2002. Attitudes in Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Italy and the Netherlands were measured in September and are being released this week.

The ADL calculates attitudes based on an "anti-Semitism index" that monitors responses to 11 statements deemed by University of California researchers in 1964 to indicate anti-Semitism. Respondents who agree with six or more of the statements are considered "most anti-Semitic."

Statements included the canards that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to their home countries, use shady practices to get what they want, care only about other Jews and prattle too much about the Holocaust.

Five hundred interviews were conducted in each country.

The survey released this week found that, overall, 40 percent of respondents think Jews have too much power in international financial markets. That number was highest in Spain, with 71 percent, and lowest in the Netherlands, where 18 percent believed it.

A majority — 56 percent — of respondents in the five countries recently surveyed see Jews as more loyal to Israel than to their home countries. That number skyrockets to 72 percent in Spain.

Foxman attributed the results in Spain to the historical anti-Semitism and power of the Catholic Church. Across Europe, the generally high levels of anti-Semitism are due to anti-Israel sentiment born of recent Israeli-Palestinian violence, he said.

But Deborah Dwork, founding director of the Strassler Family Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University and co-author of the recent book "Holocaust: A History," questions whether the index captures the nuances of anti-Semitism.

The question of how Jews can maintain their loyalty to the countries in which they live and to the Jewish people has been salient at least since the Enlightenment.

In addition, European attitudes toward Jews and Israel traditionally have fluctuated, rising and falling according to internal European instability.

"Anti-Semitism is an opportunistic infection," she said. "It sets in when the body politic is weakened" — as it has been since the Sept. 11 attacks — and when national leaders do not take strong stands against it.

Foxman said Spanish authorities' reticence to speak out has allowed the problem to "fester and grow." In contrast, French authorities "in the last several months have been doing what we've been asking, and have responded" to acts of violence, he said.

According to Foxman, a drive to prosecute those who commit racially motivated violence has led to a recent drop in anti-Semitic incidents in France.

Across the five countries just surveyed, the ADL polls found that 61 percent of respondents were "very concerned" or "fairly concerned" about violence directed at European Jews. A majority believes their governments are doing enough to combat the violence.

This survey, like many before it, found that the greatest predictors of anti-Semitism are age and education. Respondents over age 65 and those with a high school education or lower are more likely to hold anti-Semitic views, according to the results. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Faced with no choice, Argentine Jewish institutions are merging***By Florencia Arbiser*

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — A cost-cutting initiative to merge Argentina's Jewish institutions is gaining steam.

Local Jewish officials began taking the initiative seriously in 2000, after some 10 years of financial difficulties took a severe toll on the institutions.

Spurred by a national financial crisis late last year — and a subsequent wave of Jewish emigration that further sapped communal reserves — the officials embarked on a series of mergers that have affected Jewish schools, clubs, community centers and congregations.

"The magnitude of the transformation is unprecedented in the Jewish world," Alberto Senderey, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's community development director for Europe and Latin America, told JTA.

Facing requests from Argentine Jewish groups for advice on how to reorganize operations or merge with other groups, the local JDC office opened a department to provide information and economic support.

AMIA, one of the central Jewish institutions for Argentine Jews, also has been providing help with mergers, particularly for schools.

"The kids and their Jewish education are sacred. The walls are not," Abraham Kaul, AMIA's president, told JTA. Mere "buildings without Jewish life inside" are not worth preserving, he added.

With this in mind, AMIA has encouraged drastic new steps for schools that have lost substantial numbers of students or have fallen behind in salary payments.

"If you are looking for a high quality education, you have to understand that with 100 kids in a whole school it is impossible to afford an important science laboratory," Senderey said. "You need more than 500 students to have a school with a feasible plan."

Local Jewish institutions have different ideologies, outlooks and traditions, and not all want to merge with other institutions, experts agree. They start thinking about partnerships when they realize they can no longer exist financially by themselves.

But Senderey noted that it is crucial to try "to maintain Jewish diversity and pluralism" as the merger process continues.

Less than a decade ago, when some 80 percent of Argentina's 200,000 Jews were considered middle class, the idea of large-scale mergers would have been unthinkable.

But subsequent recession and inflation took their toll on the middle class. No longer able to pay the monthly fees of Jewish institutions, many Jews suspended their memberships.

Moreover, as increasing numbers of Jews seeking a better life left Argentina for Israel or other countries, Jewish clubs, congregations and schools suffered additional losses.

According to experts, an estimated 6,000 Jews will make aliyah this year. They will join approximately 80,000 Argentine Jews already living in Israel.

There are no current estimates regarding the number of Argentine Jews immigrating to other countries. But the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, which helps such emigres, says it receives more than 100 inquiries a day.

According to JDC, more than 50 Argentine Jewish institutions

are already in the process of restructuring. Some are merging, while others are engaging in partnerships for certain projects.

Experts say some 20,000 Argentine Jews will be affected by these moves.

The most significant restructuring project is the alliance between the nation's two largest Jewish clubs, Hebraica and Hacoaj. Together they serve almost 15,000 people.

Diego Freedman, associate director of the JDC's new development and organizational strengthening department, said that after merging some operations the two clubs will save more than \$305,000 a year.

But those savings came with a cost: Some staff members were fired and the headquarters of Hacoaj was shut down.

The two clubs were longtime rivals in sports such as soccer and tennis. But economic considerations took precedence.

Club members are taking the restructuring in stride.

"With the deep economic crisis, we can't afford so many buildings," said Laura Goldman, 34, a longtime member of Hacoaj.

Hebraica's vice president, Israel Maganiezin, said he does not see much opposition to the clubs' merger.

The merger movement also has affected Jewish schools, which have seen enrollment decline from 24,000 students in 1990 to 17,000 in 2002.

In the northern outskirts of Buenos Aires, for example, the Tarbut school is taking over the Scholem Aleijem school.

With 70 years of history — but, today, only 147 students — Scholem Aleijem has become unsustainable as an independent entity.

The only other Jewish school in the neighborhood, Tarbut — 41 years old and with an enrollment of 1,000 students — said it would accept Scholem Aleijem's students. It pledged not to raise their monthly tuition, which is one-third that of Tarbut's.

Sergio Herskovits, Tarbut's executive director, told JTA that Tarbut was able to make the offer to Scholem Aleijem's students thanks to financial support from a U.S.-based school, the Bicultural Day School in Stamford, Conn.

The merger could provoke some social strains, Herskovits said, adding that Tarbut's students come from upper-middle class families, while Scholem Aleijem's students are less prosperous.

Just the same, Herskovits said, Tarbut officials plan to do what they can to mediate such differences. □

Supermodel helps Shoah memorial

BERLIN (JTA) — German supermodel Claudia Schiffer is helping to raise funds for a planned national Holocaust memorial in Berlin. But the beauty will be heard, not seen.

TV viewers will see a telephone number superimposed on a white screen, while Schiffer provides a voiceover: "Between 1941 and 1945, 6 million European Jews were murdered by Germans. Today, 60 years later, construction of a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe has begun in Berlin."

Each call to the special number will provide a donation of nearly \$3 toward construction of the memorial, which was designed by American architect Peter Eisenman and is expected to cost about \$26 million.

The German government is covering all but 10 percent of the costs. According to Sibylle Quack, director of the foundation building the memorial, Schiffer offered to help "as a representative of a young, modern and open-minded Germany." □