

IN THE NEWS

Israeli official: P.A. working to curb terror

The Palestinian Authority is trying to rein in terrorist groups in Yasser Arafat's absence, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said. [Story, Pg. 2]

Congressional group visiting Middle East

A high-level congressional delegation is headed to Israel and Jordan to discuss post-election peace moves.

The delegation will explore where the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is headed now that the elections are over and ailing Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is out of the picture, said Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.).

"The confluence of events creates an opportunity for the United States to bring some order where order does not exist and bring some hope where hope is limited, both to the Israelis and to the Palestinians," Wexler told JTA.

The delegation, which was to arrive in Jordan on Sunday, will be in the region one week and will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Jordanian King Abdullah II and Palestinian leaders.

Joining Wexler, a senior Democrat on the House International Relations Committee, are Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Steve Chabot (R-Ohio), respectively the chair and deputy chair of the Middle East Subcommittee; and Reps. Ted Strickland (D-Ohio) and Luis Guterrez (D-Ill.).

The American Jewish Committee's Project Interchange is sponsoring the trip.

Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.) will travel to the Middle East separately.

Four Palestinians killed in West Bank

Undercover Israeli forces shot dead four Palestinians.

The Palestinians opened fire Sunday during an Israeli arrest operation in the West Bank town of Jenin, at which point the Israeli forces returned fire, killing them, Ha'aretz reported.



WORLD REPORT

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Israelis reflect and look ahead with Yasser Arafat clinging to life

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Mordi Peretz arranges rows of meatballs and slices of lasagna behind the counter of his Tel Aviv deli as he pulls together his thoughts on the apparent demise of Yasser Arafat.

Like most Israelis, Peretz will not miss the grizzle-faced Palestinian Authority president: He blames Arafat for throwing away peace with both hands, for leading the Palestinians toward terrorism and further away from statehood. And like his fellow countrymen, Peretz sees in Arafat's eventual death hope for a political breakthrough and a chance for peace.

Still, the 44-year-old reflects out loud on the long road Israel has walked with Arafat — from pariah to possible peace partner and back to pariah. So when he saw the 75-year-old Arafat, now frail and ill wave goodbye as he boarded a helicopter before he left the country for medical treatment in Paris, he felt the pang of mixed emotions.

"He was everything negative and achieved none of things he could have," said Peretz. "But when I saw him waving goodbye," he adds, "I felt a certain sympathy. And I felt badly for the Palestinians. Israelis, although they despise him, will still feel the loss of his image as the symbol of the Palestinian people."

Customers come into the deli that Peretz runs with his brother Ran asking for the latest news on Arafat.

"We cannot believe that after all this time he is finally going," Ran Peretz said.

"This Is the End" read the banner head-

line in the weekend edition of Israel's largest daily newspaper, Yediot Achronot, next to a large photograph of Arafat.

But as Arafat reportedly continues to slip in and out of a coma in a French military hospital outside of Paris, Israelis and Palestinians both are living in a state of limbo.

For so many years, Arafat — grinning under his trademark kaffiyeh while overseeing the struggle against Israel — was the opponent Israelis loved to hate. A post-Arafat landscape appears to be a blurry one, with hopes for renewed peace efforts but fears of the specter of Palestinian infighting.

"It could change things for better or for the worse. I don't know, but I am hoping for the best," said 22-year-old Tali Asolin as she folded pastel colored T-shirts at a sportswear store in Tel Aviv.

Mordechai Kedar served for 25 years in the military intelligence branch of the Israeli army and now teaches at Bar-Ilan University. He spoke of the mixed feelings Israelis are experiencing.

Borrowing from the old joke of the mixed emotions of a man watching his mother-in-law plunge off a cliff while driving his fancy car, Kedar said that it's like "we are watching Arafat riding our Mercedes over a cliff."

In the short term, Arafat's death may throw uncertainty into the planned Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, his death could result in a chaos that prevents the Palestinians from quickly resolving their internal affairs, delaying their ability to turn toward the Israelis in a renewed peace process, Kedar said.

"His personal game is finished. The

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

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question is what will people think is his legacy," Kedar said.

Arafat seemed to seal his fate with Israelis, and perhaps with much of the world, when he rejected the offers at Camp David in the summer of 2000, instead giving the nod to the return of armed struggle against Israel.

That struggle has since become four years of intense fighting known as the second intifada, or Palestinian uprising. In the violence, almost 3,000 Palestinians and some 1,000 Israelis have been killed.

Israelis who supported the peace process and thought Arafat would be the key to resolving the conflict feel betrayed.

"As a Jew and as an Israeli, I see him as a murderer and I am happy to see him die," said Robert Hannuna, a 24-year-old university student. Hannuna said that he cannot forgive what he sees as the mistakes Arafat made when it came to trying to forge peace with Israel.

"He was a hero to the Palestinians, he is the one who put the Palestinian issue on the world agenda, but he missed the chance to make peace," he said.

Charles Frankenberg, a 44-year-old tour guide who immigrated to Israel from Vancouver, Canada, said he is dismayed that the Palestinian leadership appears to be trying to keep the world in the dark about the truth of Arafat's health. He said that does not bode well for them being able to be truthful and forthcoming in the future.

"Everybody in Israel is hoping Arafat will die as soon as possible, so we can get on with it and move on to the next stage,

whatever that may be," he said.

Despite the twinge of sympathy by Peretz the deli owner, distaste for Arafat is one of the few things that now seem to unite both the left and the right in Israel.

On the popular Israeli satire show "Sold Game," contestants were asked how they would remember Arafat.

One brought out a small battery-wound yellow chick, its head wrapped in a kaffiyeh and said, "Like a little chicken." ■

With Yasser Arafat on death's door, Palestinians move to rein in chaos

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Yasser Arafat may be on the verge of death in a French hospital, but back home the temporary Palestinian leadership is breathing new life into prospects of peace with Israel.

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei and his predecessor, Mahmoud Abbas, declared a police crackdown on the chaos in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Sunday.

"This goes into effect immediately," said Palestinian Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat.

The initiative was billed as a move to restore law and order after recent clashes between Arafat loyalists and a new generation of Fatah members.

It also included a Palestinian Authority request that terror factions halt attacks on Israel proper, a move the groups were considering and were expected to accept.

Israeli officials, who have braced for a potentially catastrophic succession struggle in the West Bank and Gaza since Arafat was flown to Paris with a severe stomach complaint on Oct. 29, expressed cautious encouragement.

"There are indications that" the Palestinian Authority is "trying to close ranks and stop the Hamas terrorism, but there is no way of knowing if this will succeed," Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told the Israeli Cabinet. "We believe Hamas and other terror groups will answer the Palestinian Authority's call for violence to be curbed."

Israel still insists that the Palestinian Authority disarm Hamas and other terrorists group in accordance with the U.S.-backed peace "road map."

In Jerusalem there is a growing conviction that, with Arafat gone, the extremists

could lay down their arms in exchange for a place in a new, broad Palestinian government. On Saturday, Qurei and his security chiefs held a rare conference with Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aksa Brigade at which the factions requested a power-sharing role.

The Palestinian Authority, wary of alienating Israel and the United States by closing ranks with terrorist groups, was circumspect. "We are talking about unity in all forms and aspects," Qurei told reporters when asked about the talks in Gaza.

Israel, meanwhile, is keen to avoid any appearance of meddling in the future of the

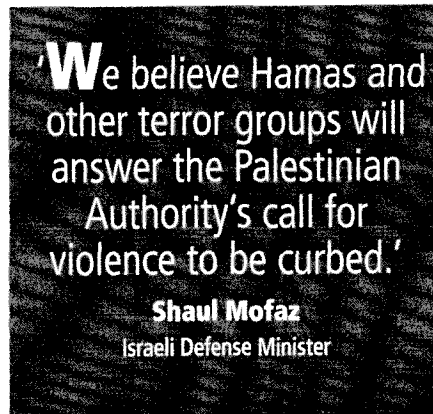
Palestinian Authority and offered to ease closures in the West Bank and Gaza so that Palestinian security forces can restore order.

Mofaz also told the Cabinet that Israeli security forces were prepared to facilitate Arafat's burial in Gaza should his condition — recent reports indicate he

is suffering liver failure, although several other ailments have also been suggested — prove fatal.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has ruled out the Palestinian Authority's request to lay Arafat to rest in Jerusalem, but some Palestinian officials discreetly agree with the choice of Gaza — the Palestinian leader's father is already buried there, in the Khan Younis Martyrs Cemetery.

Arafat's wife, Suha, has reportedly requested that he be kept on a life-support system indefinitely — or at least until she can wrap up his will to her satisfaction. The delay has increased tension in the Palestinian ranks. But according to Palestinian sources, the patience of the comatose Palestinian leader's French hosts may be wearing thin. ■



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Prague's neglected Jewish Museum is revived

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) — The Jewish Museum of Prague, founded in 1906, is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

Can't work out the math?

Ten years ago, after more than 40 years of neglect and political repression under communism, the museum was handed over by the state to the Prague Jewish community.

With its incomparable synagogues and its ancient cemetery, the museum is arguably Europe's most impressive Jewish cultural monument. When the Jewish community inherited it from the state, though, its buildings and collections were in utter decay.

Still, the museum has since become a worldwide source of education on Central and Eastern European Jewry and a symbol of the post-Communist revival of Jewish life in the region.

Celebrating the museum's rebirth, its director, Leo Pavlat, announced that after years of struggling to rebuild its collections and repair its buildings, the museum is set to embark on a new course, hoping to revitalize Czech Jewish life outside of Prague.

"We were not able to go into the regions

THIS WEEK

SUNDAY

■ Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom will moderate a panel on responding to security threats in a post-9/11 world at the UJC's 2004 General Assembly in Cleveland. The G.A., which goes through Nov. 17, is the largest gathering of Jewish leadership, with participants representing Jewish federations and communities across North America, and from Israel and throughout the world. The theme of the G.A. is "Imagine," focusing on the potential of attendees working to ensure Jewish compassion and continuity. Major forums, workshops and programs will provide the tools needed to foster leadership and strengthen the Jewish community. Other speakers will include Joshua Malina of NBC's "The West Wing"; political insiders James Carville and William Kristol analyzing the 2004 elections; Jamie Gorelick, a member of the 9-11 Commission; and Israeli Olympic gold medalist Gal Fridman.

■ The Women's League for Conservative Judaism meets for its biennial convention in Orlando, Fla. Some 1,200 women are expected to gather for networking and learning at the Conservative movement gathering. The meeting runs through Nov. 17.

before because we had to put all our funding into restoring infrastructure and the collection, plus establishing permanent exhibitions and rebuilding the synagogues," Pavlat said. "It's done now and we want to help preserve the Jewish legacy outside of Prague."

The museum is not a single building but includes houses of worship, a ceremonial hall and exhibitions throughout the cobblestone streets of Europe's best-preserved Jewish quarter.

With more than a half million visitors a year, the Jewish Museum of Prague is the Czech Republic's most popular museum. No other Jewish museum in the world

can make such a claim in its own country, but the achievement is especially stunning in a region where Jews were nearly extinguished and Judaism suppressed for nearly a half century.

"Maybe the most important of all the achievements of the Jewish Museum of Prague during the last 10 years is how it has managed to find a relationship with the public," said Petr Pithart, president of the Czech Senate.

"It has been extremely lively in devoting itself to its visitors from abroad and the Czech Republic, even more than its own collections. And what I consider particularly important for the future is how successful the museum is at attracting young people."

Pavlat expressed his hope that the museum could have an even greater impact on Czech Jews, whose number stands at about 10,000. Beginning in 2006, several hundred thousand dollars will be channeled from museum profits to 10 Jewish communities that will decide how to best use the funds.

Pavlat anticipated that monument repairs, the opening of exhibitions, cultural events and teaching projects for the general public could all be undertaken.

The history of the Jewish Museum mirrors Czechoslovakia's tragic history and that of the former Eastern bloc. As Pavlat points out, the enormity of the museum's collection is due to the Nazi's near extermination of the Jewish people.

Hitler's henchmen used the museum as

a central storage facility for artifacts stolen from Jews.

The museum's prewar collection of 1,000 items grew to 40,000 in the war's aftermath, including tapestries, textiles, furniture, ceramics, silverware, photographs, ritual objects, Torahs, documents tracing the progress of the Jewish community and some 100,000 books.

"This was after 118,000 Czechoslovak Jews were killed by the Nazis," Pavlat noted. "The table at which we are sitting at now in my office belonged to someone who was killed."

In 1950 the museum was nationalized, but unlike many other cultural institutions, the Communists viewed it

as a burden rather than a source of pride.

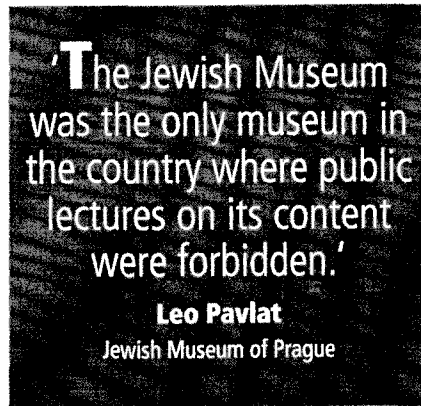
"The Communists revealed as little about the Jewish people as they could," said the museum director, who like the other few hundred observant Jews living in Prague under communism was continuously harassed and interrogated by the state's secret police.

"The Jewish Museum was the only museum in the country where public lectures on its content were forbidden," he said.

The Prague Jewish community fought a tough battle to get the museum back in the early 1990s and then, once it succeeded, found itself in the unique position of administering the country's only non-state cultural institution.

Numerous private foundations and Jewish organizations poured money into the museum, including 16 major sponsors from abroad and 10 in the Czech Republic.

After the fall of communism, each of the synagogues needed to be painstakingly reconstructed and renovated, including the 16th-century Pinkas Synagogue, the 17th century Klausen Synagogue, the 16th-century Maisel Synagogue and what most visitors find most visually impressive, the now-active 19th-century Spanish Synagogue. That synagogue re-opened to the public in 1998 after being closed for nearly two decades and is admired for its breathtaking stained glass, Moorish architecture and the original organ the composer of the Czechoslovak national anthem once played.



NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Prague Jews boot leader

Members of Prague's Jewish community voted out the community's leader. The vote against Tomas Jelinek came Sunday after several controversies that have divided the community, including Jelinek's recent dismissal of the community's head rabbi, Karol Sidon.

Also at issue were a long-running dispute over the administration of the Lauder Jewish school and Jelinek's plans to build a nursing home that some members thought was too costly.

Jelinek told JTA he rejects the vote because he believes it violates the community's constitution.

French Jews boycott anti-Semitism rally

French Jewish organizations boycotted a mass demonstration against racism and anti-Semitism because of the participation of radical Islamist groups.

Thousands attended Sunday's demonstration, which was called by a number of anti-racist organizations and supported by trade unions and left wing groupings.

However, the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews and other major community groups said they would not attend because the demonstration was endorsed by the Union of French Islamic Organizations, a radical Muslim group.

EJC calls on official to quit

The European Jewish Congress is calling on a World Jewish Congress official to resign. The European Jewish Congress demand regarding Isi Leibler came Sunday, six weeks after the WJC's senior vice president was asked to cease all activity on behalf of the organization.

Leibler got into hot water after an internal squabble at the WJC became public and turned ugly.

Jewish books pay

A slew of rare and unusual Hebraica items fetched nearly \$8 million at auction. Sotheby's two-day sale late last month brought in \$7,989,320, a sum the auction house called "the highest total ever for a sale of Hebrew manuscripts."

One 15th-century manuscript — an ornately illustrated collection of poems and prayers on life-cycle events from Italy — went for \$400,000, though initial projections had indicated it would go for half that. The items belonged to Britain's Montefiore Endowment.

The auction's proceeds will go toward Jewish education and scholarships in the United Kingdom.

MIDDLE EAST

Soldier slain by comrades

An Israeli soldier was killed by "friendly fire" during a clash with Palestinian terrorists. An initial probe of Sunday's incident found that Israeli army units accidentally fired on each other while chasing two Palestinian gunmen in the West Bank city of Tulkarm.

A soldier and one of the Palestinians were killed. Two other soldiers were wounded.

Hezbollah aims high

Hezbollah said it was using drones to spy on northern Israel. The Lebanese group made its announcement Sunday after a drone it claimed to have deployed along the border crashed into the Mediterranean Sea.

Israeli security sources rejected Hezbollah's claim that its new drones had penetrated the Jewish state.

According to the militia, the drones were retaliation for regular Israeli flyovers in Lebanon.

Egypt charges five in Sinai attacks

Egypt charged five of its citizens in last month's terrorist bombings of Sinai desert hotels.

The three car bombs on Oct. 7 killed 34 people, including 12 Israelis, in simultaneous attacks. The five, charged with murder and terrorism, are among eight Egyptians and a Palestinian arrested after the attacks.

An Egyptian attacker and a Palestinian attacker — the apparent mastermind — were killed in the bombings.

Two other suspected attackers remain at large.

NORTH AMERICA

Group files complaint against Canadian university

B'nai Brith Canada is filing a complaint against a university in Montreal for disinviting former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

The complaint to be filed against Concordia University with the Quebec Human Rights Commission comes "because we are concerned that an atmosphere of intimidation and hostility against Jewish students still prevails at Concordia."

School officials say they prevented Barak from speaking at the university recently because they could not guarantee his safety.

In 2002, pro-Palestinian students rioted at Concordia, leading to the cancellation of a speech by another former Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Arab Americans preferred Kerry

Arab Americans voted 2-1 for John Kerry in four battleground states. The Arab American Institute's Election Day poll of 500 Arab Americans in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida found that 63 percent had voted for the Massachusetts senator and Democratic nominee for president, and 28.5 percent had voted for President Bush.

In 2000, 45.5 percent voted for Bush and 38 percent for the Democratic candidate, Al Gore.

Picasso painting seized

FBI agents seized a Picasso painting claimed as Nazi-looted art by a descendant of the original German-Jewish owners.

Agents from the Los Angeles bureau confiscated "Femme en Blanc," valued at \$10 million, at the present owner's Chicago home, though they allowed it to remain there for the time being.

The painting shows a contemplative woman in a white gown, and stems from Picasso's "classic" period after World War I. "This represents a strong signal by the government to dealers and collectors that Nazi-looted art must be returned, no matter how many hands it has passed through," Los Angeles attorney E. Randol Schoenberg said.

California courts also are dealing with a demand that actress Elizabeth Taylor return a prized van Gogh painting, "View of the Asylum and Chapel at Saint-Remy," which she bought 41 years ago for \$257,000 at Sotheby's.

Israeli slain in New York

The Israeli manager of a kosher restaurant in New York was stabbed to death. The victim was knifed in the chest, stomach and arm Nov. 4 by a disgruntled employee he had recently fired, according to the New York Sun.

Patrons of Café K in New York City were horrified when the victim emerged from the eatery's basement bleeding profusely.

"His eyes were rolling up in to back of his head and he was shaking a little bit," one anonymous witness told the Sun. "He was covered with blood."

The victim was taken from the restaurant by stretcher and rushed to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead about two hours later.