

MONDAY, JULY 1, 2024 ■ 25 SIVAN, 5784



Bring them home

Oded Lifshitz, 83, abducted by Hamas from Kibbutz Nir Oz

Our heritage

Unlikely guardians of Moroccan-Sephardi Jewry
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Finishing touch

IPO to close season with 10 July concerts
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WE WON'T SERVE

Tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox men demonstrate in Jerusalem yesterday against the cancellation of exemptions for yeshiva students from service in the military. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

Democrats Party formed as Labor, Meretz unite

• Jerusalem Post Staff

The Labor Party, led by chairman and former IDF deputy chief-of-staff Yair Golan, reached a formal agreement on Sunday in which it will unite with Meretz under a single party called "The Democrats."

The statement made by the merged parties said, "Unlike in the past, this is not a 'technical bloc,' but a historic move that finally creates one large and united party, a liberal-democratic Zionist party that will serve as a political home for a large public in Israel."

The parties added, "The union is a necessary step in building a large and strong democratic base that will lead to the replacement of the extreme right-wing government led by [Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu."

"The new party will be home for all the forces fighting for democracy and the image of Israel in recent years: Protest organizations... civil society, youth movements... [and] reserve organizations fighting for equal burden."

In response to the unity agreement, Golan stated, "One of the goals I have set for us is to create connections

that will lead to the fulfillment of the camp's electoral potential. This is a necessary political, public and moral goal."

As per the agreement, the new party's Knesset list will be chosen through democratic primaries by the parties' members and new recruits who join. There will be a representation guarantee mechanism ensuring that at least one representative from Meretz will be included up to the 4th place on the list, at least one more representative up to the 8th place, and

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IDF advances in Shejaia as dozens of terrorists killed

18 soldiers wounded in drone strike in northern Golan

• BY YONAH JEREMY BOB

The IDF's current re-invasion of Shejaia in northern Gaza has killed dozens of additional Hamas terrorists since Friday, but so far it seems to be more about eliminating tunnels there that were missed during the first invasion.

ISRAEL AT WAR



Netanyahu insists on victory over Hamas, Page 2

PM won't attend US Embassy's July 4 party, Page 2

The re-invasion is expected to last for weeks as the military wraps up its operations in Rafah.

By early January, the IDF had already achieved operational control over Shejaia, but over recent months, once the army withdrew from the area, Hamas has been reconstituting itself.

But the IDF did not operate in all parts of Shejaia during the first invasion, it said, adding that it did not penetrate a significant area of Hamas's tunnel network there.

Throughout the invasion

of Gaza, IDF sources have emphasized that they would need years to eliminate all of the tunnels and are not necessarily being given sufficient time to do so.

Rather, in the initial invasions of Gaza, many of the larger and more strategic tunnels with larger communications tools, intelligence centers, and more powerful weapons were destroyed, but significant aspects of smaller tunnels were not always fully accounted for.

Later on Sunday, an explosive drone strike on the northern Golan Heights wounded 18 soldiers, one critically, the IDF said in a statement.

Israeli aircraft responded with air strikes on southern Lebanon.

This is the fourth re-invasion staged by the IDF of northern and central Gaza since mid-March, with prior ones including Shifa Hospital and the camps of Jabalya and Nuseirat.

IDF sources said that Division 98 surprised Hamas on Friday in broad daylight, and took only 40 minutes to penetrate a new makeshift headquarters established inside a school and a pharmacy.

By getting to the new Hamas command center in such a short time, the IDF was able to prevent most of the Hamas terrorists from escaping, which has been a problem in many other operations.

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SMOKE RISES from the southern Lebanese town of Khiam, amid ongoing cross-border hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, as pictured from the town of Qlayaa, southern Lebanon, last week. (Reuters)

Netanyahu holding security assessments on Rafah campaign

• BY TOVAH LAZAROFF

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is holding security assessments on the IDF's military campaign in Rafah, which is expected to wind down this month.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and IDF Chief-of-Staff Lt.-Gen. Herzi Halevi are taking part in the talks, which are also looking at the overall Gaza war and "the continuation of military pressure on the Hamas

terrorist organization."

The IDF heads of the Air Force, Southern Command, Operations, Intelligence, Operations, Government Activities in the Territories, Ground Forces, and additional senior commanders are participating in the discussion.

Gallant also held an operational assessment in Rafah, in which he said that "time is actually working against

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Smotrich says Ben-Gvir 'totally failed' to curb 'internal threat of Arab Israelis'

• BY ELIAV BREUER

The Israel Police and those who are responsible for it "totally failed" in preventing a scenario in which Israeli Arabs take part in the Iranian threat to "conquer" Israel, far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said in a speech at a joint conference of *Makor Rishon* and Machon Lev called "Security and Technology"

on Sunday.

Smotrich described what he viewed as a multi-pronged Iranian effort to counter Israel, and listed as a possible front "the internal front of Israel's Arabs," which "could not be ignored."

"The Iranians are counting on them joining, and we are far from doing what needs to be done in order to neutralize their threat in advance,"

Smotrich said, including "hundreds of thousands of illegal weapons and arms, which at the moment of truth are supposed, according to the Iranian ambition, to take part in the conquering plan."

"On this issue the police and he who is responsible for it are completely failing. This

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BEZALEL SMOTRICH (Gil Cohen-Magen/Pool via Reuters)

Cracking (or not) the Hamas-Egyptian cross-tunnel mystery

ANALYSIS

• BY YONAH JEREMY BOB

Almost seven weeks into the IDF invasion of Rafah, and with major operations there due to be wrapped up any day, the IDF still is far from certain that it has found or will find all of the cross-border tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, *The Jerusalem Post* learned during a visit while embedded with IDF forces at the Philadelphia Corridor at the end of last week.

In fact, the estimated time for finding and completely destroying all of the cross-border tunnels could exceed six months.

So far, multiple IDF sources have estimated that there are at least 25 cross-border tunnels, but these are just initial estimates.

Of all of the tunnel battles the IDF has taken on in Gaza, this is the most important by far because the Philadelphia Corridor is "Hamas's oxygen" for receiving arms from

the outside world, especially from Iran.

October 7 could not have happened without the arms and intelligence training Hamas received through the corridor.

How can it be that the army's progress, while very impressive, falls significantly short of solving the greatest threat Hamas presents?

Doesn't the IDF – after years of expanding the Yahalom tunnel Special Forces unit and investing billions of dollars in robots, specially trained dogs, customized drones, and a variety of other cutting-edge technologies – have the capabilities to close off this mega-threat?

This is without even getting into the complex geopolitical question which involves Egypt, the US, the UN and others, of whether the military can prevent Hamas's return if it withdraws completely from the Philadelphia Corridor.

If the IDF, currently in full

control, cannot root out all of the tunnels, it is hard to see what will stop Hamas from rearming.

Visiting the area up close and discussing the tunnel threat with two senior IDF commanders, Nahal Brigade Commander Col. Yair Zuckerman and Negev Brigade Commander Col. Elbaz Ivri, the *Post* got a better understanding of how much harder this job is than most of the public understands.

First of all, when you get to the Philadelphia Corridor, you actually see nothing.

These tunnels are especially long, and are deep underground. The only way to really find them is to start with a shaft deep into Rafah that might have nothing to do with cross-border issues. Then you excavate and follow every tunnel all the way through to see which ones lead to the border.

IDF sources pointed out

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Clinging to power: Surprising similarities between Biden and Netanyahu

ANALYSIS

• BY HERB KEINON

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman loves US President Joe Biden, as his column Friday following the debate calling on the president to graciously step aside, attests. He also hates Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as

his columns over the last three decades bear plentiful witness.

How painful, therefore, it must be for Friedman and others who share those views to wake up and realize that on one important metric, the two men are very similar: they share a stubborn belief that they must remain in power, that only they can do their jobs at this time, and

that after them comes the flood.

Thursday night's debate between Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump brought into the open what hitherto was primarily on the lips of Republicans, Fox News commentators and right-wing talk-show hosts: that Biden, at 81, is no

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French Jews turn to National Rally, 'the nicest enemy'

• BY MICHAEL STARR

Many French Jews are turning away from their prior political mainstays and are voting for the right-wing

National Rally (RN) in Sunday's parliamentary elections, Jewish Paris resident David told *The Jerusalem Post*, as problems arising from immigration and cultural change have risen to the forefront of political discussion.

David said that everyone in his synagogue was voting for National Rally, as were many other religious Jews he knew.

Many of his leftist Jewish friends were either voting for parties on the Right or not voting at all.

"We're voting for the nicest enemy," said David, referring to RN's founder's controversies with Holocaust denial and antisemitism. "It is very hard to vote for them [National Rally] – who wants to vote for those who have a

history with Nazis?"

David pointed to mass immigration and the consequent changes in French society and Islamist antisemitism as the major concern driving the drastic political shifts he had seen among his friends. He lives in an area heavily populated with immigrants, many from Mali, Senegal, or Afghanistan.

David explained that the area has become riddled with drugs and crime, and was not safe for native French or girls.

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SUPPORTERS REACT at RN candidate Marine Le Pen's headquarters yesterday, in Henin-Beaumont. (Yves Herman/Reuters)



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