

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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LIVNI: RISING STAR OF ISRAEL'S TROUBLED POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT

May 29, 2008 Breitbart.com reported: "Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who on Thursday challenged the Kadima party leadership of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, under investigation for alleged corruption, is seen as a rising political star and a contender to be its second woman leader.

The 49-year-old lawyer, who defied her staunch nationalist background to become the number two in government and in the centrist Kadima, is today the most popular member of government. She is seen as the strongest candidate to succeed Olmert as Kadima's head and enjoys high public approval ratings, though she still trails right-wing Likud party chief Benjamin Netanyahu in polls as a potential premier...



She has met frequently with her US counterpart, Condoleezza Rice, on improving conditions for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, where she is committed to the creation of a Palestinian state but also ensuring Israel's security and fight against terror.

"The creation of a Palestinian state, of a Palestinian economy, is clearly in Israel's interests, and we share the Palestinians' desire, just as cracking down on terror is a Palestinian interest," Livni said, while attending a donors conference for the Palestinians in Paris in December..

In April she took the rarely available opportunity of visiting an Arab country, attending a democracy forum in Qatar, where she lobbied for support against Iran's nuclear drive and urged Arab states to forge ties with Israel.

Ironically, Livni was virtually born to be a luminary in Likud. Her Polish-born father Eitan was director of operations for the Irgun, the hardline nationalist group that fought British rule through World War II and was one of the main factions that later formed the Likud.

Yet she was among the first ministers to join former premier Ariel Sharon in breaking with Likud before the March 2006 elections, becoming one of the new party's founders.

With her mother Sarah also an Irgun militant, Tzipi was brought up steeped in the vision of a Greater Israel that would include what are now the Palestinian territories.

But under Sharon's tutelage she swung round to his conviction that the only way to preserve Israel as a Jewish state was to relinquish at least some of the land occupied in the 1967 Six-Day War."..."

SCIENTISTS WARN OF BIRD FLU EPIDEMIC: DEATH TOLL COULD REACH 100 MILLION

May 27, 2008 The London Daily Telegraph reported: "A strain of bird flu has moved a step closer to developing the traits required to create an epidemic of the disease in humans, scientists warned on Monday. Researchers who analysed samples of recent avian flu viruses found that a strain of the virus called H7N2 had adapted slightly better to living in mammals.

Tests on ferrets proved the strain could be passed between animals but scientists said the evidence suggested that bird flu could be transmitted between humans.

Dr Terrence Tumpey, a microbiologist with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in Atlanta, Georgia, said: "The finding underscores the necessity for continued surveillance and study of these viruses as they continue to resemble viruses with pandemic potential."

The virus tested on the ferrets - a standard animal model of flu in humans - was isolated from a man in New York in 2003, where it thrived on the same sugars found in the human windpipe.

The scientists said the virus could be evolving toward the same strong sugar-binding properties of the three worldwide viral pandemics in 1918, 1957 and 1968. Like H5N1, the H7 family of flu viruses also primarily affects birds.

A deadly version of the H7N7 strain hit poultry in the Netherlands in 2003, and a less severe form, H7N2, broke out in the UK last year. Some have estimated the death toll of an avian flu pandemic could be 100 million, including 500,000 in Britain.

The World Bank estimates that the financial cost of a pandemic could exceed \$2 trillion."..."

REPORT: U.S. URGES UN TO FIND SECRET NUCLEAR FACILITIES IN SYRIA

May 29, 2008 Reuters reported: "The United States is pressing United Nations inspectors to broaden the scope of a search in Syria to include possible secret nuclear facilities, The Washington Post reported in Thursday editions, citing U.S. government officials and Western diplomats.

At least three sites have been identified by U.S. officials and passed along to UN nuclear watchdog the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the newspaper reported. U.S. government officials declined to describe the specific sites that have drawn interest or to discuss how they were identified, it said.

Citing unnamed sources, the Post said U.S. officials want to know if the suspected sites may have been support facilities for the alleged Al Kibar reactor destroyed in an Israel Air Force strike last September.

Syria maintains the facility targeted by the IAF was a disused military building in its eastern desert that had no nuclear link. It has yet to accept a request from the IAEA to visit the site.

Israel is believed to have the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal.

The United States and other Western governments have long been interested in identifying possible locations for a facility in Syria that might have supplied nuclear fuel rods for a Syrian reactor, the Post said.

Although the Al Kibar facility was described as almost completed when it was bombed, it had no clear source of the uranium fuel necessary for operation, the paper said, citing U.S. intelligence officials and diplomats."..."

US MILITARY: AL-QAIDA IN IRAQ 'ON THE RUN' BUT REMAINS 'LETHAL'

May 26, 2008 The Voice of America reported: "The U.S. military says al-Qaida in Iraq has been put on the run by U.S. and Iraqi forces but remains a lethal threat. A U.S. military spokesman, Rear Admiral Patrick Driscoll, said Sunday that recent U.S. and Iraqi security operations have, in his words, "certainly" put al-Qaida off balance. But, he says the group retains the ability to carry out high profile attacks.

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker said Saturday that al-Qaida in Iraq has never been closer to defeat. Iraqi and U.S. forces began an operation this month to drive out the group from its last urban stronghold in the northern city of Mosul.

An Iraqi defense spokesman, Major General Mohammed al-Askari, says some al-Qaida militants who fled Mosul have taken refuge near the central Iraqi towns of Tikrit and Ramadi. But, he says Iraqi troops will not allow them to reorganize. Al-Askari says Iraqi security forces have detained 1,030 suspects in and around Mosul since the start of the security crackdown.

U.S. military spokesman Driscoll says the overall number of attacks in Iraq fell sharply over the past week to a level not seen since March 2004. He did not give specific figures."..."

WORKERS SHIFTING TO 4-DAY WEEK TO SAVE GASOLINE

May 29, 2008 Reuters reported: "When Ohio's Kent State University offered custodial staff the option of working four days a week instead of five to cut commuting costs, most jumped at the chance, part of a U.S. trend aimed at combating soaring gasoline prices...

"In our office, we have people who travel anywhere from five or six miles to a couple who are on the road 45 to 50 minutes," Rainone said. "As the price of gas rises, the level of grumbling rises."

Regular gasoline averages \$3.94 a gallon in the United States, up 33 cents in the past month and 88 cents since the beginning of the year, the Energy Information Administration said this week. The federal government has offered four-day workweeks to eligible employees for years as part of a flexible work program that also includes telecommuting.

But the surge in gasoline prices is pushing more private employers as well as local governments to offer a four-day week as a perk that eliminates two commutes a week."..."

EU LEADERS UNSURE HOW TO HANDLE FUEL CRISIS

May 29, 2008 The EU Observer reported: "Fuel price protests threaten to spread around Europe in the run-up to the weekend following earlier action in the UK, France and Bulgaria, with EU leaders uncertain how to respond to the unfolding crisis.

Dutch and French truckers have promised to cause disruption on roads on Thursday (29 May), while fishermen in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Greece plan to picket ports and government buildings Friday, newswires report.

On Wednesday, French fishermen eased port blockades, but farmers sealed off fuel depots near Frontignan and Toulouse, with riot police using tear gas to break the line. In Bulgaria, lorry and taxi drivers closed parts of Sofia to normal traffic.

The rocketing cost of petrol and diesel - up by 30 percent in France this year - is linked to record global oil prices and exasperated by the high levels of government taxation on fuel. In the UK, 65 percent of the price of petrol consists of tax.

"The global economy is facing the third great oil shock of recent decades," UK prime minister Gordon Brown said in a statement on Wednesday. "There is no easy answer to the global oil problem without a comprehensive international strategy."

Mr Brown called for oil to lead the agenda at G-8 talks in Japan in July and the Slovenian EU presidency has promised to discuss emergency fuel relief measures at the EU summit on 19 June. Concrete ideas on how to respond to the problem have caused division in EU ranks so far, however."..."

