



News from the Nations

Israel's president says Iran's a world threat

Israel's President Shimon Peres warns that it must not be left to Israel alone to solve the Iranian issue. "The Iranian threat is not only towards Israel but the whole world—and we need to enlist the help of the entire world", the president said in an exclusive interview reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* to mark Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year). The president expressed strong views on the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora (the Jews not living in Israel), which has, he says, become too much about money and not enough about culture and intellectual values. He added that "we are a small country, we can't turn into a global market but we can be a laboratory for the world. We can be first in scientific fields such as agriculture, energy, medicine and water. We have to be a contributing nation, finding greatness not in population numbers but in intelligence".

British Petroleum may quit pipeline consortium

BP may sell its stake in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which runs one of the key oil transit lines from Russia to Europe. Partners in the consortium operating the 1,500-kilometre pipe are in dispute over how to fund an expansion. BP has been trying to agree new funding terms with Russia for the CPC, which pumps crude oil from Kazakhstan to the Black Sea. The Gulf state of Oman could also sell its stake in the consortium, which is 24 per cent owned by Transneft, the Russian pipeline monopoly.

Israel warns sanctions on Iran are failing

Iran already has one third of the quantity of enriched uranium it needs to develop a nuclear weapon, a top Israeli intelligence official has claimed. Brigadier-General Yossi Baidatz, head of Military Intelligence's Research Division, told the Israeli cabinet that international efforts to stop Iran's nuclear programme were failing. Brigadier Baidatz said the Iranians had installed and activated 4,000 centrifuges since the beginning of the year at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility, and were succeeding in enriching 60 grams of UF-6 an hour. "Iran is mastering the enrichment technology and is galloping towards a nuclear bomb. Their self-confidence is increasing and they think that the international community is not strong enough to stop them", he said. Former deputy defence minister and Labour member of the Knesset (Israel's parliament), Ephraim Sneh, told the *Jewish Chronicle* that he recently wrote to American presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain informing them that in his opinion, if sanctions were not escalated, Israel would seriously consider a strike against the nuclear installations. Mr Sneh also recently visited Switzerland and Austria to urge government officials to pull out of billion-dollar investments in Iranian infrastructure.

ANGRY PROTESTS GREET AHMADINEJAD AT THE UN

According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, a storm of condemnation greeted Iranian President Ahmadinejad's address at the United Nations General Assembly, in which he argued that 'Zionists' control money and political power in the Western world. The article says, "The Iranian president told world leaders gathered in New York that, while Zionists were 'minuscule' in number, they had control over the United States and many countries in Europe. Mr Ahmadinejad's vitriolic speech drew harsh responses from Israelis and Americans alike. Israeli president Shimon Peres, who represented his country at the UN gathering, accused the Iranian leader of using anti-Semitic language in his speech, saying, 'This is the first time in the history of the United Nations that the head of a state is appearing openly and publicly with the ugly and dark accusations of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion'. Other condemnations came from the US officials and presidential candidates".

Teheran blocks deal over us troops in Iraq

Iran is successfully blocking US efforts to secure a long-term troop presence in Iraq, the American ambassador to Baghdad has conceded. Iraqi and American negotiators missed a July deadline to seal a legal framework for US bases and troop operations in the country. Previously, Iranian interference had been officially unacknowledged.

Ukrainian unity shattered by Russia

The Daily Telegraph reports: "The Ukrainian president threatened to quit under the weight of Russian pressure designed to weaken Western allies in the former Soviet Union. President Yushchenko denounced Yulia Tymoshenko, the prime minister and his former ally, for siding with the pro-Russian opposition in a series of parliamentary votes. Ukraine, like Georgia, has risked the Kremlin's wrath by applying to join NATO. But while Mr Yushchenko flew to Tbilisi to show his support for Georgia, Mrs Tymoshenko refused to criticise Russia's action. Instead, she formed an alliance with the man he replaced as president in 2004, Victor Yanukovich, and his former Communist allies. With a large Russian-speaking minority and a pro-Western political élite, Ukrainians are deeply divided over their relations with their powerful neighbour. Ukraine's leaders fear that Moscow's aggressive protection of its passport holders in the Georgian enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia could be replicated in its own province of Crimea. Mr Yushchenko has threatened to evict Russia's Black Sea fleet from Sevastopol, the Crimean port with an ethnic Russian majority. Mrs Tymoshenko is growing in influence and she has been careful to send Moscow a more calibrated message, condemning her rival's decision on Sevastopol and agreeing to meeting Vladimir Putin in the near future".

Moscow courts OPEC

Russia is seeking to work with OPEC (the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) in a move that will unnerve European countries who fear Moscow wants to raise the oil price and control energy supplies. Russia will send a high-level delegation, headed by the deputy prime minister, to the October meeting of OPEC. "The prospects of cooperation in a new format between OPEC and the Russian Federation are very interesting", said Sergei Shmatko, the energy minister. Moscow's overtures to OPEC, which is dominated by Saudi Arabia, Iran and Venezuela, follow a period of tension with the West. During the August war in the Caucasus, Western countries feared that Russia could cut off a pipeline carrying Central Asian gas to Europe.

Falashmura families from Ethiopia

A group of 65 Falashmura families from Ethiopia arrived at Ben Gurion Airport recently in what is expected to be one of the final groups making aliyah to Israel from the African country. In 2005 the government decided that the immigration would be stopped after a quota of 17,000 Falashmura had been filled.

Croatia sells military hardware to Iran

Croatia has recently sold advanced S-300 air-defence missile systems to Iran, a newspaper recently reported amid conflicting opinions in Israel over whether Teheran has obtained the advanced anti-aircraft system. According to the report, the Libyan naval ships were docking in the Croatian port city of Kraljevica to transfer the system to Iran.

Czechs sign radar defence deal

Robert Gates, the US defence secretary, and his Czech counterpart signed an agreement recently which will allow US forces to operate a missile defence radar in the Czech Republic. The radar will be paired with 10 interceptor missiles stationed in Poland and forms part of a US missile defence system that has aroused intense Russian opposition.

RUSSIAN AID TO IRAN

Russia is considering increasing its assistance to Iran's nuclear programme in response to the United States' call for NATO expansion eastwards, the Sunday Times reported in September. Moscow has been greatly annoyed by Washington's support for attempts by Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO and by the presence of US Navy vessels in the Black Sea delivering aid to Georgia following the war in the Caucasus. Russia has sold advanced weapons to the régimes in Syria and Iran—some of the Russian weapons sold to Damascus have been channelled to terrorist fighters in Lebanon and Iraq—according to a quote in the Jerusalem Report that US Vice President Dick Cheney challenged Moscow's policies at a global conference in Italy in September.

US plans to deter anti-Israel agenda at UN

The United States Congress has passed a resolution calling on the government to ensure that next year's United Nations human rights conference will not have an anti-Israel agenda, calling on the Administration to lead efforts to prevent any UN member states and NGOs turning it into a venue for anti-Israel feeling or anti-Semitism, as in the previous conference in Durban in 2001. Next year's summit is meant to be a review conference of resolutions passed at the previous meeting.