

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 5, 2020 ***(9th Adar, 5780)***



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For March 2020

Dem. Candidate Sanders Voices Contempt for Netanyahu; Israel's FM Israel Katz last week condemned what he called a "horrifying comment," by the Jewish Vermont presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. During a Democratic debate, Sanders called Netanyahu a 'reactionary racist'. The presidential hopeful also said that if he is elected he would potentially return the USA Embassy from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. According to Katz, those who support Israel would not back Sanders' presidential candidacy after such remarks. Katz said there was a not a Jew in the world who "hasn't dreamed of Jerusalem" and Sanders' words were so severe that he had no choice but to retort. "We don't intervene in the internal American electoral process, which is splendid," Katz told Army Radio, before saying that Sanders has a long history of attacking Israel and the things most sacred to its identity and national security. "Naturally, people who support Israel will not support someone who goes against these things." Sanders' comments at the debate came after he recently announced he would skip an appearance before the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC, which he called a "platform for bigotry." The Vermont senator has also called for cutting back American foreign aid to Israel and redirecting it to the Palestinians instead. Sanders is noted for his harsh criticism of modern-day Israeli policies. His embrace of supporters who have called to boycott Israel and been accused of anti-Semitism has raised great concerns in the Jewish state about his surging candidacy. Sanders have firmly established himself in the lead after scoring primary and caucus victories in the first three nominating states: Iowa, New Hampshire, and Nevada. Blue & White co-leader Yair Lapid, who aims to replace Katz as foreign minister after next week's elections, said in a recent interview that he was "very worried" about Sanders' rise because of his "lack of understanding of our unique situation in the Middle East."

Hundreds of Rabbis Condemn Bernie Sanders' AIPAC Comment; Nearly 350 rabbis signed a letter last week condemning Independent Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders' decision to skip the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's (AIPAC) annual conference. Sanders said days ago that he would not attend the conference, accusing the organization of bigotry. The rabbis condemned Sanders for his attacks on the organization, which has traditionally enjoyed bipartisan support among elected officials. "As strong supporters of the USA-Israel relationship and AIPAC's role in advancing it, we reject Senator Bernie Sanders'

outrageous comment accusing AIPAC of fostering bigotry,” the rabbis wrote. “AIPAC is one of the last remaining vehicles in American politics that proactively seeks to bring Americans from across the political spectrum together to achieve a common goal,” they continued. “The AIPAC Policy conference may be the largest political gathering of Democrats and Republicans in the entire country.” Sanders is widely considered the front-runner for the Democratic nomination and would become the first Jewish president in USA history if he wins. However, Sanders has come under fire from Jewish organizations over anti-Israel sentiments expressed by his campaign, according to media sources Sanders has repeatedly trotted out campaign surrogates who support a boycott of the Jewish state, including Palestinian activist Linda Sarsour, and Democratic Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar.

Israel Says Coronavirus Vaccine on the Horizon; As concerns mount across the globe with the fast-spreading outbreak of the coronavirus, Israeli researchers claim they have developed a vaccine against the sickness for poultry and are only three months away from testing a vaccine on humans. The research team from the Galilee Research Institute, Migal which specializes in the fields of biotechnology, environmental and agricultural science, have been developing the vaccine for the past four years and claims it could be modified for use in humans within three months because of a similar DNA structure in the virus that had spread from China. "There is an urgency around the world to develop a vaccine for the coronavirus in humans, so we are working around the clock to expedite the development process and achieve an effective vaccine for the COVID-19 virus over the next 8-10 weeks and move to safety trials in humans within 90 days," said Migal CEO David Zigdon. The vaccine developed for poultry is administered orally and the human vaccine offered by us is also expected to be administered orally." Zigdon said Migal is working night and day with potential partners to help accelerate the research process in humans needed to complete the final product development and regulatory process. So far, 82,000 people (78,500 in China) have been infected worldwide. Some 2,800 have died, 2,744 of which were in China.

Israel Urges Residents to Avoid Travel; In additional stringent measures to avoid the spread of the new coronavirus Israel's Health Ministry has tightened its current guidelines, saying all non-essential travel should be avoided. It has also advised anyone returning from Italy to remain in self-quarantine for 14 days. Italian authorities earlier said a 12th person had died in northern Italy from the virus, while the number of confirmed cases in the country rose to 374, the biggest in Europe. The United States also earlier issued a travel-advisory to Italy, urging the Americans to "exercise increased caution" over the spread of the disease. The Israeli Health Ministry said that according to their assessment "there is a high probability the disease has already spread to other regions of Europe and many other places in the world. In addition, traveling to conferences and other international congregations should be avoided, including trips to religious events where people from many countries gather together. Among the current destinations with a travel advisory are China, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Macau, South Korea, Taiwan, and Italy.

Saudi Arabia Halts Pilgrimages to Mecca Due to Coronavirus; The city of Mecca, which able-bodied Muslims are called to visit at least once in their lives, and the Prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina, were cut off to millions of pilgrims, with Saudi Arabia making the extraordinary decision to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Tourism visa-holders from countries with reported coronavirus infections will also be denied entry, the Saudi embassy in Washington said in a statement, without naming any country. The steps are reportedly subject to continuous evaluation. With the monarchy offering no firm date for the lifting of the restrictions, it posed the possibility of affecting those planning to make their hajj, a ritual beginning at the end of July this year. The government is acting to block the deadly virus as neighboring countries including Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates have flagged dozens of cases. No infections had been reported by Saudi Arabian authorities as of late last week.

40,000 Tel Aviv Marathon Runners Ignore Coronavirus Fears; Foreign athletes already in Israel were allowed to compete after Israel's Health Ministry said it was barring non-resident participants as Israeli

officials work to keep out coronavirus. The city said last week that Health Ministry Director-General Moshe Bar Siman-Tov had authorized the participation of any runners already in the country - but did not permit the inclusion of participants who had not yet arrived in Israel. The race was kicked off by Mayor Ron Huldai at 7 a.m. Friday 28 Feb. 2020 and many streets around the city are expected to remain closed until 1 p.m. The city said its decisions were in keeping with Health Ministry directives as officials sought to stem the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak. Israel has taken far-reaching steps to prevent an outbreak, including banning entry into the country to foreigners who recently visited Italy, China and a handful of East Asian countries.

Israel Eighth Most Expensive Country in the World; According to CEO World Magazine, the Jewish state is the eighth-most expensive place in the world to live. High rents, high prices, and high transport costs placed Israel close to the top of the countries with the highest cost of living. CEO World magazine based its assessment on a range of living costs, such as accommodation, clothing, taxi fares, utility, and internet, the price of groceries, transport, and eating out. The list compared dozens of locations around the world, using “notoriously expensive” New York City as a benchmark. Based on that, Israel’s cost of living was about 80% of New York’s. Topping the list in almost every category was Switzerland, where life, in general, is about 20% more expensive than in New York. The United States overall ranked 20th on the list. Those looking for an inexpensive lifestyle should check out Pakistan or Afghanistan, which ranked as the two least expensive countries for almost every metric.

Killer Whale Skirts Israel's Northern Coast; Divers spotted on Friday morning 28 Feb. 2020 a killer whale off Israel's northern coast, and immediately reported the rare sight to the Nature and Parks Authority. According to the authority, this is the first time a killer whale has been seen off Israel's shores, while other whale species have been spotted along Israel's coasts from time to time. Members of the authority's maritime unit later spotted the mammal some 1.4 miles off the coast of the ancient port city of Acre, where the water is 15 meters deep.

Abundant Rains Cause Israel's Deserts to Bloom; A four-mile stretch between Kibbutz Kalya and Ovnat in Israel's southern region is the perfect location for viewing beautiful new wildflowers. The desert seeds, dormant for years, have germinated due to this winter’s rains and visitors are flocking to see the budding desert landscape. Israel’s abundant rainfall this year has also replenished the Sea of Galilee. For nearly two decades water levels in the Dead Sea, which is the lowest place on earth, were depleted, as was the Sea of Galilee. The Dead Sea receives the overflow from the Sea of Galilee, Israel’s only fresh-water source. However, due to continual years of drought, the dam that feeds the Dead Sea remained closed. Presently, it is hoped that the dam will be opened, and the Dead Sea will receive much-needed replenishing. The Water Authority reported that the water level of Lake Kinneret/the Sea of Galilee was measured on Tues. 25 Feb. 2020 and is 96 centimeters shy of being full. The Dead Sea has nearly 10 times more salt than oceans. Visitors who enter the water can simply lift their feet and float naturally, due to the high salinity. Considered the eighth wonder of the world, the Dead Sea has high levels of oxygen and special minerals, known for their healing properties.

Israel Bombarded With 90 Rockets in Two Days; Gaza Strip terrorists fired 90 rockets at Israel on Sunday 23 Feb. and Monday 24 Feb. 2020. 90% of those heading toward populated areas were intercepted by the IDF's Iron Dome system. In response, Israel launched multiple retaliatory air raids against Islamic Jihad bases in Gaza, as well as an airstrike on a squad as it was preparing to launch rockets. There was some damage to homes and infrastructure in Israel, and a few Israelis sustained minor injuries while running to bomb shelters. With the latest round of rocket fire, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) is seeking to prevent any long-term agreement between Hamas and Israel. In addition to seeking to conduct a holy war to destroy Israel, PIJ is also motivated by its need for financial assistance from its Iranian sponsors. Tehran has instructed the PIJ and other Iranian proxies to increase their terror activity in the wake of the killing of Revolutionary Guards Gen. Qasem Soleimani by the USA in January 2020.

The EU and Germany on Mon. 24 Feb. 2020 condemned Palestinian Islamic Jihad for firing rockets at Israel. "Indiscriminate firing of rockets on the civilian population is totally unacceptable and must stop," said Emanuele Giaufret, the EU's ambassador to Israel. German Ambassador to Israel Susanne Wasum-Rainer said, "We condemn the rocket attacks by PIJ in the strongest possible terms." Netanyahu said he'd conveyed a message to Hamas that if it did not stop Gaza terrorists behind the attacks, Israel would target Hamas directly. "If you don't shoot them, we will shoot you. I'm talking about a war," he said. "I'm not looking for a war. But we have prepared something you can't even imagine." Meanwhile, men, women and young children are living in terror and fear. A children's playground in Sderot suffered a direct hit in the rocket attacks. Air-raid sirens sounded throughout southern Israel. Tentative calm was restored overnight between Monday and Tuesday of this week along the Gaza Strip border, following a two-day clash between the IDF and the Iranian-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). A spokesman for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad vowed to continue fighting against Israel, shortly after a ceasefire went into effect on Tues. 25 Feb. 2020 ending two days of clashes between Israel and the Gaza-based terror group.

Egypt's Former President Hosni Mubarak Dies; Egypt's ousted former President Hosni Mubarak died on Tues. 25 Feb. 2020 at the age of 91, weeks after undergoing surgery. Mubarak ruled Egypt for 30 years until he was expelled following mass protests against his rule in 2011. He was jailed for years after the uprising but was freed in 2017 after being acquitted of most charges. Egypt has declared eleven days of mourning for the deceased president. Mubarak was the longest-running president in Egypt's history, having led the government for thirty years from 1981, following the assassination of Anwar Sadat, until the violent riots of the Arab Spring in 2011.

Nikki Haley Slams Sanders for Boycotting AIPAC; Ex-US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley slammed 2020 Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders on Monday 24 Feb. 2020 over his announced boycott of next week's American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) conference in Washington, DC. Haley pointed out, that Sanders "has never attended and has no clue what the organization is about or what it stands for. Go back to defending Fidel Castro and socialist dictators," the former South Carolina governor and potential future Republican presidential candidate added. "We will go back to defending peace, democracy, and our ally Israel." Last weekend Sanders, who has emerged as the front-runner in the ongoing contest for the Democratic nomination, said, "The Israeli people have the right to live in peace and security. So do the Palestinian people. I remain concerned about the platform AIPAC provides for leaders who express bigotry and oppose basic Palestinian rights. For that reason, I will not attend the conference. Responding to the Vermont senator, AIPAC said, "Senator Sanders has never attended our conference and that is evident from his outrageous comment. In fact, many of his own Senate and House Democratic colleagues and leaders speak from our platform to the over 18,000 Americans from widely diverse backgrounds, who participate in the conference to proclaim their support for the USA-Israel relationship. By engaging in such an odious attack on this mainstream, bipartisan American political event, Senator Sanders is insulting his very own colleagues and the millions of Americans who stand with Israel," AIPAC continued. "Truly shameful."

Iran Reports at Least 16 Dead From Coronavirus; Iran's latest report on the coronavirus is that 16 people have died from the epidemic as of Tues. 25 Feb. 2020. Meanwhile, Iranians worry that authorities could be underestimating the scale of the outbreak. Iran has the highest number of deaths from coronavirus outside China, where the virus emerged in late 2019. Among the infected was the deputy health minister, who tested positive for coronavirus, state media said. "Among those who had been suspected of the virus, 35 (new cases) have been confirmed. He said 95 people had been infected across Iran. Some unconfirmed reports gave a higher death toll. Worried that official numbers could underestimate the scale of Iran's outbreak, many Iranians took to social media to accuse authorities of concealing facts. Popular anger has been high for months over the handling of a Ukrainian passenger plane crash in January, which the military took three days to admit was caused by an Iranian missile fired in error. The incident revived anti-government protests that rocked the

country in November against a hike in fuel prices, which swiftly turned political with calls for Iran's rulers to step down before authorities cracked down. The head of Qom's Medical Science University, Mohammad Reza Ghadir, expressed concern over "the spread of those people infected by the virus across the city," adding the Health Ministry had banned releasing figures linked to the coronavirus. Authorities ordered the nationwide cancellation of concerts and soccer matches and the closure of schools and universities in many provinces and have urged Iranians to stay home. Iran said on Monday 900 cases were suspected, dismissing claims by a lawmaker from the holy Shi'ite city of Qom who said 50 people had died in the city, the epicenter of the new coronavirus outbreak. Six Arab countries reported their first cases, with those infected all having links to Iran. Kuwait said this week the number of infected people there had risen to eight. Bahrain said it had eight cases; four were Saudi nationals and two Bahrainis.



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