

World and Nation

Shamir to form new Israeli coalition

From Associated Press reports

JERUSALEM — President Chaim Herzog on Monday chose Yitzhak Shamir, leader of the rightist Likud bloc, to form a new government that likely will include religious parties and factions that want to annex the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In accepting the nod from Herzog, Shamir sought to defuse international concern over the far right's hard-line stance on peace talks, pledging to make a "tremendous effort" to achieve dialogue with the Arabs.

In parliamentary elections Nov. 1, neither Likud nor its rival, the center-left Labor Party, won enough parliamentary seats to gain a majority in the 120-member body. According to

Israeli law, the president calls on the party with the most support to try to form a governing coalition.

Shamir has six weeks to form a coalition, and he was expected to get the needed 61-seat majority with the help of six small religious and right-wing parties. Two of those parties endorsed him Sunday.

Herzog, however, urged Shamir to include the Labor Party in a broad coalition similar to the National Unity government that has been in power since inconclusive elections in 1984.

The president said his office had been flooded with thousands of calls urging a unity government. Many

Israelis, most of whom are secular, fear the religious parties will force the passage of laws that will restrict their daily lives.

"The public is worried," Herzog said. "There is a wish for unity to confront the dangers from outside and the separation threatening us from within."

Later Monday, Shamir invited Labor leader Shimon Peres for coalition talks Tuesday, said Shamir aide Avi Pazner. Peres accepted the invitation, Pazner said. He refused to elaborate.

A unity government would not only blunt the power of the Orthodox parties but would relieve Shamir of pressure from the extreme right,

which demands annexation of the West Bank and Gaza and the expulsion of 1.5 million Palestinians who live there.

Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt in the 1967 Middle East war.

Shamir agreed Monday to try to form a coalition with Labor. But he made clear he could not share power equally with Peres as he has for the past four years, during which each was prime minister for two years and Cabinet posts were divided.

"The government that exists today cannot continue. There can not be a government that speaks with two voices," Shamir said on Israel radio.

Bush promises to tackle federal deficit

From Associated Press reports

GULF STREAM, Fla. — President-elect George Bush, seeking to calm skittish financial markets, said Monday that he considered the federal budget deficit a matter of "great urgency" that he intends to

tackle quickly in the new administration.

Bush also said he was fully committed to the Reagan administration's policy of coordinated actions with other major countries to stabilize the value of the dollar on foreign cur-

rency markets.

The vacationing president-elect, talking to reporters on a sunbaked Florida beach, added his voice to a chorus of Reagan administration and Bush aides trying to reassure financial markets after a huge sell-off last week.

The big drop was blamed on investor concerns over Bush's ability to handle the economic challenges facing the nation.

The words of assurance apparently had some effect. The Dow Jones industrial average of 30 stocks, which had lost almost 80 points since Bush's election, including a 47-point drop Friday, steadied and ended the day down only 1.95 points.

The dollar, which had been battered last week, recovered some of its losses as traders reflected on the U.S. statements pledging further cooperation to stabilize the greenback.

Bush noted the dollar's rally when he spoke to reporters.

"The dollar apparently is stronger this morning and apparently the Tokyo market is up, so these gyrations happen," he said.

Economic analysts have said the shaky markets are reflecting worries about Bush's ability to bring down the U.S. budget deficit, especially in light of his tough "read my lips" stance against tax increases and his repeated insistence during the campaign that a "flexible freeze" on spending was all that was needed to balance the budget.

"I will address myself to that early on in my presidency," he said. "It is a matter of great urgency."

Bush said he would discuss the matter with congressional and other leaders, but was careful to note that President Reagan is still in charge until Inauguration Day on Jan. 20.

Department orders drug testing for U.S. transportation workers

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — The Transportation Department on Monday ordered a wide range of drug testing, including random checks, for more than 4 million transportation workers, from airline pilots and flight attendants to truckers and railroaders.

Transportation Secretary Jim Burnley said the transportation industries are no more immune to drug abuse than other parts of society, listing a series of accidents and other indicators he said show narcotics to be a problem among truck and bus drivers, commercial pilots and railroad workers.

"The American people demand and expect a drug-free transportation system. These new rules will take us as far as practically possible toward that goal," Burnley said at a news conference.

He acknowledged the tests, which take effect in a year, likely will be challenged in the courts.

The Supreme Court has before it two separate drug-testing cases, including one involving post-accident testing of railroad workers, that are expected to be decided next year.

After Burnley's announcement, the head of the 40,000-member Air Line Pilots Association vowed to go to Congress and to the federal courts to overturn the requirement for random testing.

"Random testing is a counter-productive, shotgun strategy that is at the same time an unwarranted invasion of privacy and of no significant value in the battle against drug abuse," said ALPA President Henry Duffy.

The series of federal regulations announced by Burnley calls for

transportation companies to have a comprehensive testing program in place by December 1989. Companies with 50 or fewer employees — including tens of thousands of over-the-road independent truckers — have a second year to comply.

The Transportation Department estimated the testing will cost businesses more than \$2.1 billion during the first 10 years, but Burnley said the testing will save the same companies about \$8.7 billion in increased productivity, accident reductions and medical cost savings.

Besides requiring random checks, the regulations call for drug testing before employment, periodically during annual physicals if there is reasonable cause to suspect drug use and after an accident. The drugs covered by the tests are marijuana, cocaine, opiates, amphetamines and PCP.

Reagan, Sakharov discuss Soviet political prisoners

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — Andrei Sakharov, the Nobel laureate and nuclear physicist, met with President Reagan on Monday to discuss the plight of political prisoners in the Soviet Union.

Reagan said until the problem was "completely eliminated" human rights would remain an irritant in U.S.-Soviet relations.

Stooped and aging at 67, Sakharov met with Reagan for about 20 minutes in the Oval Office. They shared a cautious approach to the measures taken by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Sakharov, mindful of reporters at a picture-taking session, drew Reagan's attention to two dissidents, Vazif Meylanov and Mikhail Kukobaka, that Sakharov said still were being held.

He called the detention of Meylanov "ironic" because he was sent to prison for protesting the removal of Sakharov from Moscow to Gorky in 1980. "I'm free to travel and he is in prison," the human rights activist and "father" of the hydrogen bomb told Reagan.

Sakharov, speaking through an interpreter, said Kukobaka was in prison for refusing to bear false witness against a foreign diplomat.

Shuttle countdown simulated

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The launch team and astronaut crew Monday completed a successful countdown test for a secret military mission to be flown by space shuttle Atlantis in late November or early December.

The five crew members boarded the shuttle for the final two hours of the two-day simulation and ran through launch-day procedures.

Conrad Nagel, Atlantis' processing director, termed the exercise "very successful" and said the only significant problem involved communications with the Mission Control Center in Houston, which he said would take a day or two to correct.

He also reported some trouble getting accustomed to a new secure communications system that will be used because the shuttle will be carrying a classified

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military payload.

Nagle said that had Monday been the actual launch day, the liftoff would have been postponed because winds at the shuttle runway here were too high for a safe emergency landing.

He said that while Nov. 30 is the target launch date, "I think we're looking real hard now at Dec. 1" because of a few outstanding technical problems that cropped up before the countdown test.

Offers made for PTL property

COLUMBIA, S.C. — U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Rufus Reynolds is expected Wednesday to consider at least four offers for the PTL property near Fort Mill, and he may make a decision soon.

PTL Trustee M.C. "Red" Benton predicts the hearing will last until at least Thursday. But he expects a buyer will be chosen within a matter of days.

Two bids for the property are considered serious — from Canadians Stephen Mernick and Peter Thomas. The two other bids came from groups known as "Lexalt University" and "Holy Celebration."

Palestinians revise strategy

ALGIERS, Algeria — Members of the Palestine National Council worked out final details Monday of a new political strategy that would renounce terrorism and implicitly recognize Israel.

The council also is expected to declare Palestinian independence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which Israel captured from Jordan and Egypt in the 1967 Middle East war and has occupied since.

With the new approach, the 450-member council hopes to meet at least some conditions the United States has set for dealing with the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Arab League formed the council in 1964, but it has assumed the role of PLO legislature.

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For further information and inquiries, please feel free to contact:

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