



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Netanyahu Forms Fourth Term Government

Nepal: “Deep Gratitude” to Israel for Earthquake Relief

The Israel Defense Forces supplied a field hospital and medical personnel as part of its humanitarian mission to Nepal. In addition, the IDF Home Front Command scanned 332 public buildings to check whether they were still stable, and held 605 safely courses for the Nepalese general public.

The 60-bed field hospital was based in the Nepali capital, Kathmandu, in its army’s compound following the earthquake that killed over 7,900 people and injured more than 16,000. During the period, it became the preferred hospital for some of the injured to come for treatment. It carried out 85 operations on injured Nepalese civilians and eight babies were born in the hospital, including two births requiring cesarean section operations.

The hospital offered operating rooms, imaging facilities, advanced labs, and an intensive care section with 150 Israelis taking care of its patients. It also had a synagogue and a kosher kitchen.

To recognize the care provided at the facility, Nepal’s Urban Development Minister Narayan Khadka expressed his government’s gratitude to Israel for its help. “Let me express our sincere gratitude to the government of Israel and to the people of Israel for helping us in times of very critical hours for Nepal,” Khadka said.

According to the United Nations, Israel, with 260 people, sent the second largest delegation (after India) to assist Nepal following the massive earthquake. [JPost]



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cemented a conservative and religious coalition that will let him remain Israel’s leader for a fourth term, but afford little room to safeguard his government’s survival. In an unexpected epilogue to his Likud Party’s election landslide in March, the Israeli leader became embroiled in prolonged negotia-

tions with coalition partners that were further complicated by a former ally’s desertion.

The talks succeeded shortly before the legal expiration of his mandate to form the government, but left Mr. Netanyahu with a badly truncated majority and an empowered Jewish Home party, a religious nationalist group which held out to gain concessions. “No one was surprised that the negotiations were drawn out with all the parties, but no one was surprised that it ended on time,” Mr. Netanyahu said at a news conference alongside Jewish Home leader Naftali Bennett [photo].

The new government members’ conservative positions are likely to complicate Mr. Netanyahu’s relations with the U.S. and Europe at a time when Israel faces increasing isolation over stalled negotiations with the Palestinians and its opposition to nuclear diplomacy with Iran. The result came after the prime minister called early elections in December with the hope of forming a more cohesive and stable government. Instead, he has a razor-thin majority with the potential for even more instability.

The new 61-member coalition is Israel’s smallest post-election government in 34 years and leaves Mr. Netanyahu with little margin for error in the 120-seat Knesset. The parliamentary opposition will have a hard time toppling the government—it is entirely right-wing—but it could implode if just two Knesset members decide to part ways with the coalition. Passing laws will require unanimous consent. “The present government is going to be even more dysfunctional than the last government given how narrow it is,” said Sam Lehman Wilzig, a political-science professor at Bar Ilan University. “Something has got to give.”

Mr. Netanyahu’s new government consists of his 30-seat Likud Party, the center-right Kulanu party with 10 seats; Mr. Bennett’s eight-seat Jewish Home Party, and two ultra-Orthodox parties, which together control 13

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seats. Political commentators and opposition politicians criticized Mr. Netanyahu for allowing political partners to win too many concessions in the negotiations.

“Netanyahu didn’t establish the government he wanted,” said Israel Radio political commentator Yoav Krakovsky. “He settled for a government that was forced on him by the coalition partners.”

Isaac Herzog, the leader of the opposition Zionist Union Party, said Mr. Netanyahu had given into “extortion” during the talks. “A weak and narrow government that won’t advance anything,” Mr. Herzog called it. Mr. Netanyahu’s struggle to form a coalition, even after requesting an extension, presages the kind of disputes that may lie ahead.

Mr. Netanyahu’s combative foreign minister and long-time ally, Avigdor Lieberman, resigned his post, saying Mr. Netanyahu had done little to advance settlement expansion and wouldn’t fight against the Islamist group Hamas in Gaza. Mr. Netanyahu faced a last-minute demand for the post of Justice Minister from Mr. Bennett’s Jewish Home, the remaining holdout among Mr. Netanyahu’s partners, a move likely to create strain among other coalition partners.

“Netanyahu’s victory celebrations were premature,” said Mitchell Barak, a public-opinion analyst. No coalition in Israel has leaned so far to the right since Mr. Netanyahu’s first government in 1996, which rose to power with promises to slow down the Palestinian peace process.

The new government will likely face pressure from the international community to halt new settlements in contested territories and accelerate peace negotiations with Palestinians. Mr. Netanyahu’s coalition members favor the opposite. That tight bargaining space within his government signals continued testy ties with President Barack Obama and European allies. They have clashed with Mr. Netanyahu over peace negotiations with the Palestinians and sparring has stretched on through talks with Iran over a potential deal to Israel’s archival to maintain its nuclear industry. Few predict relations will improve much with the current White House.

Palestinian statehood with Israel could suffer diplomatically this year. The Jewish Home calls U.S. opposition to settlement expansion discriminatory and seeks to annex much of the West Bank into Israel. Jewish Home is against establishing a Palestinian state.

Mr. Netanyahu’s thin majority could also impede the government’s domestic agenda. Economic inequality and rising house prices have often eclipsed security as Israel’s main political issue and resulted in large-scale protests in 2011. [WSJ]

Israel to Purchase Four Navy Patrol Boats from Germany

The Israeli Defense Ministry has announced the signing of a contract with German ship makers ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems to purchase four patrol corvette type vessels. The corvettes are expected to arrive in Israel in the coming five years, and they are to be equipped with Israeli combat systems, enabling Israeli defense companies to receive plentiful orders as a result of the deal. Their mission is to defend the gas drilling rigs and search efforts off the Israeli coastline.

The corvettes are to be joined by other vessels, including naval unmanned surface vehicles, intelligence drones and other components to defend the energy assets at sea. Maj.-Gen. (Res.) Dan Harel, managing-director of the Defense Ministry, described the signing of the contract as a “most significant event, representing a dramatic improvement in the navy’s ability to protect strategic sites for the State of Israel.” He added that energy sites located dozens and hundreds of kilometers off the coast at sea will enjoy protection as a result of the deal.

The deal was announced during a visit by German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, who arrived in Israel on an official state visit. While there, she met with her counterpart, Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon.

Deep security cooperation is in place between Israel and Germany, Ya’alon said, based on a common view of threats facing the countries and threats facing the Western world, an exchange of information and intimate relations between the two militaries and intelligence branches. “We are proud to share with you from our military and intelligence experience,” he said. He added, “We highly appreciate Germany’s contribution to the security of the State of Israel and to the security of its citizens.

Ya’alon referred to Israel’s acquisitions of four navy ships from Germany, saying it would significantly increase the navy’s quality and ability to defend strategic assets. The ships are “the most advanced, and their acquisition will enable the Israel Navy to continue to stand in one line with the leading navies of the world.”

Separately, Chancellor Angela Merkel defended Germany’s sale of weapons to Israel. “We sell weapons to Israel because we believe that Israel must defend itself and is often attacked,” Merkel said. “We also believe that Germany has a special obligation to support Israel.”

Israel ordered three new-generation air-independent propulsion Dolphin class submarines from Germany, in addition to the three older German-made submarines in the navy’s possession. The INS Tanin, arrived in Haifa navy base in September, and received weapons and communications systems from domestic defense companies. The fifth, the INS Rahav is expected to arrive in the coming months. [JPost]