

Rivlin: Democracy is not to be taken for granted

Political parties earn 12% of Arab, 14% of Jewish trust

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN

A democratic administration is something that cannot be taken for granted even when there is a deep seated tradition of democracy, President Reuven Rivlin told members of the Israel Democracy Institute on Monday after receiving the annual democracy index from the group's president, Yohanan Plesner.

Rivlin noted that there are daily reports in the international media in which there are attempts to define and analyze 21st century democracy and where it's heading. In some respects, he continued, Israel's democracy resembles that of other nations of the world, but with specific differences. Israel's demographic composition and its political challenges are different to those of other countries.

In presenting the index to Rivlin, Plesner, a former MK, said he was not only presenting the democracy index to the president, but also to an individual who is closely tied to the same principles as the IDI. Plesner voiced regret that many people in Israel's political system are not democratic.

"Israel is changing before our eyes," he said. "There is no clear majority and there is no clear minority," indicating that this was reflected in the index. He was pleased to report that for the first time,



PRESIDENT REUVEN RIVLIN receives the 2016 democracy index from Yohanan Plesner yesterday in Jerusalem. (Mark Neyman/GPO)

there were signs of democratic values in the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) community.

Prof. Tamar Herman, the academic director of the IDI's Guttman Center for Public Opinion, who traditionally reviews the index for the president said that it contained "points of light and points of darkness." The recent period she said, could not be described as a golden one.

The 306-page index covers a broad range of subjects, including the trust or lack of confidence Israelis have in their state institutions.

The highest level of trust by Jews is in the IDF, with 90% of Jews and 32% of Arabs

are political parties, in which only 12% of Arabs have faith compared to 14% of Jews.

Racism, whether overt or covert, surfaces in the index. For instance, 58% of haredim believe that Israel's Jewish citizens should have more rights than non-Jewish citizens. Fifty-nine percent of Jews are opposed to having Arab parties in the coalition or as ministers; 52.5% of Jews say that anyone unwilling to declare that Israel is the national state of the Jewish people should be stripped of their right to vote. On the other hand, 53% of Jews agree that Arab citizens are discriminated against compared to Jewish citizens.

As far as corruption goes, the situation has improved by one point since last year, and stands at 61 on an indicator that goes from 0 to 100, with the lowest numbers signifying the most corruption. It may be comforting to know that Russia ranks 29.

One of the questions put to respondents was whether they thought that human and civil rights organizations caused damage to the state. 80% of Jews on the right answered in the affirmative, a jump of 9.5 percentage points from last year. In addition, 76% of those in the Center said yes, compared to 55% last year and 28% of the Left compared to 26% last year.

Haredim feel part of state, are proud to be Israeli

• By JEREMY SHARON

The large majority of the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) public in Israel feels proud to be Israeli and consider themselves to be part of the state.

They are also right-wing by a similarly large majority, believe Jewish law should take precedence in a conflict with civil law and have barely any trust in the High Court of Justice or the media.

These findings were presented by the Israel Democracy Institute in its 2016 democracy index which was presented to the president on Monday.

Despite public perceptions, 69.5% of haredim in Israel are proud to be Israeli, compared to 87% of the rest of the Jewish population according to the annual index.

Of those, Sephardi haredim are the most proud at 79.5%, followed by hassidic Ashkenazim at 68% and non-hassidic "Lithuanian" haredim at 59%.

Additionally, 64% of haredim feel part of the State of Israel and its problems, compared to 86% of the non-haredi Jewish population.

However, 55.5% of haredim say their strongest identity is their Jewish identity, while 41.5% said their religious identity was most important and just 1% said their Israeli identity was most important, while 56% of the non-haredi Jewish population said their Israeli identity was their primary identity and 33% sees themselves as primarily Jewish.

Among non-haredi Jews,

42% of the population thinks that the Jewish component of the State of Israel is too strong, and only 21% think that the democratic component is too strong.

For the ultra-Orthodox, things are the other way around; 69% think that the democratic component is too strong and only 17% think there is the right balance between the Jewish and democratic components of the state.

And an overwhelming 96% of haredim say that if there is a contradiction between Jewish law and a court ruling, Jewish law should take precedence.

In terms of political inclination, 75% of haredim describe themselves as right-wing, compared to 51% of the non-haredi Jewish population. 83% of haredim think that human rights organizations cause damage to the state, compared to 70% of non-haredi Jews.

Fifty-six percent of haredim disagree with the statement that freedom of expression for those speak out against the state should be guaranteed, compared to 40% of the non-haredi Jewish population.

Haredim are also more averse to Arab citizens taking part in decision-making affecting Israel's security than the general Jewish population. Some 94% of haredim think that such decisions should be taken by a Jewish majority, compared to 54% of the non-haredi Jewish population.

Fifty-eight percent of haredim believe that Jewish citizens should have more rights than

non-Jewish citizens, compared to 26% of the non-haredi Jewish public.

Eighty-one percent of haredim oppose bringing in the Arab parties to the governing coalition, compared to 57% of the general public, and only 14% of haredim would accept an Arab as a neighbor, compared to 72% of the non-Jewish population, 16% as a personal friend, compared to 72% of non-haredi Jews, and 37% as a work friend, compared to 86% of non-haredi Jews.

Haredim are also more skeptical about the institutions of democracy and law and order in the country than the non-haredi Jewish population.

Only 4% of haredim trust the media, 6% trust the High Court of Justice, 25% trust the Knesset, 28% trust the government and 34% trust the police, whereas 29% of the non-haredi Jewish public trust the media, 62.5% trust the High Court, 28% trust the Knesset, 29% trust the government and 43% trust the police.

But 71% of haredim said they have a party that represents them, compared to just 52% of the non-haredi Jewish public.

The most trusted state institution for both the haredi and non-haredi Jewish populations was the army, with 66% and 93% respectively.

The poll was conducted in May 2016 on a total of 1,531 interviewees of the Jewish and Arab public, with a margin of error of 5.3% for the haredi sample.

Akunis: Satellite program needs investment of millions

• By JUDY SIEGEL

Science, Technology and Space Minister Ofir Akunis said Monday that millions of shekels are needed immediately to rehabilitate Israel's space program and build a new satellite to replace the Amos 6 satellite destroyed in a September explosion.

A report released Monday by the committee Akunis established to examine the fallout from the loss of the satellite recommended an immediate annual grant of NIS 20 million to the Space Communications Company to lease a replacement for Amos 6 until a new satellite is constructed. An additional NIS 70m. is needed to launch a national, multi-year project to develop four more so the country is not dependent on foreign satellites, it said.

In addition, the committee said the Israel Space Agency needs an annual budget of NIS 110m. (NIS 30m. more than this year), and recommended building, every four years, a satellite to carry out engineering and scientific tasks.

"The space industry is in a severe crisis that threatens the national space program," and replacing Amos 6 "is vital to ensuring Israel's existence and maintaining our position in the small club of countries that operate in space," the report stated.

It went on to say that, eventually, four telecommunications satellites should operate simultaneously, and the state must support the development of products in the aerospace industry that will compete in the world market.

The committee indicated that an array of communications satellites is needed to strengthen the security of the communications industry during emergencies, noting that the state needs to be able to obtain information independently and transfer it through communications satellites.

The committee, led by the ministry's director-general, Peretz Vazan, portrayed a worrisome picture of the crisis in the Israeli telecommunications satellite field as threatening the space program as a whole.



SMOKE RISES from the September launch-pad explosion of the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket that was carrying the Amos 6 satellite in Cape Canaveral, Florida. (Reuters)

Amos 6 was meant to replace the Amos 2 satellite, which serves many Israeli consumers and is expected to stop functioning in early 2017, leaving only Amos 3 and Amos 4 in operation.

The remaining satellites will not be able to meet all the country's needs, including those that do not involve civilian communications, Vazan said. Without working on new satellites, he said Israel will

lose know-how and manpower.

Because Israeli-made communications satellites are more expensive than those in the global market, the committee said a plan must be formulated to bridge the cost gap.

The committee noted that the life of a satellite is about 15 years, so a new one must be built every four years so four can function simultaneously.

Rehovot is city with highest household income

• By LIDAR GRAVE-LAZI

Rehovot has surpassed Tel Aviv as the city with the highest average monthly household income, according to a survey released Monday by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

The report outlined findings from the 2015 household expenditure survey of the 14 largest cities in Israel and provided a comparative picture of the average household socioeconomic situation in each city.

According to the findings, the average monthly income before taxes for households in Israel stands at NIS 18,671, while the average monthly household expenditure stands at NIS 12,323.

In Rehovot, the average household earns NIS 19,099 per month; while in contrast, Bat Yam is the municipality with the lowest monthly income, standing at NIS 11,005.

Still, the report found that the average income per person was highest in Tel Aviv, standing at NIS 8,053, as was the average expenditure per person at 6,419. In contrast, Bnei Brak, a predominantly ultra-Orthodox neighborhood had the lowest monthly income and expenditure per person standing at NIS 2,639 and NIS 2,585, respectively.

Tel Aviv also has the highest monthly household expenditures standing at NIS 14,284, compared to Bat Yam, which has the lowest at NIS 9,632.

The report also found that in Rehovot, Ashdod, Petah Tikva and Rishon LeZion 80% of income came from employment, while in Bnei Brak a fourth of income came from government allotments.

The findings also indicated that the average Israeli household has 3.3 people and 1.5 earners while Bnei Brak averaged 4.8 people per household, the highest. Tel Aviv had the lowest, averaging 2.2 people per household.

With regards to expenditures, the report found that 24.7% of household expenditures in the 14 largest cities are spent on housing.

On average, 67.6% of Israeli own houses, while 26.7% rent housing. Of those who own a house, some 40% pay mortgages which average NIS 3,260 per month.

With regards to rental housing, the findings indicated that Tel Aviv had the highest monthly rent fees at NIS 4,563 and the lowest number of rooms per apartment at 2.7 rooms. In contrast, Beersheba had the lowest rental fees at NIS 1,712 and the largest average number of rooms per apartment at 3.1 rooms.

Largest-ever number of emigrant scientists, researchers to return

• By JUDY SIEGEL

A record number of 3,240 Israeli researchers and scientists who live abroad have registered with the Israel Academy of Sciences' center for help in returning home, the academy said on Monday.

The Jerusalem-based academy is holding a job fair on Thursday where those who left and are now visiting can explore possibilities for jobs upon their return. Hundreds of them are expected to meet representatives of the universities, colleges and private companies, said Prof. Nili Cohen, the president of the academy, who will host the guests.

The center was founded in 2007 to fight the "brain drain" of scientists and other academics abroad. Since then, over 700 returnees – most from the US, Canada and Europe – have been hired by Israeli universities and colleges. A total of 505 have become tenured faculty members, 76 of them in the last year. Others returned as post-doctoral students and lab managers.

Of the 3,240 who are currently regis-

tered, 2,380 have doctors and the rest are PhD candidates.

According to surveys conducted by the academy's center, most of the emigrant scientists and researchers are held back from returning by the red tape and "lack of transparency" in employment terms and the worry that they will not find permanent jobs. The longer they live abroad, the more concerned they are, thus the center's professionals say that being in touch with them raises their confidence about returning.

A third of those registered are in the life sciences and medicine field, a third in the exact sciences and engineering and the rest in the humanities and social sciences.

The fair will open at noon in the academy building, 43 Jabotinsky Street and the adjacent Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. It is expected to be the academy's largest-ever employment fair so far, with 33 stands of academic institutions and 20 companies including IBM, Motorola, Teva, Oracle, Intel and the Israel Aircraft Industries.

Lectures by company leaders and academics will begin at 4 p.m.

Russia claims it is being targeted for cyber strikes by foreign services, following US election

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

A special commission of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) has concluded that foreign intelligence services are preparing large-scale cyber attacks "in order to destabilize the Russian financial system," according to a report issued by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS).

"Cyber attacks were planned to accompany the mass sending of provocative SMS-messages and publications on social networks (blogs) in relation to the crisis of credit and the financial system in Russia, businesses' failure, and revocation of licenses of a number of leading banks at the federal and regional level. The campaign was aimed at several dozen Russian cities," the report said, attributing the statement to *MIA Russia Today*.

The report comes on the heels of the US election campaign, from which allegations have emerged of Russian hacking against the US. INSS cyber director and report editor Gabi Siboni said Monday that there is no way to confirm



COULD THE Russian S-300 air defense system be the target of a cyber attack? (Maxim Shemetov/Reuters)

the Russian claim. While the FSB mentioned foreign intelligence services, it did not name the US or make a specific connection to US promises of a counterattack for what US intelligence has said was Russia's cyber interference in the election.

However, Siboni did say that the report and several other recent reports in Russia media, referring to possible US attempts to use

cyber hacking to "turn off" Russia's S-300 and S-400 anti-aircraft systems, should be seen in the greater context of Russia's cyber interference in the US election.

MIA Russia Today also reported that five Russian banks had been hit in November by distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks when their systems were flooded with superfluous data to overload the system.

In October, US Vice President Joseph Biden said the US would counterattack Russia with its offensive cyber capabilities, and US President Barack Obama echoed the threat, vowing on Saturday to send Russia "a clear message."

It is unclear whether the latest reports emerging from Russia signal that US cyber efforts regarding Russia are already afoot.

Meanwhile on Sunday, Donald Trump's White House chief-of-staff-in-waiting, Reince Priebus, told Fox News that his boss would accept the idea that the election interference came from Russia if the entire intelligence community, including the FBI, put out a report that was unanimous on that issue.

Until Sunday, Trump had numerous times voiced skepticism as to whether hacking of the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton campaign officials was carried out by Russia. Part of the controversy has surrounded an additional conclusion by the CIA and Obama that Russia was specifically trying to help Trump's chances in the election.