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Haaretz Staff |
May 05, 2009 1:48 AM

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Religious Jews will join the

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spread of swine flu by holding a special fast on Thursday, Sephardi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar said yesterday. In an open letter to Jewish communities in Israel and worldwide, the rabbi said that while "all are standing in great readiness for any trouble, may it

never come,
through medical
methods and
excellent care,
we, in the name
of our God ... will
'cry out to the
Lord in our
trouble.'" Rabbi
Amar called on
the public to fast
for the entire
day, or at least
half of it, and to
multiply their
prayers and
increase their
study of Torah.
(Yair Ettinger)

Israel prohibits
Israelis from
visiting
Jerusalem's
northern areas,
outside the
separation fence,
unless they
coordinate the
visit with the
defense
authorities,
which will give
them military or
police
protection.
Although these
areas are under
Israeli rule,
Jerusalem Police
legal adviser
Ronen Leibovitz
has said it is
dangerous to
enter them.
Regulations to
this effect have
been sent to far-
right activist
Aryeh King, who
claims he has a
right to settle in

the area of Ras Hamis and Qalandiyah, in the midst of some 55,000 East Jerusalem Arabs. This is the first official confirmation of restrictions on Jews in these areas. (Nadav Shragai)

An ultra-Orthodox man was yesterday sentenced to two years in prison and six months' suspended sentence for sexually molesting three boys to whom he taught Torah studies. Dan Gavriel Hajaj, 36, was found guilty of luring the children to hidden places, giving them alcoholic drinks and then molesting them. Tel Aviv Magistrate Hanan Efrati also ordered Hajaj to pay each boy NIS 8,000 in compensation. The magistrate said Hajaj's acts were "disgusting and severe, as they were perpetrated against religious minors who trusted him as

an adult, a teacher and a religious man." (Ofra Edelman)

Environmental Protection Minister Gilad Erdan yesterday appointed Alona Shefer-Karo his chief of staff. Shefer-Karo has served for the past five years as director of Life and Environment, the umbrella group for the country's non-governmental environmental organizations, and was formerly an attorney in the Israel Union for Environmental Defense. Shefer-Karo is expected to formulate Erdan's agenda and increase the ministry's involvement in environmental projects around the world. (Zafir Rinat)

The Ministry for Pensioners Affairs will transfer NIS 500,000 to mental health clinics in Sderot and communities along the Gaza Strip border to ensure their

continued operation. The region's five treatment clinics, opened in December 2007 to treat people suffering from stress, were financed jointly by the state and the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Now the centers are in danger of closing for lack of funding. Pensioners Ministry's director-general Avi Bitzur said the ministry and Health Ministry decided to come up with the money to keep the clinics open "so that our old people will be able to get appropriate treatment in times of emergency." (Dana Weiler-Polak)



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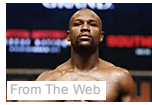
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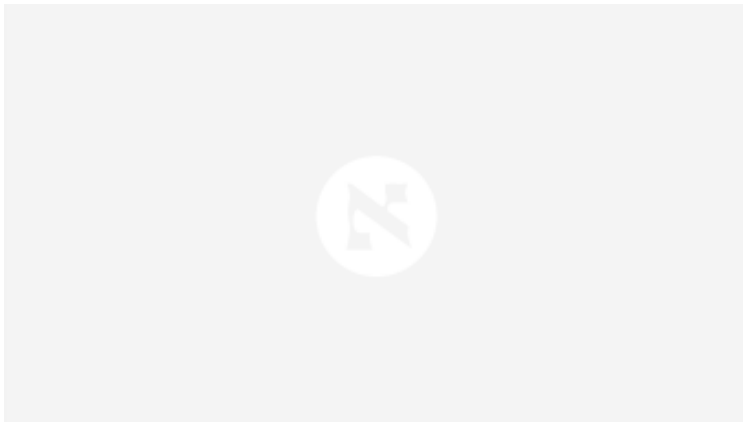
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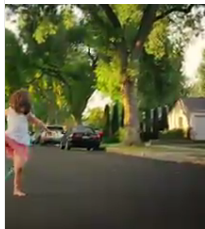


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