

UJIA helps teachers' links with Israeli counterparts

BY SANDY RASHTY

SCHOOLTEACHERS WHO have just returned from a UJIA-organised tour to Israel have described the current situation as "surreal".

The 22-strong group of Jewish and non-Jewish teachers from seven Jewish schools in the UK, participated in the programme's six-day seminar, which included tours around Jerusalem and teaching lessons at partner schools.

Matthew Near, assistant headteacher at Clore Tikva Primary School in Redbridge, said: "This was my first time visiting Israel. The first thing that struck me was how different it was [from what we see] in the news. We did a multicultural tour of Jerusalem, and to see the Arab and Jews together was something that I really didn't expect."

However, the situation has changed since the group's return.

"Two weeks was a long time ago," Mr Near added. "It's sad and very surreal to think that two weeks ago it was a happy, peaceful and beautiful place to be in."

The highlight for me was visiting our partner school [Kerner primary school in Meona]. When we were there, the school had turned the shelter into a play area with dressing-up clothes. [Watching the news] my first thought was that the children were sitting and dressing up — in the shelter."

Jaskin Singh, a reception teacher at Clore Tikva, who also visited Israel for

Teachers work out their timetable



"I watched the children playing in the air raid shelter"

Dr Helena Miller, director of research and evaluation and Living Bridge programmes at UJIA, said: "This project makes real people-to-people links. Strong professional relationships are formed and this programme has real added value for the schools in both countries."

Multifaceted seminars, education and coexistence lessons were a focal part of this UJIA senior educators' mission, which took place from October 28 - November 2.

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"The student-teacher relationships are much closer than here, but the teenagers have a lot in common".

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Shalit receives a hero's welcome from the UK

BY MARCUS DYSCH

GILAD SHALIT has made his first visit to Britain since spending five years as a prisoner at the hands of Hamas.

The former Israeli soldier thanked British Jews for their efforts to campaign for his release; took part in a football match during his four-night trip which ended earlier this week.

The visit came just days after the Israeli strike which killed Hamas military leader Ahmed Jabari, who mas-terminated Mr Shalit's capture in June 2006.

Mr Shalit, 26, travelled to London to take part in a conference organised by B'nai B'rith UK. On Friday, Mr Shalit met members of the community, including London cabbies who had publicised his plight by putting his image on their taxis.

Lord Sacks said: "Every week for five and-a-half years we prayed every Shabbat for Gilad, and we have been blessed to see you again."

Mr Taub presented Mr Shalit with Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks and Gila Shalit

On Friday evening Mr Shalit took part in a service at South Hampstead Synagogue and socialised with other conference participants. The following night Mr Shalit joined revelers at a gala evening at which he was presented with honorary membership of B'nai B'rith.

He also went to the Foreign Office to meet Middle East Ministers Alistair Burt, who told him of the efforts made in Parliament to secure his release.

Mr Shalit also attended last week-end's north London derby between Arsenal and Tottenham.



PHOTO: YAKIR ZUR

Israeli start-ups meet London techies

BY SANDY RASHTY

BRITISH INVESTMENT interest in Israeli companies will be tested next week, when representatives of 15 Israeli start-ups companies are due to fly to the UK to meet their opposite numbers in the technology hub of London.

The Israeli business group, whose companies include a universal social contact book and one which specialises in text-to-video technology, will have the opportunity to meet British leaders in the gaming, mobile, social media and video markets.

The opportunity arose after an eight-strong panel at the British Embassy's Tech Hub in Tel Aviv selected 15 companies — out of 128 applicants — to take part in an exchange programme.

Lucy Blechner, digital manager of the UK Israel Tech Hub, will lead the first four-day Tech Exchange trip on November 25, which will focus on internet companies with solutions.

"Israeli companies tend to go global from an early stage because there's a smaller market in Israel," she said.

"These companies are ambitious and usually want to open up in Silicon Valley [the USA's leading technology hub], but we want to divert some of that flow into the UK. There are lots of benefits to bringing a business to Britain — even the time difference and travel distance makes it easier.

"The retail, media and advertising industries in Britain are very strong — and the London technology scene is strong — so there's real value in business relationships for Britain and Israel."

Founded name-dropping service Call My Name last year and is one of the entrepreneurs coming to London.

He expressed a particular interest in the media and advertising strength of the UK market, and said: "For me, this wasn't about qualifying, it's about what I can get from the trip and meet-up with the company in the UK."

Mayer Reich, chief executive of Inteligen software start-up, RankAbove, said: "Opportunities to forge partnerships like these are vital in the effort to expand the Israeli tech-footprint in Europe."

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