

CENTRE DAILY TIMES

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LIFE INSPIRATION

Celebrities reunite with teachers who changed their lives, **Inside**

BRIGHTER FUTURE

Scott ready to rise to his potential, **C1**



Israel clears out Gaza

By Nathaniel Hoffman, Dion Nissenbaum and Michael Matza
Knight Ridder Newspapers

KFAR DAROM, Gaza Strip — Israel's plan to shut down all its Gaza Strip settlements appeared headed for a swift conclusion after military forces cleared out the most violent strongholds of resistance Thursday and began preparing for the next phase of the complex operation: demolishing now-abandoned homes.

Two days into the forced removal of thousands of settlers and their supporters, Israel announced that most of the 8,500 settlers were gone and voiced optimism that the massive military operation — once expected

Military prepares to demolish abandoned homes

to last weeks — might wrap up this week-end.

After putting his legacy on the line in pushing the plan, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon appears to have won a political boost from the swift and relatively smooth evacuation. A new poll published today in Yedioth Ahronoth, Israel's largest newspaper, showed 59 percent of Israelis still supporting the pullout and 61 percent voicing support for Sharon's handling of the situation.

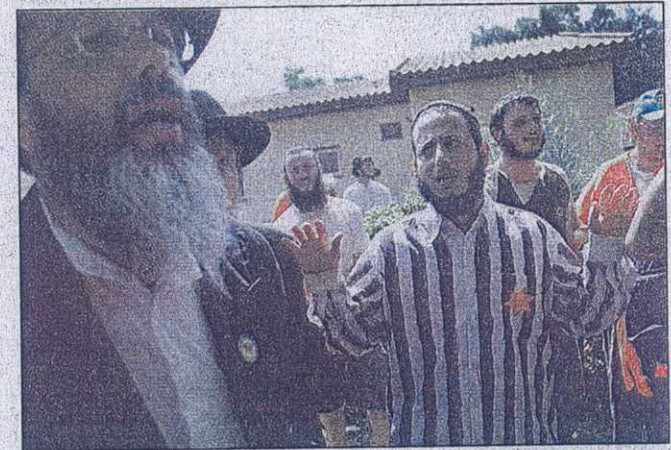
The survey also found that more Israelis felt some empathy for the settlers than the

ardent, young outsiders who proved to be the most confrontational, suggesting that the more radical stance of the activists had limited resonance among Israelis.

There's no sign, though, that Israel will be ready for further concessions to the Palestinians in the wake of the painful evacuation.

Israeli forces have all but cleared 15 of the 21 Gaza settlements, including the de facto capital of Neve Dekalim and Kfar Darom, where they faced fierce clashes with hun-

See Gaza, Page A3



AP photo/David Guttenfelder

A Jewish settler dressed in Nazi-era clothing walks out of his house with his hands up as he is evacuated by Israeli police Thursday in the Jewish settlement of Neve Dekalim.

Sowing the seeds of change

Ag Progress Days puts the latest innovations at



Ferguson fighting for control of property

innovations at farmers' fingertips

By Anne Danahy
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ROCK SPRINGS — Ed Hostetter had his hand in the dirt Thursday.

"I'm comparing the seed depth from the no-till to the conventional," he said after inspecting a tilled plot of land.

Hostetter, who has a dairy and crop farm in Annville, joined other farmers who turned out for the drills and seeders demonstration at Penn State's Ag Progress Days. Ron Hoover, coordinator of on-farm research in the department of crop and soil sciences at Penn State, said the goal was to give farmers an opportunity to see the drills and a seeder — two methods for putting seeds in the soil — run in the field and compare the results of how they do in tilled soil and nontilled soil.

Joel Hunter, extension educator from northwestern Pennsylvania, said the demonstrations give farmers a chance to see different brands of equipment working in the same field. He also led a hay-mowing demonstration that featured four mowers.

"The exhibitors, of course, like to highlight and show off their latest and greatest equipment," Hunter said. The equipment is on display, but the demonstrations let the potential customers see it in action.

The mowers demonstrated Thursday had rotating discs as opposed to sickle mowers. John Wanner, who works at New Holland Machine Company in Denver, Pa., said the disc mowers are more expensive but are getting more popular because they're fast and can cut earlier in the morning when it's still a little wet outside.

"This is what the farmers are looking for," he said. "They want

See Progress, Page A3

ON THE WEB

For more photos, full coverage of Ag Progress Days, go to www.centredaily.com.



CDT photo/Nabil K. Mark

Chris Steiner, of Philipsburg, looks at the seed spacing after a drill and seeders demonstration Thursday at Ag Progress Days in Rock Springs.

Plastic waste a burning problem

By Anne Danahy
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ROCK SPRINGS — Plastics. That was the word uttered to the Dustin Hoffman character in the 1967 film "The Graduate" by a party guest who promised there was "a great future in plastics."

Farmers have found plastics, too — for plant pots, greenhouses and mulches. But "plasticulture" has produced a problem of its own: what to do with, all the plastic once farmers are finished with it.

James Garthe, an agricultural engineer in Penn State's department of agricultural and biological engineering, said the answer has been to throw the nonrecyclable items in the garbage.

So he and a team at Penn

State are working with a South Korean company, GR Technologies, on the development of a plastic burner they hope will provide a better answer.

"We are taking plastics that cannot be recycled, and we are converting them to fuel," Garthe said before dumping another bucket of plastic pellets into the prototype burner Thursday.

The burner, on display at Penn State's Ag Progress Days, drew attention from passers-by who stopped to watch the flame that shoots out one side.

Plastic waste is converted into pellets and fed like coal into the burner, which reaches 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The burner could heat water, which in turn could heat a greenhouse.

See Plastic, Page A3



For the CDT / Jason Malmont

Matt Lawrence, a Penn State agricultural and biological engineering graduate student, talks Wednesday to Mike Todd, of Montgomery, about a heater that runs on used plastic and burns cleaner than natural gas.

of property

State grant on the line as township goes against COG

By Mike Joseph
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Ferguson Township officials said Thursday that they would prefer to risk losing substantial state funding to acquire land for sports fields rather than give up controlling ownership of the land to the Centre Region Council of Governments.

Township Board of Supervisors Chairman Dick Mascolo cast the lone dissenting vote on a five-municipality COG committee formulating a regional strategy to obtain an almost \$160,000 grant from the state Department of Community and Natural Resources.

The money would be used to buy 75 acres of Penn State-owned farmland south of Whitehall Road and Blue Course Drive in Ferguson Township. The land would be turned into playing fields for the region's space-starved youth soccer leagues and other sports.

Township Manager Mark Kunkle said that if the full COG General Forum approves a motion Monday that would give ownership of the land to COG, as the committee proposes, "We won't go through COG — we'll file the application ourselves" for the DCNR grant.

But that would put the approval of the application in Harrisburg at risk, according to a July 7 e-mail to Kunkle from DCNR recreation and parks supervisor Lori Kieffer Yeich.

"Please keep in mind that we are looking to reward those communities that partner with their neighbors and who have formed multi-municipal alliances such as the Centre

See COG, Page A3

and to the Palestinians. The process could take a month or more. But after that, Gaza Strip land that Israel occupied since the 1967 Day War will be officially transferred to the Palestinian authority, which is still deciding what to do with it.

The massive military operation is the culmination of a divi-18-month initiative aimed generally and figuratively reversing the Israeli-Palestinian "escape." Sharon unilaterally decided to pull all Israelis out of Gaza Strip, along with four other West Bank settlements, to better secure the nation's borders and protect hundreds of thousands of other people in other settlements in the occupied West Bank.

On the second day of what was planned as a three-week operation, Israel faced its fiercest stance from the outsiders. Demonstrators at Shirat Hayam, a frontier outpost right on the Mediterranean beach, doused a facade at the entrance in a line and set it ablaze to part oncoming soldiers. Others sat atop houses with guitars, singing patriotic songs and singing unsuccessfully with the intent not to move in. After days of skirmishes in the Dekalim, most of the

tried to set an Israeli flag on fire and then tore it to shreds and spat on the pieces before tossing them at soldiers in disgust.

Eventually, forces rushed the synagogue and began pulling out the holdouts one by one.

But the strongest resistance came in Kfar Darom, where hundreds of outside activists who've been living in the settlement's shantytowns fought off soldiers for hours.

Using the synagogue rooftop like a bunker, activists tossed buckets of paint, rocks, oil and sand on Israeli forces who climbed ladders and cut through razor wire to reach the holdouts. The military fought back by spraying demonstrators with water cannons and using cranes to lift shipping containers filled with troops onto the rooftops.

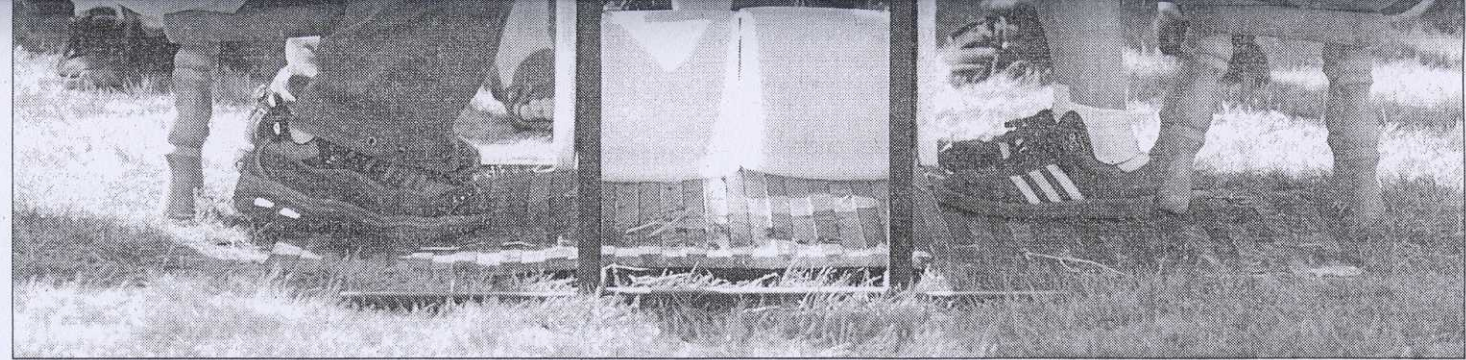
Eventually, the soldiers overwhelmed the demonstrators and won control of the synagogue, but not before dozens of soldiers and demonstrators were injured.

On Thursday, Palestinians who'd lived side-by-side with the Kfar Darom settlement for decades looked on in amazement as Israeli forces turned their water cannons on the holdouts.



AP photo/David Guttenfelder

g settlers cry as they sit on the roof of their house trying to repel the Israeli soldiers who came to evict them Thursday in Dekalim.



CDT photo/Nabil K. Mark

Austin Fiedler, 10, left, and Codey Bomberger, 12, compete in a milking race Thursday at Ag Progress Days.

Farmers get chance to compare the newest agricultural products

Progress, continued from A1

to be able to cut faster. They want to be able to start earlier."

But Wanner wasn't demonstrating his company's mower. Instead, he said, he was there "to see what the competition has."

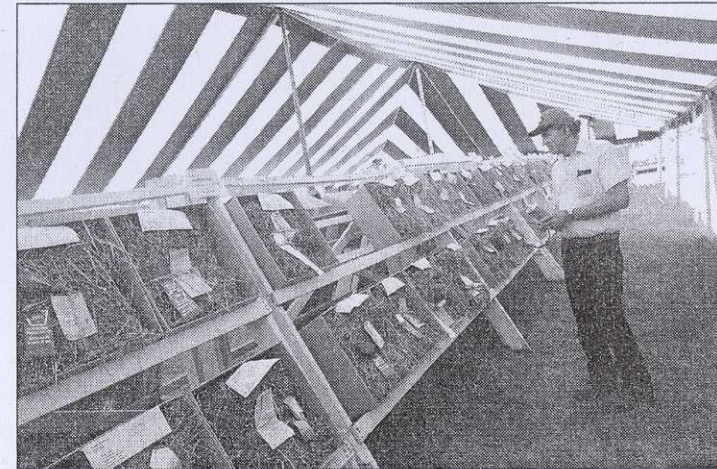
After the mowing, farmers got to go out in the field and pick up the alfalfa to see what it looked like and compare the different brands' work.

"I thought it was pretty impressive," said Ron McMahon, a dairy farmer from Huntingdon County. "You get a lot more speed than with the older type of mowers like I have."

McMahon said he also looks at the seed and feed that's on display at Ag Progress Days and tries to get new ideas for seeds, such as those that are coated and can be planted in March.

The drills and seeders demonstration gave farmers a chance to compare the difference between planting in tilled soil and nontilled soil. Like the name sounds, the no-till approach means the farmer plants without tilling the ground first.

"It saves a lot of soil moisture,



Richard Molitoris, of Sugarloaf, looks at Alfalfa award winners Thursday at Ag Progress Days.

a lot of time and, right now, fuel," Hostetter said.

He said it takes a little bit more management for weed control and other factors, but the net results are good.

Hoover and others in the field are hoping more farmers see it that way. Tilling loosens the soil, he said, which means it can erode more easily. That means the nutrients in the soil are lost, too, and instead end up in rivers and streams.

After a heavy rain, he said, the Juniata River can look like "chocolate milk."

Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences puts on Ag Progress Days every year to showcase the latest in agricultural research and practices. As many as 50,000 people turn out for three-day event, which also features children's activities, horse demonstrations, gardening workshops and food.

Plastic waste a burning problem

Plastic, continued from A1

Garthe said a team at Penn State had developed Plastofuel — plastic nuggets — to burn with coal in a coal-fired burner. A study on the project was released and not long after, in late 2002, Garthe heard from William Bang, CEO of GR Technologies.

That company has developed a burner, which Bang hopes to manufacture in Pennsylvania and find a market for in the United States, which uses 67 million tons of plastics a year in agriculture alone. The plan is to modify the burner so it can burn Plastofuel.

Before the project can be sold, it will need to get governmental approval. A \$32,000 test completed by an independent company in May and paid for by the American Plastics Council found good results for air emissions.