

STYLE LEADERS: NO. 24

Dress for success

Israel [TZIPI LIVNI]

Even if nothing else seems to be changing for the best in the Middle East, at least Tzipi Livni's makeover in the last two years has brought a breath of fresh air to the region.

The 51-year-old former Israeli foreign minister and Mossad agent and now head of opposition to Benjamin Netanyahu's government, has managed, at a very critical time in her political career, to abandon a slightly laddish look in favour of a more slinky style.

After losing some weight, she shortened and straightened her hair. Then she got rid of her bulky jackets and trouser-suits and put on skirts, elegant dress-suits and classic knee-length dresses. Instead of plain blacks, whites and blues, she started wearing more daring purples and greens.

Livni's transformation has occurred in parallel to her ascending career from a junior minister in Ariel Sharon's government, to Ehud Olmert's foreign minister and to the Kadima party leader and its nominee for prime minister in the 2009 elections.

Gadi Elimelech, a leading Israeli stylist, says that Livni's image previously was "icy and distant". "She is using her femininity to send out a message warmth," he says.

In spite of the fact that the head of Judiciary is a woman, and that Livni is just one of 21 female members of the Knesset (Israeli parliament), she still has no real role model to look to. Israel's only female prime minister was Golda Meir, and she was nicknamed "the only man in the government" back in the Seventies. The Israeli ethos moreover, still relying on a remote socialist vision, is always a bit uncomfortable with fashion matters. Leaders are supposed to do good, not necessarily look good.

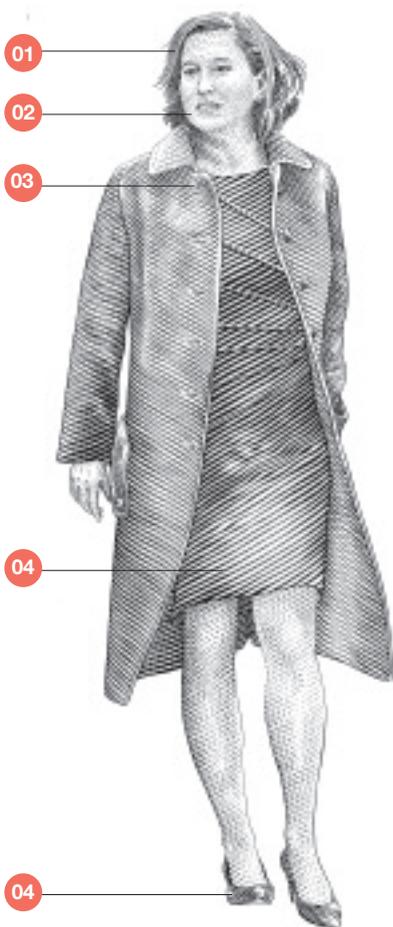
In the Knesset there is a general tendency towards informal dress, even when the decisions being made often have major implications for global security. The speaker of parliament recently had a bitter fight to ban jeans and sandals in the plenum.

In a country burdened with existential challenges, and a region lacking women politicians, Livni walks a fine line between pulling crowds or putting them off with her attention to appearances. Which is why the identity of her stylist is one of the best kept secrets. — AS



Cheap spot Dubai

Dubai may be a playground for the rich and famous, but it also offers bargain basement prices for those who know where to look, making it 13.9 per cent below global average. It helps that petrol here sells for just 35p a litre.



The transformation:

- 01 Hair:** Shoulder-length curls, more suited to Livni's time as a basketball player in her youth, have given way to a shorter, smoother and tighter haircut.
- 02 Face:** After her heavily Photoshopped image on election billboards last year was ridiculed on every possible talk show, she now tries to get the same results with real makeup brushes: Shades of pink are used to overcome her asymmetrical face and Aquiline nose
- 03 Jewellery:** You'll never see her with a necklace or earrings, or any other noticeable accessory. Apparently this is in order to avoid rumours of a luxurious lifestyle. Remember her former boss, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, is facing trial for alleged corruption.
- 04 Dress:** Figure-hugging tube dresses, some of them by the Israeli fashion designer Reuma Sachs, accentuate Livni's new silhouette.
- 05 Shoes:** Her 5'6" stature makes flat soles or small heels the solution.



Gut reaction

Uganda [HEALTH]

Uganda's police officers have apparently been enjoying their food a bit too much. Their boss, Major General Kale Kayihura, has put his staff on a strict new training regime and announced he will measure their waists from now on, on a regular basis. "It is unhealthy for a police officer or anyone active in the forces to have a potbelly," he says. — SB