

Israeli Labor Party members picking leader

by UPI

TEL AVIV, Israel - The two leading candidates were both confident of victory heading into the Labor Party primary in Israel Monday.

Knesset Member Ami Ayalon and former Prime Minister Ehud Barak both expressed confidence they would win the race to be the party's sixth leader in eight years, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was more interested in getting the vote over with so he could appoint new defense and finance ministers, sources told the Post.

"He is closer to Barak and he values his experience, but he is just looking forward to replacing (Defense Minister Amir) Peretz," a source told the newspaper.

More than 103,000 voters were eligible to cast ballots in Monday's primary, in which five candidates were vying to lead the Labor Party. The results were expected early Tuesday. If necessary, a run-off election will be held June 11.

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