

ISRAEL / POLLS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Barak gambles on his future, W. Asia peace

HEADLINE BODY

JERUSALEM, NOV. 29. In the midst of a bloody conflict with the Palestinians, Israel has been plunged into political turmoil by an overwhelming Parliament vote to hold elections, two years ahead of schedule.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, took a gamble on Tuesday — on his political future and on West Asia peacemaking — when he unexpectedly agreed to go along with the hard-line Opposition's push for an early vote.

Representatives of Mr. Barak's One Israel alignment and the Opposition Likud Party met briefly on Wednesday to try to agree on a date for elections. The Opposition leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon, said elections should be held as quickly as possible, 'even before Passover,' the Jewish holiday that begins on April 7. Mr. Barak's One Israel did not propose a date, but planned to do so on Monday, said party spokesman Gilad Haymann.

In a new twist, Mr. Sharon said he was still open to holding new coalition talks if Mr. Barak issued an invitation. The early elections bill still faces two more readings, giving Mr. Barak several more weeks of political manoeuvring.

However, it appeared unlikely that the Prime Minister would reverse himself after having rejected the idea of a broad coalition just a day earlier. Mr. Sharon has said he would only join the Government if given veto powers over Mr. Barak's peace efforts, something Mr. Barak has said he is unwilling to do.

Mr. Nabil Shaath, a Palestinian negotiator, said he was still hopeful a peace accord could be reached before the elections and despite two months of violence that had killed more than 280 people, most of them Palestinians. "Barak still has six months until the coming elections, and if he wants, he can stop his aggression and adopt a new policy that will enable him to go to his people with progress in the peace process," Mr. Shaath said.

Reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians in the next few months was widely seen as Mr. Barak's only chance to get re-elected.



The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, addressing the Knesset in Jerusalem on Tuesday. — AP

Recent polls have indicated that without an agreement in hand, he would be narrowly defeated by Mr. Sharon and trounced by the former Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Sharon said the Likud would hold primaries to elect its candidate for Prime Minister, and that he would seek the job. Mr. Netanyahu has not formally announced his political plans, though he has been increasingly active in recent weeks, giving speeches and TV interviews.

Mr. Barak's popularity plummeted in recent months. Mr. Barak, Israel's most decorated soldier, is being perceived by a growing number of Israelis as ineffective because he has been unable to stop the violence and has failed to make progress toward a peace deal. — AP

THE HINDU

30 NOV 2000

Barak calls snap polls

ERIC SILVER
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JERUSALEM, Nov. 29. — Mr Ehud Barak, Israel's beleaguered Prime Minister, announced last night that he was calling a general election after only 18 months in office. It was a pre-emptive strike typical of the former special forces commander.

He acted to avoid the humiliation of an overwhelming vote to dissolve the Knesset. More than 70 out of 120 members were lined up to support early elections. They ranged from the far right, the religious and the disgruntled centre to the three Arab parties. What united them was disenchantment with Mr Barak's management of the peace process with Mr Yasser Arafat and his indecisive response to the challenge of the two-month-old Palestinian Intifada. He pleased none of the people none of the time.

In a defiant speech, the Labour leader told MP s: "You want elections? I'm ready for elections for Prime Minister and the Knesset." He added ruefully that he was not afraid of the voters. "I have won every election I have ever contested." As his listeners knew, that was only one, in June, 1999, when he trounced the Likud's Mr Binyamin Netanyahu.

A date would be set in consultation with the parties, he said. The right-wing Likud Opposition is proposing some time in May, 2001. Israel, with its multi-party, proportional representation system, does not go for snap elections. The parties do not yet have candidates for Prime Minister, let alone agreed lists of aspiring MPs.

Mr Barak's strategy now will be to try and complete negotiations with the Palestinians, if necessary for another interim agreement, in time to present himself to the nation as the Prime Minister of peace. Israeli officials believe that Mr Arafat is eager to return to the bargaining table, having demonstrated the anger and tenacity of the Palestinian street and its willingness to pay and extract a price in blood if Israel is not more forthcoming.

It is a desperate gamble for Mr Barak, but the parliamentary revolt has left him no alternative. He and the 72-year-old Likud leader, Mr Ariel

Sharon, would have preferred a national emergency government, but neither of them could persuade their parties to endorse what would, in any case, have been a temporary solution.

(Mr Sharon today said he was willing to hold new coalition talks with Mr Barak after the Israeli leader said he was ready to hold a general election, reports Reuters.)



Barak: Swift action

Last weekend's opinion polls showed Mr Barak trailing way behind either of the potential Likud contenders, Mr Sharon and Mr Netanyahu. Two thirds of the Israeli voters said they no longer trusted Mr Barak to lead the country.

Mr Sharon is committed to holding primaries. The Likud rank of file is expected to opt for Mr Netanyahu, who is seen as younger, more dynamic and more likely to attract the popular vote. Mr Barak, too, may face opposition within the Labour Party, disillusioned with him as a loser and as a

leader who refused to listen to, or even consult, more seasoned colleagues.

Characteristically, the first they knew of Tuesday night's election announcement was when they heard it in the Knesset chamber. Mr Avraham Burg, the parliamentary Speaker, is already canvassing support to run against him for the Labour nomination. He has the advantage of being both a liberal-minded orthodox Jew and a veteran of the 1970s peace movement.

Having been passed over by Mr Barak when he was forming his government, the ambitious Mr Burg is untainted by the shabby compromises forced on the Prime Minister by an unruly coalition of conflicting interests.

Threat to PM

Extreme right-wing Israelis have threatened the lives of Mr Ehud Barak and army chief of staff, Mr Shaul Mofaz, Mr Avraham Dichter, head of the Shin Bet internal security organization has revealed, adds DPA.

Four Palestinians shot: Israeli troops shot dead four Palestinians in a gunbattle in the Gaza Strip today, military sources said, adds Reuters from Gaza.

THE STATESMAN

30 NOV 2000

Opp moves SC to topple Barak

5-9 28/11

AP & REUTERS

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27. — Israel's hardline Opposition appealed to the Supreme Court today in a new bid to topple Prime Minister Ehud Barak, while Israeli and Palestinian officials met secretly to try to resume security coordination.

During the two months of escalated violence, Mr Ehud Barak has repeatedly tried, but failed, to bring the Likud, the largest Opposition party in Israel, into his government.

The Opposition leader, Mr Ariel Sharon, sought a pledge from Mr Barak that he would not resume talks with the Palestinians on the basis of concessions offered at Camp David.

After Mr Barak refused to close the door on a resumption of peace talks, Mr Sharon has renewed efforts to bring down the government.

Meanwhile, Jordan's King Abdullah has begun talks with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak that are likely to focus on a peace process.

Egypt and Jordan are the only two Arab countries to have signed peace treaties with Israel.

SNS adds: Israel and Palestinians are showing clear signs

of battle fatigue. The less ideologically-motivated Jewish settlers are talking openly of leaving the West Bank.

"We did not come here to die for Israel," said Mr Moshe Cohen, chairman of the residents' committee in a commuter settlement.

Across the divide, besieged Palestinian families complain

that they are running short of basic foodstuffs on the eve of Ramzan.

In an atmosphere of widening diplomatic activity, both Mr Ehud Barak and Mr Yasser Arafat have iterated their wish for a solution, though neither ordered the kind of ceasefire that would convince the

5 DIE IN WEST BANK

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27. — Israeli army snipers have shot dead five Palestinian gunmen in West Bank, reports Israel Radio and Army Radio. The army spokesman's office yesterday declined to comment, neither was there any immediate response from Palestinian authorities. The reports said the Palestinians were on their way to carry out a night-time attack.

— Reuters

other.

Though a drastic reduction in the level of Palestinian attacks remains an absolute condition for Israel, Mr Barak is hinting at greater flexibility.

Dealing Moscow into the game also widens Mr Arafat's options as Russia is more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause than the USA is perceived to be.

If Mr Arafat now returns to the table, he can tell his people that he is not simply bowing to American dictates.

THE STATESMAN
28 NOV 2000

Putin wants Israeli troops out of Palestine

55/12
26/11

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MOSCOW, Nov. 25. — Russia has asked Israel to pull out its troops from Palestinian territory and end its blockade to find a "sensible solution" to the West Asia crisis.

"No other sensible solution exists," the Russian deputy-foreign minister, Mr Vasili Sredin, said yesterday briefing reporters on President Vladimir Putin's talks with Mr Yasser Arafat.

Mr Arafat, on a one-day visit to Russia, was told by Mr Putin that violence must end immediately to pave way for restoring normalcy in the affected areas. "Israel and Palestine must meet each other half way," Voice of Russia quoted Mr Sredin as saying.

Russia is a co-sponsor of the West Asia peace process. Prior



Mr Yasser Arafat

to Mr Arafat's arrival here, the Russian foreign minister, Mr Igor Ivanov, had visited several Arab states to persuade them to take appropriate steps to ensure peace between Israel and Palestine.

Mr Sredin said the warring sides "no more trust each

other" and were being guided by "emotions rather than common sense".

Islamic nations will reportedly submit a diplomatic demarche to the UN, calling for an international peacekeeping force to protect Palestinians and to set up a war crimes tribunal to probe "Israeli aggression", adds DPA from Kuala Lumpur.

A delegation of foreign ministers from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference will soon meet the UN Secretary-general, Mr Kofi Annan, to urge the world body to stop the escalating "Israeli violence against Palestinians".

The delegation will comprise ministers from Malaysia, Qatar, Egypt, Morocco, Iran and Palestine, a Malaysian foreign ministry statement said.

THE STATESMAN

26 NOV 2000

WEST ASIA / DIPLOMACY STEPPED UP

110-16
25/11

Arafat seeks Putin's role

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), NOV. 24. While the Israelis and Palestinians continue to confront each other on the ground using military force, diplomatic efforts have been reinvigorated at several levels.

The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, travelled to Moscow today in an effort to persuade the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, to play a more active role as co-sponsor of the negotiations. A senior aide to Mr. Arafat on Thursday met Mr. Ephraim Sneh, Israel's Deputy Defence Minister and the person who looks after Israel's interests in the occupied territories, and a senior aide to the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, is to soon meet the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak.

For the greater part, the Palestinian and Israeli diplomatic efforts are not aimed at a convergence but are being carried out more with a view to espouse their positions before other countries and leaders. The meetings between the Israelis and Palestinians or between Israelis and Egyptians have not been initiated at sufficiently senior levels to suggest that there is a serious effort at a breakthrough. The U.S., apparently still affected by the political paralysis on account of the recount in Florida, is currently conducting little more than long-distance mediation.

A committee to probe the causes of the confrontation, the commencement of which body's activities might cool tempers down, has not been fully constituted and the U.N. Security Council is still in the very early stages of exploring a Palestinian request for the deployment of an international force between the two

sides. The word from Moscow was that the Russians were thinking of announcing a new initiative. While the Palestinians are eager that the Russians should get involved and widen the mediating team beyond the U.S., the Israelis are not very enthusiastic about such an outcome. It is also unclear what formula the Russians can pronounce beyond the international call for an end to the violent confrontations prior to the resumption of the peace negotiations.

One positive sign is that the U.S. administration has shifted ever so slightly to the middle ground by expressing itself against the use of excessive force by Israel and calling for an end to the siege of Palestinian towns and an easing of the economic blockade that Israel has imposed on the Palestinians. The U.S. has, however, blocked every effort at an international condemnation of Israel and is not ready for an internationalisation of the mediation efforts. Unless the U.S. takes a firmer stand, the Israeli's are not likely to heed the calls for restraint from the rest of the international community.

Egypt's decision to recall its ambassador and Jordan's refusal to send a new envoy to replace the person who recently retired from the post have been viewed seriously by Israel. These steps have, however, not raised concerns in Israel to a level commensurate with the serious erosion of all the diplomatic links that Israel has built with the Arab world over two decades. The conviction that they are the most powerful military force in the region still dominates Israel's response to the Palestinian challenge and the serious misgivings expressed by even the friendly Arab countries.

Egypt recalls Ambassador to Israel

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), NOV. 21. Egypt is recalling its Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Mohammed Bassiouni in protest against last night attacks by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on Palestinian targets. Israel has described this as a grave step but declared that it would not respond in kind as the two-month long conflict, that has so far been confined to the Israelis and Palestinians, now threatens to widen. The Egyptian action is among the most severe measures that the Arab world has taken in the face of what is widely perceived as the use of excessive force by Israel in its confrontation with the Palestinians.

The Egyptian decision today was taken after the IDF carried out its most severe attack on Palestinians since the confrontation began on September 28. Israeli helicopter gun-ships struck at nine targets in the Gaza Strip and killing one Palestinian and wounding dozens of others including children. The Israeli attack was in retaliation against a bomb attack yesterday on a school bus that killed two and injured nine including five children.

Israel believes that the three men who carried out the attack were members of the Palestinian preventive security forces and that the bomb was triggered from an area under Palestinian security control though the bomb itself



Friends and relatives of Israeli school teacher Miriam Amitai cry during her funeral at the settlement of Ofra North in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Amitai, a mother of four, was killed on Monday in a school bus bomb attack in the Gaza Strip. — Reuters

was planted alongside a road that Israel controls. In retaliation, the IDF targeted offices of the Palestinian preventive security forces and of the Tanzim militia that is affiliated to Fatah the PLO faction loyal to its Chairman, Mr. Yasser Arafat.

Israel was reported to have fired at least 13 rockets from the gun-ships. Unlike on earlier occasions when they gave prior warning to Palestinian officials this time, the IDF was reported to have acted without any such

warning. However, the Palestinians have now come to expect these sort of actions whenever there is an escalation in the level of violence and the building that could have been chosen as targets were emptied. Though the IDF struck in the evening, and not late at night as they have done earlier, the emptying of the buildings and the pin-point targeting reduced the number of casualties. The Israelis appear to have directed their rage in particular at Mr. Mohammed Dahlan, head of preven-

HO-16
MM
tive security in the Gaza Strip and an officer who had worked closely with Israeli counter-parts in their joint drive against terrorism. A nephew of Mr. Dahlan had been shot dead by the Israelis last week.

Egypt's decision comes in the wake of talks between its President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, and Israel's former President, Mr. Ezer Weizman, in Sharm el-Sheikh yesterday. Mr. Weizman had met Mr. Mubarak to see whether they could work together to end the violence in the Palestinian territories.

Last night's IDF attacks occurred after the Mubarak-Weizman meeting. The so-near-yet-so far situation has become endemic to the West Asian scene. Yesterday morning's bomb attack took place just a few hours after the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, had spoken to Mr. Arafat on the telephone to express his pleasure at Mr. Arafat's order to his compatriots to refrain from firing at Israelis from areas under their control.

This is for the second time that Egypt is taking such a strong measure against Israel since diplomatic relations were established twenty two years ago. In taking this step without any prior warning, Egypt has served notice that Israel will have to pay a price for its refusal to heed the concerns of the Arab world.

THE HINDU

22 NOV 2000

Egypt recalls Israel envoy as tension mounts

REUTERS

JERUSALEM, NOV 21

EGYPT recalled its ambassador from Israel on Tuesday protesting at "Israeli aggression" against the Palestinians, degrading the Jewish state its biggest diplomatic blow since the start of a Palestinian uprising eight weeks ago.

The decision by Egypt, one of only two Arab countries with diplomatic ties to Israel after four wars spanning 52 years, came the day after Israel pounded the Gaza Strip with missiles fired from the air and sea.

Egypt cited "Israel's escalating aggression against Palestinians" for its move. Israel said it regretted the decision and had no plans to recall its Cairo ambassador. It said it hoped to persuade Egypt to change its mind.

Foreign Ministry Director-General Alon Liel told Reuters: "We heard that the Egyptian ambassador is planning to leave tomorrow so we have still a few hours. Maybe we can still reverse

the situation.

"There will be an attempt with the Egyptians on the highest level." The Palestinian authority praised Egypt's move and urged world leaders to take "real steps" against Israel to halt the bloodshed. The missile barrage was in retaliation for the bombing of a Jewish settler school bus in the Gaza Strip that killed two adults and wounded several children seriously.

The bombing and the missile strikes were the latest blows to Middle East peacemaking, shattered by violence in which 248 people have been killed. Most were Palestinians.

Early on Tuesday, Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian in a gun battle after catching a group of "terrorists" about to plant a bomb near an army checkpoint in southern Gaza, close to the site of Monday's attack, the army said.

Hospital sources said another Gaza Palestinian died of wounds sustained in fighting with the army the night before. In the West Bank town of Jenin, Israeli soldiers shot



Hosni Mubarak: Calling it quits

dead a 22-year-old Palestinian man during a clash, witnesses said. **Death toll keeps climbing:** Clashes between stone-throwers and Israeli troops resumed around Kani and Khan Younis in the coastal strip on Tuesday and at least 19 Palestinians were injured, two critically, including a 15-year-old girl shot in the stomach, hospitals said.

The Israeli government urged Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to order a halt to guerrilla attacks and restore calm.

Lashing back, the Palestinians said it was up to Israel to pave the way for ending nearly eight weeks of violence and a resumption of peace talks by halting the develop-



Ehud Barak: Stern resolve

ment of Jewish enclaves in Gaza and the West Bank.

Reporting the Egyptian diplomatic move, the official Middle-East News Agency (MENA) said: "President Hosni Mubarak issued instructions for the recall of Ambassador Mohammed Bassiouni to Cairo immediately because of Israel's escalating aggression against Palestinians and excessive use of force against the Palestinian people."

It quoted Foreign Minister Amr Moussa as saying he would consult Bassiouni on the "deteriorating situation" in areas under Palestinian rule — about 40 per cent of Gaza and the West Bank

under an interim peace process now in ruin.

MENA said Bassiouni was expected to remain in Cairo for some time and gave no date for his return to Tel Aviv.

Egypt's peace role will shrink, Israel says. Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami told Israel Radio that the decision was a "very serious" step that would restrict Cairo's ability to play a role in Middle East peacemaking.

"It is a very serious issue. I think that recalling the ambassador will hurt Egypt's ability to continue to fill the very important role it has in the process here."

In contrast, Palestinian Authority cabinet minister Hassan Asfour applauded Egypt's move.

"This is a critical message to the Arab nations, to the United States and to the international community that Israel has to pay the price of its aggression," he told Reuters.

"We hope this will be followed by real steps against Israel's aggressor government and we are waiting for more steps against Israel and its ally the US," said Asfour

Israeli diplomat shot at in Jordan

Amman, Nov. 19 (Reuters): A gunman shot and lightly wounded Israel's vice-consul in the Jordanian capital Amman today, Jordanian and Israeli officials said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which came amid the worst Israeli-Palestinian violence for years.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak described the shooting as a very serious incident and called for the capture and prosecution of those behind it.

A Jordanian interior ministry statement said a gunman fired several shots at Yoram Havivian as he was stepping into his car outside his house in the affluent Rabi-ah neighbourhood.

The diplomat was lightly wounded and the glass of his car windows shattered, it said. A Jordanian doctor who happened to be in the area immediately gave him first aid and rushed him to hospital.

Witnesses said Havivian left hospital about four hours after the incident. Diplomatic sources said he would return to Israel later in the day. A Jordanian security source said the incident took place at 8:30 a.m. and the diplomat was injured in his thigh and arm by flying glass.

A statement from Barak's office in Jerusalem after the weekly cabinet meeting said: "The prime minister noted that the incident in Jordan is very serious and noted that in coordination with the Jordanian authorities it is necessary to act to capture those responsible for the shooting on an Israeli diplomat and to prosecute them to the full extent of the law".

The shooting incident was the first attack on an Israeli target in Jordan since the current outbreak of violence in the neighbouring Palestinian territories began on September 28.

At least 239 people, mostly Palestinians, have been killed in the seven-week Palestinian Intifada, or uprising.

Most Jordanian citizens are of Palestinian origin.

The latest victim, a 14-year-old Palestinian boy, died today at the Karni crossing in the Gaza Strip.

A live bullet had penetrated the chest of Abdel-Rahman Dahshan, killing him instantly. Six Palestinians were also injured by live bullets in the upper parts of the body during minor clashes at the border crossing.

But Alon Liel, director-general of Israel's foreign ministry, said the attack was not necessarily related to Palestinian-Israeli tension and was not the first such incident since the two countries signed a peace treaty in 1994.

THE TELEGRAPH

20 NOV 2000

710-12
19/11

Another chance for peace in W. Asia

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), NOV. 18. While a Palestinian gunman reportedly shot at and killed an Israeli soldier and wounded two others in the Gaza Strip today, and was himself killed in the return fire, there are still hopes that a cease-fire order from Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, could take hold.

Yesterday, for the first time since hostilities broke out over seven weeks ago, Mr. Arafat ordered his people to refrain from shooting at Israelis from areas under the Authority's control. For the first time yesterday, Israeli and Palestinian officials also discussed the possibility of transposing an international force between the two battling sides.

On the face of it, Mr. Arafat's order appears comprehensive since the Authority has control over security in about 18 per cent of the West Bank and two-thirds of the Gaza Strip. Israelis control security in all the rest of the occupied territories. However, there have been a few occasions on which Palestinian gunmen have crossed over to areas under Israel's control and ambushed vehicles. Israel has, therefore, demanded that Mr. Arafat's directive be comprehensive. They have also said that they will not be satisfied with such verbal orders but wants the Authority's security forces to enforce the order.

However, while making these demands, Israel's Prime Minister,

Mr. Ehud Barak, has also said that his forces would not soon embark on a drawn-up plan for an intensified response to Palestinian actions.

The hopes that both sides would hold the line preparatory to a pull-back from the confrontation have been strengthened by the talks that were held yesterday between the Palestinian and Israeli special representatives to the United Nations in New York. During the talks, initiated by the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the two envoys discussed the possibility of inducting an international force into the occupied territories.

The Palestinians had pressed for the setting up of an international peace-keeping force but that was a proposal that the Israelis were never likely to accept. Mr. Annan had himself raised the possibility of inducting an international observer force similar to the one that operates in Hebron where a Jewish settlement has been set up in the heart of the otherwise Arab town. This is the proposal apparently now in favour.

According to the Palestinians, a proposal would be soon submitted to the Security Council incorporating a French proposal that the force comprise unarmed observers. Israel had objected to the proposal when it was first raised on the grounds that it would multi-lateralise the mediation efforts and dilute the role of the U.S.

THE HINDU

19 NOV 2000

Israel launches missile attacks on Fatah bases

FROM NIDAL AL-MUGHRABI

Gaza, Oct. 31 (Reuters): Palestinian President Yasser Arafat vowed defiance today after Israeli helicopter missile attacks on three of his Fatah faction's headquarters and said he would go on fighting for an independent Palestinian state.

The missile strikes late yesterday caused only limited damage and no deaths, but heralded a new Israeli tactic to take the initiative against Palestinian gunmen to try to stop a growing guerrilla war.

"All these things cannot shake one eyelash from the eyelashes of

11/11 W. Amin (10) 5/3
a Palestinian child holding a Palestinian stone to defend holy Jerusalem... the capital of the Palestinian state," Arafat told Voice of Palestine Radio.

"And whoever dislikes it, let him come and drink the sea of Gaza," he said before touring the rocketed headquarters of his Force 17 security service in Gaza, where he pointed to an unexploded shell that landed on a commander's chair.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak today defended Israel's attacks on buildings of Arafat's Fatah faction, saying he had to do whatever it took to protect Israeli lives.

Barak's office issued a statement after he met German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder saying: "Barak stressed that he will continue to do whatever is necessary in order to protect the lives of the country's citizens and its soldiers even if it requires the kind of response there was yesterday."

The army said its gunships had fired missiles yesterday at largely empty buildings used by Fatah, Arafat's mainstream political faction, in Ramallah and Nablus in the West Bank as part of a new policy of pinpoint strikes.

The headquarters of Fatah's elite Force 17 militia in Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip was also hit.

Israel said the helicopter strikes were intended to prevent guerrilla attacks which included the killings of three Israelis in the past four days, one of them a security guard shot dead in Arab East Jerusalem hours before the helicopter strikes. "We know who the perpetrators are. We know the address of those who sent them. And we say to them: beware," said Col. Raanan Gissin, an army spokesman.

In clashes elsewhere, Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian teenager during an exchange of gunfire at a border crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip, witnesses and hospital officials said. At least 150 people, almost all of them Arabs, have been killed in nearly five weeks of clashes.

CNN scribe hurt

CNN correspondent Ben Wedeman was shot in the waist today during clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip. CNN's Rula Amin said Wedeman, the network's Cairo bureau chief, had been taken to a Gaza hospital where he was in stable condition.

THE TELEGRAPH

Israel pounds Fatah positions

REUTERS, AP & AFP



Mr Yasser Arafat

5/10

that were empty. The CNN bureau chief in Cairo was shot in the back and injured today while covering clashes at the Karni crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip, a report from Gaza City says. The condition of Mr Ben Wedeman (41) is reported to be stable. Intense fighting at the crossing reportedly left one Palestinian dead and another critically injured.

The Israeli deputy defence minister, Mr Ephraim Sneh, said: "Since the Palestinians are beginning to wage something that approximates a guerrilla war, our helicopter attack was a signal that if there is

one, we have the answer to it." He described the attacks on Fatah buildings in the West Bank towns of Nablus and Ramallah, and on Fatah's elite Force 17 militia in Khan Yunis in Gaza as "a warning operation". Palestinians would "pay a price" for Lebanon-style guerrilla warfare, he said.

Mr Ehud Barak's office issued a statement saying: "Mr Barak stressed that he would continue to do whatever is necessary to protect the lives of the country's citizens and its soldiers even if it requires the kind of response there was yesterday." The army said its strikes were aimed at Force 17 (Mr Arafat's

personal protection force) and Fatah's Tanzim militia, which Israel holds responsible for the recent violence.

An Israeli security guard was shot in Arab east Jerusalem yesterday by what police said was a Palestinian gunman. For the third time since the violence broke out a month ago, Israel closed the Palestinian international airport in Gaza, citing security concerns, a Palestinian official said today.

Fighting for his political life after losing his parliamentary majority three months ago, Mr Barak said he believed peace in West Asia was possible though Israel did not have a partner

prepared for dialogue. His small coalition appears safe for now as the ultra-Orthodox Shas party has said it will support him for the next month.

Mr Arafat has not given any sign of ordering an end to the confrontations. Yesterday, he declared in Gaza: "Until Jerusalem, until Jerusalem, until Jerusalem, the capital of our independent Palestinian state." His adviser, Mr Nabil Aburdeneh, said: "What is needed is to stop the Israeli aggression before there are talks about reviving the peace process."

Support for Arafat: Malaysia and Saudi Arabia today condemned Israel's use of force

against Palestinians and supported recommendations that the UN set up an international court to try those responsible for the violence, a report from Kuala Lumpur adds.

USA: USA today urged Israelis and Palestinians to show restraint and end the violence, a report from Washington says. The US secretary of state, Ms Madeleine Albright, is due to meet Israeli acting foreign minister Mr Shlomo Ben-ami in Washington tomorrow. The US embassy in Cairo has warned American citizens against possible extremist attacks in Egypt or elsewhere in West Asia, a report from Cairo says.

Violence abates ahead of peace push

JERUSALEM, NOV. 6. After more than five weeks of bloodletting across the Palestinian territories, the focus shifted to the diplomatic front today ahead of a new U.S. push to restore calm to the volatile West Asia.

On the streets, minor clashes erupted between Israeli troops and Palestinian demonstrators in the Gaza strip, leaving four wounded, as several thousand mourners joined the funeral for one of two Palestinians killed in violence yesterday.

But the intensity of the fighting has dropped since a fragile truce accord agreed last week between the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the former Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres.

And both Mr. Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, head to the U.S. for talks with the President, Mr. Bill Clinton, this week following the U.S. presidential elections, after two previous failed attempts by the U.S. to bring a halt to the unrest.

Close to 180 people have been killed since the violence erupted on September 28 following a provocative visit by the Israeli hardline Opposition leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon, to a Jerusalem holy place that is at the heart of the conflict.

The vast majority of the dead have been Palestinians.

The White House announced that Mr. Clinton, striving to achieve peace before his term of office ends in January, would meet Mr. Arafat on Thursday and Mr. Barak on Sunday for separate talks.

A White House spokeswoman, Ms. Nanda Chitre, said the aim would be to extinguish the violence and revive the moribund peace process, but added that Mr. Clinton did not believe a three way meeting would be "productive".

"I believe that on Thursday they (the U.S.) will see if Mr. Arafat is serious about the peace process," the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr.



A masked Palestinian youth uses a slingshot to fire projectiles at Israeli soldiers near the Karni commercial crossing, east of Gaza on Monday. Clashes flared in the Gaza Strip with protesters demanding an independent state. — Reuters

Shlomo ben Ami, told public radio.

"We will resume the (peace) process on the basis of a fair compromise, not one of dictation," he added, calling on Mr. Arafat to implement the truce arrangements agreed at the Clinton-hosted summit at the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh three weeks ago.

A similar call will be made by Mr. Arafat, who is due to leave for Washington on Wednesday, said his top aide, Mr. Nabil Abu Rudeina, in Gaza city

"President Arafat will discuss with President Clinton the explosive and dangerous situation in Palestinian territories stemming from the Israeli aggressions against the Palestinian people," he said.

"He will ask Clinton to work to carry out the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings." Mr. Arafat said in a U.S. television interview he wanted an international peacekeeping force in the West Bank and Gaza to protect Palestinians from the Israeli army. — AFP, AP

THE NEW YORK TIMES

7 NOV 2000

West Asia in a simmer

By S. Nihal Singh

The basic problem is that Israel, by far the stronger party, is not ready for anything approaching a just settlement.

IT IS only after witnessing the new *intifada* that the world is beginning to realise the basic truth in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. There is no prospect of the problem being resolved in the short-run. All that one can hope for is a lessening of the level of violence and an uneasy truce. The basic problem is that Israel, by far the stronger party, is not ready for anything approaching a just settlement. And while this is so, endless talks and mediation will lead the parties nowhere. Israel is divided down the middle on the kind of Palestinian entity that should come into being, with a bare majority for a settlement at the best of times, depending upon how the question is posed. Israel's dilemmas are many. It is a state whose ideology is being eroded by the very fact of its governing a large Arab population in a colonial situation. It is divided between orthodox and secular Jews and confronted with the Palestinians have strengthened the right-wing in Israel.

To be sure, all blame does not lie with the Israelis, but they bear a heavy burden for the West Asian tragedy because they won territory in the 1967 war and are being very selective and partial about the kind and extent of territory they should give back and on what terms. Besides, as Israel's Premier, Mr. Ehud Barak, pointed out as an Opposition leader, the world changed dramatically in Israel's favour after the demise of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the sole surviving superpower. Indeed, the Palestinians have always lived with an all-batross, of coping with the only effective mediator tilting to the other side. The U.S. has made no secret of its primary strategic interest in the alliance with Israel in the region and the influence of the American Jewish lobby over U.S. West Asian policy hardly needs amplification. As Mr. Barak correctly divined, the post-Cold War world lent a helping hand to Israel because Washington was able to keep the United Nations and European powers at arm's length in mediating the problem. The European Union is given the opportunity of being the biggest aid provider; the Palestinian Authority and the U.S. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan,

chief Arab mediator — or, more accurately, coordinator — is beholden to the U.S. for the annual aid it receives from Washington, second highest in the world. In a broader setting, Egypt's President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, is performing the jugler's role of Mr. Arafat.

There cannot be a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem as long as Tel Aviv insists that occupied Arab East Jerusalem constitutes, together with West Jerusalem, its indivisible capital. Jerusalem as Judaism, and any equitable solution must envisage an international status for it if the eastern half is not to be returned to the Palestinians. Second, a Palestinian state must be viable and cannot resemble a Swiss cheese. While Israel's legitimate security interests must be safeguarded, it would be a travesty of justice to allow the country to impose sanctions and blockade on the Palestinian entity at will. Whether Israeli security is to be governed by denying the future Palestine the right to raise armed forces is a matter for discussion. Third, the fate of the Palestinian refugees is as evocative a matter as it is a question of justice. The Israelis, to their credit, are finally confronting the truth of the expulsion of the Palestinians in the creation of the state of Israel. But they have still to accept the logic of granting the principle of return of the Palestinian diaspora. A great majority of the Palestinians settled abroad would choose to remain where they are and a mechanism and timetable can be worked out to regulate their return so as not to disrupt the new state and unduly alarm the Israelis.

Mr. Barak's efforts at shoring up his minority government with the help of Likud introduce new complications into an already complex situation but they do not alter the contours of the problem and how it can be resolved. The Israelis of Ariel Sharon variety are a natural complement to the militant Palestinians but it would be in Israel's interest to come to grips with the contradictions of its situation. The Palestinians will not remain satisfied with a ceremonial band providing a guard of honour to Mr. Arafat and his visitors at his hamlet on a piece of land

the end of the road. They must continue to govern the Palestinians like a colonial power — a visit to the Palestinian self-rule areas starkly brings out the truth of the situation — with bloodshed continuing, disproportionately at the expense of Palestinian lives. Yet colonial powers in today's world are an anachronism and the Israelis will continue to deprive themselves of the peace they have been seeking — on their own terms. It is plain that such a situation is not amenable to resolution at the dictates of the American political calendar. At one stage, Mr. Barak tried to finesse the Palestinians, seeking an opening to Syria to resolve the Golan Heights issue, in essence far simpler than the Israeli-Palestinian divide, but he was not prepared to pay the full price.

For the better part of the past decade, Mr. Arafat proved capable of keeping several balls up in the air, a necessity given his domestic constraints and the dynamics of the Arab world. If he appears contentedly flying from one Arab capital to another, it is his recipe of giving the impression of activity in a situation that is often in a stalemate. Palestinian frustrations have grown with the realisation that Oslo has more often than not meant more Israeli settlements with no end in sight. In the larger Arab world, the interests of individual countries are guided by their own priorities, often at variance with those of fellow Arabs. It is a striking fact that even the holding of a summit becomes a matter of months and years of negotiation for the simple reason that Arab leaders fear that it would merely highlight their differences.

Beyond these differences is the overarching American presence in the region. Thanks to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the American-led military operation against it, the Gulf monarchies in particular have sought U.S. military protection and, in consequence, are susceptible to American pressure. In addition, Egypt,

appears on occasion in the role of an American errand boy to try to calm the situation. The much-trumpeted Oslo agreements were flawed because they gave much more to the Israelis than the Palestinians. Still, the accords could have taken the two parties closer had they been seriously and fairly implemented. With help from the Palestinian militants, the Israelis succeeded in further colonising the territories they had captured. American attempts at mediation have concentrated on turning down the temperature and securing whatever agreements were possible. But as deadlines came and went and the new Palestinian state was nowhere near realisation, the problem of "final status" talks became acute, with Mr. Yasser Arafat having to threaten a unilateral declaration of a state since he had few other cards to play.

The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, took a leaf out of Mr. Jimmy Carter's book to try to put heads together in what has come to be known as the Camp David format. What emerged was an inkling of the utmost that Mr. Barak or any other Israeli Prime Minister was able to offer — some 90 per cent of the occupied West Bank, a symbolic Palestinian control over East Jerusalem and very little satisfaction on the question of the return of Palestinian refugees. The fact that Mr. Clinton blamed Mr. Arafat for not accepting this package revealed how little he has understood the heart of the problem and how partial he is to Israel. Mr. Arafat was in no position to accept the poisoned chalice, except at his peril. And the manner in which the situation has slid downhill comes as no surprise. The Hamas movement has grown at the expense of Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement and Palestinian suspicions of Israel and the U.S. have only increased.

In a sense, the Israelis are now beginning to discover that they are coming to

Arafat, Barak ready to meet Clinton

AP & AFP

JERUSALEM/ GAZA CITY, Nov. 4 — Israeli and Palestinian leaders announced readiness to meet Mr Bill Clinton in Washington for talks even as fresh clashes broke out in the Gaza Strip early today following overnight gun battles.

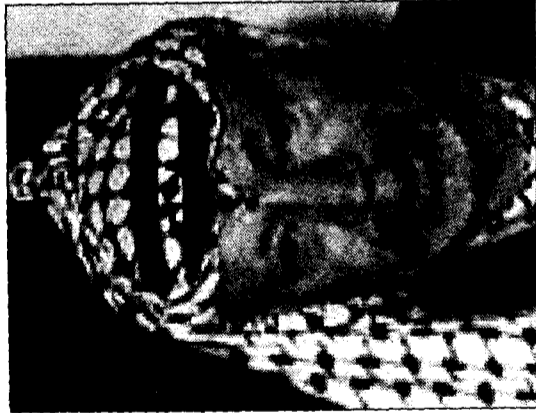
Seven Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli soldiers on the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel near the Bureij refugee camp early this morning.

The Palestinian areas were far from quiet yesterday despite calls for restraint issued by both sides in an attempt to implement their latest cease-fire and stop five weeks of bloodshed.

Three Palestinians were shot and hundreds injured in clashes with Israeli troops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Four Israeli soldiers were hurt. Numerous firefights were reported late yesterday.

Still, the Israeli leader, Mr Ehud Barak, pledged to "persevere in our efforts for peace... We are strong enough to stand on both fronts: the battle for peace and the struggle against violence and terror," he said.

Palestinian leaders, who have designated the past several Fridays a "day of rage", also took on a more subdued



Chasing peace: Mr Yasser Arafat, Mr Bill Clinton and Mr Ehud Barak

tone, saying events on Friday and Saturday would determine whether the truce agreement reached earlier in the week was taking hold.

On the political front, aides to Palestinian leader, Mr Yasser Arafat, said he was ready to meet the US President in Washington. No definite date was set.

Mr Arafat would arrive after the US presidential elections "to discuss the situation in the Palestinian areas and

the future of the peace process" with Mr Clinton and the US secretary of state, Ms Madeleine Albright, a Palestinian spokesman said.

Mr Shlomo Ben-Ami, Israel's foreign minister, told Israel TV from the USA that Mr Arafat was expected in Washington on 8 November.

Mr Clinton has also invited Mr Barak, and Mr Ben-Ami said the Israeli leader may travel to Washington after the planned

Clinton-Arafat talks.

He described the separate meetings as a "US attempt to check how the peace process can move forward."

"I don't think they will talk at the moment about some defined peace package... The sides will check with the Americans what is the best way to advance the process after this harsh breakdown," Mr Ben-Ami added.

The momentum generated by the

daily clashes proved hard to stop.

After midday prayers at mosques, confrontations began breaking out. One Palestinian was shot dead in Tulkarem, two were killed in Hizme, both in the West Bank. Rock-throwing clashes were reported across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, deterring into firefights by night.

Palestinian gunmen and Israeli soldiers traded machine-gun fire near Bethlehem and a shooting confrontation was also reported near Hebron in the West Bank.

The Israelis and Palestinians also traded accusations yesterday about the lack of formal cease-fire statements from their leaders.

Palestinian officials accused Israel of failing to restrain its troops and moving tanks back to friction points in Palestinian areas.

"The Israelis try to run away from the agreement. So far, we have heard no Barak statement. Instead, the tanks return and there are shootings," Mr Nabil Shaath, a Palestinian negotiator, said.

Several cease-fires have collapsed without ever going into effect, including a deal brokered in Egypt last month by Mr Clinton.

The latest agreement was reached early Thursday after overnight talks between Mr Arafat and the former Israeli premier, Mr Shimon Peres.

W Asia hopes against hope for a truce

ERIC SILVER
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JERUSALEM, Nov. 4. — Both Israel and the Palestinians are soberly taking stock of the situation this weekend after a crescendo of violence that climaxed in Thursday's car bombing near a Jerusalem market. The five weeks of confrontation have cost nearly 170 lives, all but 13 of them are Palestinians.

Although the political leaders were reluctant to issue unequivocal calls for a truce, security forces on both sides were making an effort yesterday to lower the level of combat. Palestinian police tried to keep rioters away from the flashpoints, the fortified military positions protecting isolated Jewish settlements. Israel, for its part, began withdrawing tanks from the outskirts of Palestinian cities.

Israeli analysts were sceptical about whether this heralded a full-fledged ceasefire, as Mr Yasser Arafat and the former Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Shimon Peres, agreed on Wednesday night.

Neither side is yet ready to give up hopes of a truce, but what the Palestinians celebrate as their Al Aqsa Intifada — the battle for Jerusalem — has undermined whatever trust there was between Mr Arafat and his Israeli counterpart, Mr Ehud Barak. Each accuses the other of negotiating in bad faith.

The Palestinians don't see any difference between Mr Barak and his Likud Party predecessor, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu. Mr Yasser Arafat, Palestinian information minister, said in an interview: "We had no confidence in

Mr Netanyahu, but no confidence was created in Mr Barak either."

The Israeli Prime Minister's colleagues say he is fed up with Arafat. A government spokesman, Mr Nahman Shai, complained to **The Statesman**: "Whenever Mr Arafat has to make a decision, he runs away."

Many Israelis now believe that the Palestinian leader has abandoned diplomacy for a war of attrition, designed to force Israel to make concessions. Military commentator Mr Ron Ben-Ishai wrote in **Yediot Aharonot**: "The Palestinians' ultimate objective is to bring about a unilateral withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories and from most of Jerusalem." For this, he said, they try to increase international pres-

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER FED UP WITH ARAFAT, SAY AIDES

sure on Israel and sap the Israeli people's appetite for the struggle.

Mr Abed Rabbo lent weight to this reading. "Our people," the

ability was claimed by the militant Islamic Jihad. "We are against it completely," he told reporters in Gaza.

The Israelis contend that it is the Palestinians who initiate the violence. Israel, they say, responds.

THE STATESMAN

NOV 04 2000

NOV 2 2000

Israel gives 24 hours to Palestinians to implement ceasefire

Jerusalem, November 3

THE ISRAELI security cabinet decided late yesterday to give the Palestinian authorities 24 hours to impose an agreed ceasefire, Israeli radio reported.

A truce had been struck at dawn yesterday after a meeting between Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

However a car bomb blast in West Jerusalem later in the day, which killed two people, had thrown that agreement immediately into doubt.

A militant group opposed to the peace process, Islamic jihad, claimed responsibility for the blast - the first deadly attack in Jerusalem in two years - and said the perpetrators had escaped.

According to preliminary reports, the police said, the perpetrators of yesterday's bomb blast in Jerusalem used a stolen Mazda car for the attack, loading it with 15 kgs of explosives packed with nails and attached to a timer.

One of the victims of the attack was the daughter of Yitzhak Levy, leader of an Israeli party that is the mouthpiece for Jewish settlers living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Hundreds of people, including ministers and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, attended the funerals of the two bomb blast victims in Jerusalem.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak met late yesterday with his security cabinet to decide on the next move in the bid to breathe life into the peace process and came up with the 24-hour deadline, the radio reported.

The radio said Barak also held talks with a number of government officials and senior army and security service figures.

Meanwhile the clashes continued.

"There was automatic arms fire yesterday evening in practically all Gaza Strip settlements, notably at Kfar Darom and the Gush Katif settlement, and the army responded," said a military source. (AFP)

Around the World

'Lizard may have been first biped'

WASHINGTON: The first known creature to walk upright on two feet was a speedy, long-legged lizard that scurried onto the scene some 80 million years before the dinosaur, shows a newly found fossil, reports AP. The lizard, less than a foot, only 30 cms long and weighing 0.45 kgs, was a plant-eating reptile that researchers believe used his speed and unique way of running to avoid the hungry meat-eaters that roamed the world 290 million years ago. Walking upright on two feet is an example of "repeated evolution", where a physical advantage evolves in different species at different times in history, said Robert R. Reisz, a University of Toronto researcher and co-author of a study which has appeared today in the journal Science. Bipedalism developed independently in dinosaurs, which passed it on to birds and then later it developed in mammals, said Reisz. Remains of the lizard were found in a German quarry.

Typhoon kills 58 people in Taiwan

TAIPEI: As the death toll from Taiwan's typhoon rose to 58 on Friday, rescue workers searched for 23 crew members who disappeared when the storm sank a cargo ship in the Pacific ocean, reports AP. With winds of up to 145 kph, typhoon Xangsane produced the worst flooding in Taiwan in 30 years, killing people as it traveled up the east side of the country on Wednesday and Thursday.

First online journalism awards in Dec

NEW YORK: The winners of the first online journalism awards will be announced Dec 1 by the Online News Association and the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, the two groups have announced, reports AFP. The new awards are aimed at recognizing journalistic excellence in the new medium of the internet. Columbia also administers the Pulitzer Prize.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 NOV 2000

Barak, Arafat to enforce ceasefire

By Kesava Menon

LARNACA (CYPRUS) NOV. 2. Israel and Palestinian public media have been calling on the forces and people on both sides to stop the violence and return to their homes following a truce agreement between the Israeli Minister for Regional Co-operation, Mr. Shimon Peres, and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, which was arrived at late last night. Mr. Arafat has spoken to Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, this morning and both leaders are to publicly call for the enforcement of the ceasefire.

Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat met late last night while some of the worst fighting since violence broke out on Sept. 28 was still going on. The two of them, however, worked out the modalities of implementing the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement which was made last month but has not been implemented in the slightest. As per yesterday's agreement, which reinforces Sharm el-Sheikh, Palestinian security forces are to prevent their youth from throwing stones and bottle bombs and occasionally shooting at Israeli soldiers. Israel is to withdraw its armour from the Palestinian territories and end the closure of Palestinian towns and villages. Although there was some violence after Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat met, the reports by late afternoon were that the Palestinian policemen were indeed trucking their youth away from areas where they could confront the Israelis and the Israelis were moving their armour and ending the closure.

The militant movement Hamas has declared that it will not honour last night's agreement. However with Mr. Arafat calling on his people to cease fire the threat from Hamas might not be as profound. The Palestinian leadership has, however, declared that their peaceful struggle would continue till independence is achieved.

Blast shatters deal

JERUSALEM, NOV. 2. A car bomb ripped through a Jerusalem shop-



An Israeli machine gunner turns and looks at the photographer with binoculars as he mans a sandbagged position in the Jewish settlement of Gilo, near Jerusalem overlooking the Palestinian town of Beit Jala (behind) on Thursday hours before the accord, reached by Israel and Palestinians to end the violence, was due to come into effect. — Reuters

ping centre today, killing two persons, just hours after the Israelis and the Palestinians began implementing a truce to end five weeks of bloodletting in West Asia.

Vast plumes of smoke billowed into the air over the centre of the Jewish part of Jerusalem as ambulances rushed to the area near the Mahana Yehtda market, the target of previous attacks by Islamic militants.

Police said they became suspi-

cious of the car when it was driving near the market and gave chase before the vehicle exploded, flames bursting out.

They said the driver was killed along with another man who was found near the car, but it was not immediately clear if he was involved in the attacks. Police said at last 11 people were injured.

The blast came as an expected joint Israeli and Palestinian statement on the overnight accord was

delayed for "technical reasons."

Earlier in the day, the Israeli army started withdrawing its tanks and lifting a blockade from around Palestinian towns after the announcement of an "understanding" following a meeting between the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and Israel's former Prime Minister and Nobel Peace laureate, Mr. Shimon Peres.

And on the Palestinian side, witnesses reported that Palestinian police were out in force in most flashpoints across the Gaza Strip to prevent demonstrators from clashing with Israeli troops.

Four hours before the joint announcement was due, Palestinian hospital officials said Israeli troops had shot dead a Palestinian teenager during a stone-throwing protest in the West Bank village of Hizma.

Another Palestinian died of a gunshot wound in Gaza Strip, hospital officials said, raising to 165 the number of people killed in five weeks of Israeli-Palestinian violence. Almost all of the dead have been Palestinians.

Israel's army spokesman, Brigadier-General Ron Kitrey, said troops had received orders to withdraw tanks and lift closures on Palestinian cities. "The appropriate orders have been given," he told army radio. The army said Israeli and Palestinian commanders were meeting in West Bank.

Witnesses said Israel had withdrawn tanks from positions at the flashpoint Karni Crossing between Israel and Gaza Strip and from the entrance to the West Bank town of Ramallah. Journalists at another Gaza trouble spot, the Netzarim Junction, said Palestinian police tried to stop young protesters from throwing stones at an Israeli army outpost and had loaded many of the youths onto trucks to take them from the area.

The U.S., the main peace broker, said it had been informed of the understanding by both sides. "It's a welcome development and we'll be looking for full compliance by both sides," the White House National Security Council spokesman, Mr. P. J. Crowley, said. — AFP, Reuters

Fresh clashes kill 5 in West Asia

REUTERS

GAZA, Nov. 8. — Four Palestinian teenagers and an Israeli woman were killed today as fighting continued in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, medical officials said.

Witnesses also said that Israeli tanks had fired shells while battling Palestinian police on a day, in which several people were also wounded.

Three Palestinians, aged 14, 16 and 18, were shot dead in clashes with soldiers at Gaza's Karni commercial crossing and at Khan Younis, local hospital officials said. A 14-year-old Palestinian was killed in Hares, a village in the West Bank.

Palestinian gunmen had ambushed an Israeli car driving to the Rafah border crossing with Egypt in the Gaza Strip, killing a woman and seriously wounding a passenger, an Israeli army spokesman said.

Two other Palestinians also died of wounds from earlier clashes in Gaza, bringing the death toll in almost six weeks of bloodshed to 185, most of them being Palestinians.

Israeli tanks fired shells during a heavy gun battle with Palestinian police at the Karni crossing, a witness said.

A Reuters photographer at the scene said that three tanks and three armoured personnel carriers arrived as Palestinian stone-throwers and Israeli soldiers clashed. There was also an exchange of gunfire.

He said that at least four shells were fired at a building used as cover by the police during the shootout.

The Israeli army spokesman said: "we have a couple of tanks at Karni because fire was opened on a civilian convoy. We don't know about any shell fire, but live fire was used."

The Israeli woman was shot dead while travelling to work at the Overland Rafah inter-

national terminal, which also handles security inspections of Palestinians arriving at the airport.

The army spokesman said three Palestinian gunmen opened fire at the woman's car from the direction of the airport, which Israel subsequently closed. Israel is in charge of border controls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel has said that the Palestinian president, Mr Yasser Arafat, has not done enough to implement an agreement to halt the violence, but conceded that the clashes were less intense than in the previous weeks.

Mr Arafat held talks in Egypt today before flying to Britain en route to the US for talks with President Bill Clinton tomorrow. Mr Barak, the Israeli Prime Minister, is due for talks with Mr Clinton at the White House on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia exits Doha summit: The Saudi delegation today withdrew from a preparatory meeting of the OIC summit in Doha, following Riyadh's decision to boycott the summit, adds AFP from Doha.

"The entire Saudi team has left", a member of the Saudi delegation told AFP, as they swept out of the hotel which was hosting the meeting.

The delegation, comprising of experts to help draw up the leaders' agenda for the November 12-14 summit, would return to Riyadh later today, the source said.

Saudi Arabia said today that it will boycott the summit in Doha because of the "deteriorating situation" in the Palestinian territories.

Crown prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz would not attend the November 12-14 gathering because of Qatar's continued ties with Israel despite the clamour in the Arab world to isolate the Jewish state, officials said.

THE STATESMAN

NOV 2000

Needed, an honest broker

NOW THAT he is free from the restraints of electoral considerations, the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, has the opportunity to go with any desire he may have to force Israelis and Palestinians to make a deal. While the still in-favour rhetoric is that deal-making is impossible so long as the current violence continues, the feeling on the ground is that the only way to end the armed conflict is through the proclamation of a fair agreement by a sufficiently powerful source. This is really a case where a judgment has to be made as to which is the horse and which the cart.

The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, had three items on his wish list as he went to Washington. He wanted Israel to implement its part of the Sharm-el-Sheikh agreement, to broaden the team trying to make the final deal and the setting up of an

The feeling on the ground in West Asia is that the only way to end the armed conflict is through the proclamation of a fair agreement by a sufficiently powerful source... There might be an opportunity for Mr. Clinton here, writes KESAVA MENON.

nian populated areas and that they desisted from using excessive force. Both the distancing and the non-resort to lethal force would ensure that no further provocations were given to the stone-throwing Palestinian youth and would thus cut the cycle of violence.

There is of course a political aspect to the insertion of such a force. The presence of an international force as a buffer between the two warring sides would underscore that the Palestinians were as much a nation as the Israelis.

accepted. The U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, washed his hands off the whole affair by declaring that an international force could not be inserted when one of the parties was opposed to it.

Mr. Arafat's efforts to broaden the negotiating teams by bringing on board the European Union, the Russians and some of the Arab states was also rejected by Israel. This demand was also not received with any great enthusiasm by the U.S. It was perhaps asking too much of the U.S. administration to share the credit at the last stages of an effort it had carried out almost entirely on its own. But however the end result is reached it would always go on the record as a mainly U.S.-brokered one. At the same time it would be easier for Mr. Arafat to sell an accord that had broader backing than one that was struck solely with the U.S.-Israeli alliance.

Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, was to meet Mr. Clinton over the weekend with his demands also focussed on elements of the Sharm-el-Sheikh accord. While the Palestinians had fulfilled part of this agreement — especially through orders prohibiting those less than 16 years old from participating in the riots — they were not stopping stone-throwing in every case nor had they moved to disarm the Tanzim militias. However, Mr. Barak also appeared to be more interested in getting Mr. Clinton to press Mr. Arafat on his counter-proposals to the Camp David understandings.

The best offer that Mr. Barak had to make at Camp David did not go far enough to fulfil Palestinian aspirations. Nevertheless they were significant in that Mr. Barak broke major Israeli taboos about withdrawing from the Jordan valley, abandoning a number of Jewish settlements, offering Palestinians compensatory land for the settlements that Israel would retain and about sharing authority in Jerusalem.

Now with the taboos broken on the one side and with the violence having shown up the dangers of Israel's continued entanglement with the daily lives of the Palestinians the Israeli pro-peace Left is steadily building up momentum for an assault on the final taboos. Day by day articles and statements appear questioning the need and the viability of striving for Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount/Haram-el-Sharif complex and for the continuance of the settlement. There might be an opportunity for Clinton here.

Almost every country bar the U.S. recognises that the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem are under Israeli military occupation. They also recognise that a fair settlement must involve the return of these territories to full Palestinian control, freedom for the Palestinians to set up a state there and that Palestinian demands must be met with due consideration for Israel's security. Clinton could crown his presidency with an act of statesmanship if he were to make a declaration that he believes a just agreement must be along these lines.

THE HINDU

12 NOV 2000

Hijack crisis over; Barak heads for U.S.

JERUSALEM, NOV. 12. After twice reversing course with his plane due to a hijacking crisis, the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, was again headed to the United States on Sunday for a meeting with the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, on West Asia violence.

Mr. Barak left Israel on Saturday night, but by the time he landed for a scheduled stopover in London, he had received word that a Russian plane had been hijacked and had landed at a military air base in the southern Israeli desert.

He decided to return home, but before he could reach Israel, the hijacking was resolved peacefully, prompting him to turn around in midair to head back to London and on to Washington, said Mr. Barak's adviser, Mr. Danny Yatom, who was traveling with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Barak has already said that after six weeks of sustained violence, he has little hope that the meeting with Mr. Clinton will be able to end the bloodletting.

In clashes Saturday, six Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed in the volatile West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Also on Saturday, in Bethlehem, an American freelance photographer on assignment for the Associated Press was shot in the abdomen. The photographer, Ms Yola Monakhov (26), underwent six hours of surgery for her injuries at Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital. Asked before the surgery who had shot her, Ms Monakhov responded: "An Israeli soldier."

More confrontations broke out on Sunday. The Jewish neighbourhood of Gilo, on the southern fringe of Jerusalem, came under fire around midday from a neighbouring Palestinian village. The Israeli army responded with fire, witnesses said. Gilo has been repeatedly targeted for attack in recent weeks.

In the West Bank town of Hebron, Israeli troops and Palestinian stone-throwers clashed, and the two sides also exchanged gunfire.

Tame end to drama

A Chechen gunman who seized a Russian airliner surrendered to Israeli authorities on Sunday and all 58 people on board were safe, a military official said.

Army Col. Ofer Ophir said the lone hijacker was in Israeli custody and the passengers were unharmed.

The Vnukovo Airlines plane landed at a military air base in Uvda, in Israel's southern desert, early on Sunday morning after being commandeered during a flight from southern Russia to Moscow. The plane refuelled in Baku, Azerbaijan, before reaching Israel.

Israel, Russia and Azerbaijan had said initially that up to four hijackers were on board and were threatening to blow up the plane.

But there was only one gunman, and he turned over his weapon and surrendered, Israeli authorities said.

The hijacking began moving toward a peaceful resolution at about 9 a.m. local time,

three hours after the plane landed in Israel.

At that time, the captain of the Vnukovo Airlines plane came down a stairway and handed over weapons to Israeli security forces, said an army spokesman.

The hijacker too came down the stairs, and was met by a vehicle that took him to the terminal building.

Israeli officials initially said the hijackers acted in support of the Palestinian uprising. But later they said that information was incorrect, and that the hijacking was part of the ongoing conflict between Chechnya and Russia.

Israel initially refused the plane permission to land, and was intent on preventing the plane from landing at Ben-Gurion international airport near Tel Aviv, the country's main airport.

While the plane circled over the Mediterranean Sea, an Israeli Air Force jet flew nearby. Eventually, the plane was allowed to land after the Russian pilot said he was running low on fuel.

The gunman seized the plane on Saturday night shortly after takeoff from Makhachkala, the capital of the southern Russian region of Dagestan in the Caucasus Mountains. It was headed for Moscow, but the hijacker diverted the airplane to Baku, Azerbaijan, where it refuelled before heading for Israel.

Most of those on the plane were believed to be from Dagestan. — AP

THE HINDU

NOV 13 2001

Annan meets leaders, fresh violence erupts

Jerusalem, Oct. 11: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan met Israeli and Palestinian leaders separately on Wednesday to try to staunch two weeks of bloodshed, but fresh violence erupted in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli soldiers shot dead a 17-year-old Palestinian during clashes in the West Bank, hospital sources said.

The death of Sami Hassan Salim from Tulkarm refugee camp raised to at least 91 the number of people killed in two weeks of unrest, all but five of them Palestinians or Israeli Arabs.

A second Palestinian was wound-

ed in the violence, which broke a lull that had accompanied the arrival this week of international mediators trying to defuse the crisis.

Before Salim's death, the UN Children's Fund said 22 children under the age of 18 had been killed and more than 1,000

wounded in the trouble, which has also crippled peace efforts.

Israel Radio said an Israeli Army truck came under fire at Gush Katif junction in Gaza. One soldier was lightly wounded.

In the West Bank, witnesses said

Israeli troops in three tanks had fired machineguns on a Palestinian house near Nablus where gunmen had traded fire with soldiers and Jewish settlers leaving a funeral for an Israeli killed earlier this week.

Mr Annan delayed his planned departure to Lebanon for surprise meetings with Israeli

Prime Minister Ehud Barak in Jerusalem and Palestinian Authority president Yasser Arafat in Gaza.

Neither Mr Annan nor Mr Arafat spoke to reporters.

Palestinian officials said Mr Annan had spoken to French Presi-

dent Jacques Chirac during the talks and planned to contact Mr Barak again.

UN spokesman Fred Eckhart told reporters: "It is our hope that we can achieve something by the end of today, but we are by no means sure. The idea is to come up with some kind of formula to have both sides appeal for calm and once calm is restored to try to resume the peace process." Diplomats said Mr Annan and European Union envoy Javier Solana, who each saw Mr Barak and Mr Arafat on Tuesday, wanted them to agree on an inquiry into the violence and resume dialogue. (Reuters)

'Arafat could do more to stop unrest'

Washington, Oct. 11: The US has blamed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for not doing enough to stop the continued violence between Arabs and Jews.

White House press secretary Jake Siewert told the media on Tuesday "I think he (Arafat) has taken some steps, but he could do more to lower the level of violence. And I think the President (Bill Clinton) has communicated that to him."

He said that the President would go to a summit with Mr Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak if, in his judgment, the parties on the ground are taking the steps to make such a meeting helpful.

When his attention was drawn to the Egyptian foreign minister's suggestion that the next summit on West Asia would likely be an Arab summit a couple of weeks from now, Mr Siewert replied "We want to do everything we can to defuse the tension there, and to take steps now that will lower the level of violence."

Mr Siewert said that it would be useful to have some sort of mechanism for finding facts about the current violence but "we are not focused right now on gathering those facts. We are focused on the diplomacy that might break the violence." (PTI)

Italy may host peace meet

Rome, Oct. 11: Italian Prime Minister Giuliano Amato said on Wednesday Italy had offered to host a possible West Asia peace summit and was waiting for a response from the parties involved.

"We have offered West Asia leaders the possibility of holding a summit in Rome and we are awaiting a response on whether that would be conducive (to the peace process)," Prime Minister Giuliano Amato told Parliament during a question time session. (Reuters)

WEST ASIA CRISIS

Attacks on synagogues condemned

Paris, Oct. 11: President Jacques Chirac on Wednesday condemned a series of firebomb attacks on synagogues in France over the past few days and apparently fuelled by violence in the West Asia.

Police said two synagogues west of Paris were the latest targets of unidentified assailants overnight. Both were empty at the time and no one was hurt.

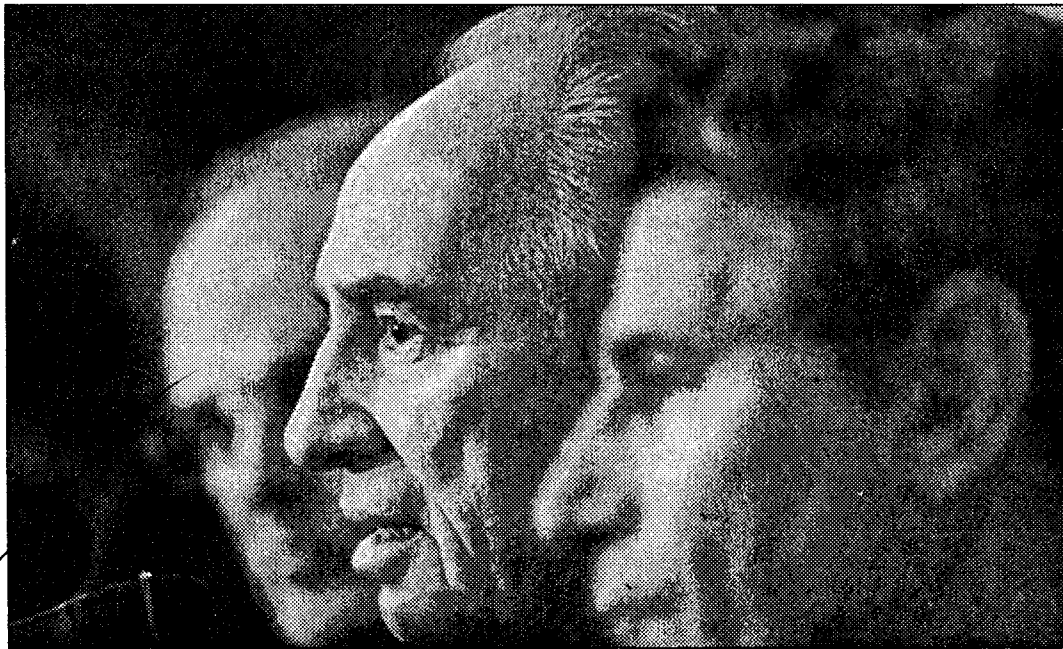
"The President of the Republic condemns these acts of intolerance which are unacceptable in our democracy," Mr Chirac's spokeswoman Catherine Colonna quoted him as saying.

"They question in an inadmissible way the values and traditions of the Republic," she said.

A small synagogue in Trappes was destroyed and investigators discovered containers of flammable liquid near the premises.

A group of youths was seen leaving the synagogue shortly before the fire took hold, a police spokesman said.

The walls and ceilings of another synagogue at Les Ulis suffered minor damage after firebombs were thrown through the windows at ground floor level during the night. The flames were brought under control, the spokesman added. Tension between Jews and Muslims has mounted in France after 90 people, all but five of them Arabs, were killed in Israeli-Palestinian violence. (Reuters)



CRITICAL PEACE: Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres (centre) at a news conference in Rome on Tuesday on the first stop of a tour of European capitals for talks on the West Asia peace process. Mr Peres said he did not think the peace process was dead but rather that it was in critical condition. (Reuters)

Arabs send relief to Palestinians

Dubai, Oct. 11: Gulf Arab states dispatched relief planes on Wednesday to evacuate Palestinians wounded by Israeli forces for medical treatment, official news agencies reported.

They said Saudi Arabia sent two aircraft carrying medical teams to Jordan to fly back 11 Palestinians for care at a military hospital in the Saudi capital Riyadh. At least 90 people, all but five of them Arabs, have been killed in two weeks of violence in Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Jewish state. The dead include 22 children under the age of 18, according to the United Nations.

The United Arab Emirates also sent a plane to Jordan

to evacuate 46 wounded Palestinians, and Qatar sent a planeload of medical supplies, also carrying doctors who would stay to work in Palestinian hospitals and return with 12 hurt Palestinians.

The Qatari plane would fly to an Egyptian town near the Gaza Strip after Israel closed the Palestinian airport in Gaza. UAE newspapers said President Sheikh Zaid bin Sultan al-Nahayan has donated \$8.17 million to the families of Palestinians killed in the clashes.

Oil-rich Gulf Arab states have been rushing aid and donations to the Palestinians and hundreds of people have staged anti-Israeli demonstrations in the conservative region where rallies rarely take place. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

12 OCT 2000

13 MAR 2000

Diplomatic efforts bear fruit in West Asia

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, OCT. 10. The diplomatic efforts to defuse the tension in West Asia have borne some fruit with Israel easing an ultimatum it had sought to impose on the Palestinians. There has also been a perceptible decrease in the intensity of the confrontation between Israeli security forces and rioting Arab youth perhaps because the former have tuned down the scale of the fire-power they had deployed earlier. However, as the events of the past 13 days have shown, the situation is extremely fluid and calm mornings do not necessarily portend a similar mood for the rest of the day.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, has softened his stance in respect of the "ultimatum" he first delivered to the Palestinian leadership on Saturday that he would consider the negotiations closed if rioting by the Arab youth was not quelled by Monday evening. Though the Palestinian leadership declined to initiate any action on these lines even after the ultimatum had expired, Mr. Barak today said that he was willing to wait a few more days.

The Palestinians had regarded the use of the term "ultimatum" as insulting and Mr. Barak tried to be accommodative in this respect as well. He said that his intention was not to show that he was imposing something on the Palestinians but merely pointing out that the closure of the negotiations was the "obvious, most self-evident consequence" if the rioting continued.

These changes in stance have not been sufficient to mollify the Palestinian leadership. There is no definitive word from the Palestinian Authority President, Mr.

Yasser Arafat, as to what Israel must do before he will consider action to quell the rioting. One of his aides insists that the Palestinian leadership will act only when an international commission of enquiry is instituted to probe the cause of the disturbances.

While the U.N. Security Council has noted the need for an objective enquiry, it has not constituted such a commission. It is not likely that the Security Council will do so since the U.S. is bound to oppose such a move. Perhaps the other members of the Security Council would also be disinclined to set up such a commission since the Council has already found that the initial provocation came from the Israeli side and since they have also condemned the excessive force Israel used to quell the rioting.

A demand of a more substantive kind has been advanced by the Palestinian Authority's Planning Minister, Mr. Nabil Shaath, who said that the violence would stop only when Israel pulls back its tanks and snipers. The Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, who had a two-hour meeting with Mr. Arafat yesterday, also spoke of the need for an Israeli troop pull-back. Some Arab commentators in the media have also written about the need for Israel to scale down the massive fire-power it had deployed and also of the need for some expressions of contrition.

The Palestinians clearly want a clear affirmation from Israel and the international community that they are the aggrieved party in this whole affair as a minimum condition to be met before restraints are placed on the incensed Arab masses.

Israeli leaders, including Mr.

Barak, have expressed words of regret for the deaths (nearly a 100 by now) and the injuries (over 2000 have been wounded) and the Israeli tanks and helicopters do not appear to have been used over the last two days. But the Israeli leadership and public still tend to treat the affair as the product of Palestinian provocation and there is therefore still no readiness to express their remorse in a coherent and clear-cut fashion.

It also does not appear that the heads of Israeli security are ready to pull-back the snipers who have done most of the killing. This is one of the rare episodes when the world has recognised that Israel is responsible and the Palestinians, who have for long suffered from being depicted as the irresponsible party, will probably not relent till the idea is firmly planted on the world's consciousness.

Perhaps that last sentence needs to be amended. It is perhaps not the world's good opinion that the Palestinian leadership craves as much as a sign of impartiality from the U.S. administration which has not shed its traditional view as to who are the good guys and who the bad in the Israeli-Palestinian equation.

Significantly, Mr. Arafat has yet to signal his consent to attend a summit of five leaders (those of the U.S., Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Israel) that the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, is trying to convene. Mr. Barak has said that he will attend. Meanwhile, two leading diplomatic trouble-shooters, the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan and the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, have begun rounds of consultations with regional leaders.

THE HINDU

7 11 2000

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MIDEAST PEACE

So near, and yet so far

THE tragedy of the Mid-east peace process is that when many outstanding issues between Israelis and Palestinians have been settled, the last remaining hurdle — Jerusalem — appears to pose insuperable obstacles. Clashes in the West Bank, Gaza and even within Israel itself are spreading, and 88 people, mostly Palestinians, are dead. Israel has trouble even on its Lebanese flank, which it thought it had settled by withdrawing from Lebanon. In a daring attack, Hezbollah guerrillas have captured three Israeli soldiers, and are demanding in exchange for them 19 Lebanese, including a couple of guerrilla leaders held by the Israelis, as well as scores of Palestinian prisoners. The peace process was initiated in Oslo in 1993, that it is taking so long for it to get off the ground is causing frustrations to rise to fever pitch. Since no one denies that what is being negotiated is the final shape of a Palestinian state, what Ehud Barak and the Israelis need to take into consideration is that a Palestinian state without jurisdiction over any part of Jerusalem is unacceptable, not just to Palestinians but to Arab opinion as a whole. In that case, imposing a "solution" on Yasser Arafat without any concessions on Jerusalem would not bring peace, whatever else it may bring. It will simply put Arafat out on a limb among the Palestinians. Neither is the United States realistic in pushing for a solution, which leaves out the pivotal issue of Jerusalem.

East Jerusalem, the predominantly Arab part of the city, was annexed by Israelis in the 1967 war and religious passions swirl around the Temple Mount area, where next to the Wailing Wall, the remains of early Jewish temples, are the Haram al-Sharif and al-Aqsa mosques. These rate as among the holiest shrines in both Judaism and Islam, and explain why both Israelis and Palestinians want control over the area. In that case the beginnings of a workable solution may be for Israel to cede sovereignty over at least the Arab parts of East Jerusalem, with guaranteed access from the Israeli side to the Temple Mount area. If the Israelis cannot trust the Palestinians over this, some creative solution, such as the UN Security Council administering the area for a number of years pending transfer to the Palestinians, needs to be considered. Taboos have to be broken for a lasting solution to the area's conflicts; the alternative is too horrible to contemplate.

THE STATESMAN

11 OCT 2000

Hammas threatens Israel with terrorist attacks

Paris, October 9 **XV-13**
THE ISLAMIC resistance movement, Hamas, today threatened to resume terrorist activities in Israel in an escalation of the Intifada (uprising).

"The Intifada is the first step in the revolt. The second will be the resumption of violence in Israel," Hamas spokesman Ismail Abu Shanab said in an interview to the French daily *La Croix* published today.

Shanab said that the Netzarim, the Jewish colony in the Gaza Strip "is no longer a useful target as there are no more Israelis..." We know how to hit the Israelis elsewhere. Our objective is to avoid direct conflict and find easy targets," the spokesman added.

"Resistance is the only means of convincing the Israelis to withdraw from the Palestinian territories."

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak "should understand that repression will not stop Palestinian violence. The only solution is that

the Israelis withdraw from the occupied territories," he said.

Shanab said his group could follow the example of the Shiite Muslim Hezbollah movement, which spearheaded successful efforts to force Israeli troops out of Lebanon, as the current wave of violence against Israel continues.

"We could take Hezbollah as our

phone diplomacy bid in support of international efforts to defuse the growing crisis in the region.

Chirac last night spoke to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as well as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, his office said.

UNITED NATIONS:

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has left for W Asia in an attempt to help end violence in the region and put the peace process back on track, UN officials said.

He is expected to arrive in Tel Aviv tonight and to meet both Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Annan's spokesman Fred Eckhard said in a statement.

The UN Secretary General was undertaking the trip "in view of the increasingly precarious situation in West Asia, which carries the risk of a major conflagration," Mr Eckhard said.

(Agencies)

Clinton may visit West Asia

US PRESIDENT Bill Clinton is considering travelling to West Asia this week for a summit with Israeli, Palestinian and Egyptian leaders, to try to cement an end to recent violence and restart the peace process there, US officials said. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Clinton would attend the summit, hosted by the Egyptians, the officials said.

AFP, Washington

example for Palestinian struggle. Those who are negotiating will continue to do so, and those who use the armed struggle will continue to do so, because the two strategies are complementary," Shanab said in Gaza.

Meanwhile, French President Jacques Chirac has made a series of calls to W Asia leaders in a tele-

Kostunica gives priority to Yugoslav integrity

Belgrade, October 9 **XV-13**
NEW YUGOSLAV President Vojislav Kostunica has seen the national currency soar and international sanctions eased since taking power, but the problems which face him remain daunting.

Basking in support from abroad, Kostunica spent his first day in office yesterday struggling to prevent the country's further disintegration and tackling the economic crisis inherited from his predecessor Slobodan Milosevic.

Kostunica, sworn in on Saturday, said he was keen to reintegrate his country in the international community but said safeguarding the fragile Yugoslav Federation was his main priority.

"In reality, reconciliation between Serbia and Montenegro is the task of tasks," he told the state news agency Tanjug in his first interview since taking office.

In a first move Serbia lifted a blockade of its border with Montenegro imposed since a government opposed to the Milosevic regime came to power there in 1998.

The move came amid signs that Serbia's junior federal partner

Montenegro and ethnic Albanians in the breakaway province of Kosovo welcomed the change of President but did not see it as a solution to the issue of their national status.

Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic said Milosevic's departure removed the immediate threat of armed intervention by Belgrade in his tiny republic, but he stressed the need to reassess Podgorica's federal status, downgraded by Belgrade in July.

"Montenegro faces two possibilities nowadays: to reach an accord on relations with Serbia within the Yugoslav federation or to form an independent state," he said on Saturday.

Djukanovic, who boycotted the September 24 federal polls and skipped Kostunica's swearing-in ceremony in Belgrade, said he was ready to negotiate with the self-proclaimed moderate nationalist "not as President of Yugoslavia, but as the representative of the democratic majority in Serbia."

Leaders in Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority also stressed that the new presidency would not end their calls for independence.

(AFP)

Region hurtling towards war?

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, Oct. 8. The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, today reiterated the ultimatum he laid down late last night for the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to quell rioting by Palestinian youth by Monday evening.

(According to an AFP report, an Israeli army commander announced today that Israel and the Palestinians had reached an accord for an immediate halt to fighting in Gaza Strip. Gen. Yom Tov Samia said the deal was agreed during a meeting with Gen. Abdel Razeq al-Majidiah, head of general security in the Gaza Strip.)

Mr. Barak said that his hand was still extended for peace but also that Israel was prepared to unleash its armed might if Mr. Arafat does not put an end to the violence that has rocked the Palestinian territories and Israel during the past 11 days. For their part, the Palestinians state that the responsibility for the current spell of violence, the worst since the intifada, rests with Israel and that Mr. Barak is the one who should act to lower tensions.

The subtle shift in the Israeli position vis-a-vis the Palestinians over the last couple of days, with the talk of war now over-laying the talk of peace, took place even as Israel issued grave warnings to its northern Arab neighbours Syria and Lebanon following the abduction of three Israeli soldiers by Hizbollah yesterday.

While the Arabs view the developments on the Israel-Lebanon and Israel-Palestinian fronts as being connected, the Israeli Government for the moment is trying to deal with them on separate tracks. However, Mr. Barak also gave vent to his concern that Israel might soon be fighting for its existence in West Asia thus under-lining the possibility that a wider regional conflict could explode at any moment.



Palestinians throw stones during a demonstration against Israeli forces on the border with Israel in South Lebanon on Saturday. Lebanon's Hizbollah group said in a statement on Saturday its guerrillas captured Israeli soldiers during an attack along the Israeli-Lebanese border. — Reuters

Mr. Barak delivered his ultimatum after two developments yesterday that raised the stakes higher still. One was the sudden eruption of tension along Israel's border with Lebanon. A group of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon who had gone to the border to express their solidarity with their brethren in the territories were reported to have tried to tear down a border fence. At least one of them was killed when Israeli soldiers opened fire.

Hizbollah launched a retaliatory mortar attack on the Sheba farms (a piece of territory that Lebanon claims) and under cover of this attack breached the border fence and abducted the soldiers. Israel has rushed commandos to the north and while their bombers, gun-ships, artillery and naval units have already shelled Hizbollah targets even as the possibility of a raid to rescue the soldiers has not been ruled out. Unsources reports suggest that Hizbollah

is ready to trade the soldiers for their cadre who are held in Israeli jails and a swap is also not ruled out since Mr. Barak has said that he is prepared to use all means to secure the release of the soldiers.

If that was one development which caused a qualitative deterioration of the situation, another took place in the Palestinian-controlled town of Nablus.

Israel had withdrawn its soldiers, and the religious scholars whom they were protecting, from the Jewish religious site Joseph's tomb in Nablus yesterday morning. This site was ransacked and at least partially destroyed by Palestinian civilians while their security forces stood by.

In retaliation, the Israelis went about destroying a mosque in the town of Tiberias. This rank communal twist has made a ugly situation uglier still.

Though diplomatic efforts to bring about a truce have not been abandoned, it does not appear that much headway can be made in the short time that Mr. Barak has set for the enforcement of his ultimatum. Mr. Barak has said that if the Palestinians do not do as he has demanded, he will turn his attentions to the formation of a national unity government which he believes his country needs at this moment of crisis. If he does so it would mean the induction into his Cabinet of the Opposition leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon, the man who set off this conflagration, and the effective end of the peace negotiations.

Buildings destroyed

Meanwhile, Israeli tanks and bulldozers destroyed at least three buildings in the Gaza strip overnight, in an act the Palestinians denounced today as "terrorism," reports AFP.

Palestinians pull down Jewish tomb of contention

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NABLUS (West Bank), Oct. 7. — Palestinians using iron bars, pickaxes and hammers demolished Joseph's Tomb after the Israeli army pulled out of the Jewish shrine, a deadly flashpoint over the past nine days of violence.

They were among some 2,000 people who swarmed past Palestinian police posted to protect the site, and ignored the governor of Nablus, Mahmud Al-Alul, who said the shrine was also holy to Muslims and called on them not to damage it.

After several hours, only the outer walls of the small, five-room building remained standing. The part of the building which housed the tomb was in flames, but there was no immediate indication of what started the fire.

Demonstrators hoisted a flag over the site, bearing the words "there is no God but God and Mohammed is his prophet."

The Israeli army vacated the

Israeli firing kills Palestinians at Lebanon border

RAMIEH GATE (Lebanon), Oct. 7. — Israeli troops fired on a demonstration at the Lebanese-Israeli border today, killing at least two Palestinian refugees and wounding 15, and provoking Lebanese shelling on Israeli positions.

Lebanon's Hizbollah guerrillas later said they had captured three Israeli soldiers during the border clashes. Within hours, Israeli jets began bombing Hizbollah-held hills in Lebanon.

The Israeli army has strengthened its presence at Ramieh Gate with several armoured vehicles. Hundreds of Palestinians were still facing them. — Agencies

site, which lies in an Israeli-controlled enclave of the Palestinian-ruled town of

Nablus, at dawn today, handing control over to Palestinian police. The Israeli government said the Palestinian Authority had promised to protect the site, but about 100 Palestinian policemen stood by as the demonstrators entered and began to vandalise it.

They burned books left behind by Jewish theology students and hauled outside other equipment left by the Israeli soldiers, adds DPA.

UN resolution

The USA threatened yesterday to use its veto power against a draft resolution condemning Israeli "provocation" and "excessive use of force" against Palestinian civilians.

The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr Richard Holbrooke, told the UN Security Council that he rejected the draft resolution negotiated for several hours with Palestinians, after consulting with the US Secretary of State, Mrs Madeleine Albright.

THE STATESMAN

Battling against great odds

No one can deny the magnificent courage of the Palestinian youth who faced the Israeli army with slingshots and catapults... And then there was the man who lit the spark, Mr. Ariel Sharon, the one Israeli the Arabs have cause to hate.

KESAVA MENON
on the violence in West Asia.

IRAN CALLED a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Iraq asked the Arab states to its west to provide passage so that its armoured columns could punish Israel. An Arab businessman in the United Arab Emirates issued a tender for fifty truck-loads of one cubic inch sized Suwan rocks (a particularly hard variety) and 500,000 sling-shots to be transported overland through Jordan for delivery to the Palestinian youth confronting Israel's armed might. Of all the responses from an enraged Muslim world that of the UAE businessman was the one that really encapsulated the spirit of what happened in the Palestinian territories and Israel for a week beginning September 28.

Whatever might be one's views on the Arab-Israeli conflict, no one can deny the magnificent courage of the Palestinian youth who faced the Israeli security forces with sling-shots and catapults for the most part. Those displays of courage also produced much tragedy since over 70 people were killed and over a thousand injured — the vast majority of them Palestinians or Israeli Arabs — in the seven days of conflict. That international opinion swung the Palestinian way was one small recompense. A more important one perhaps was that the Palestinians' perception of the true nature of their relationship with Israel was imprinted on the world's consciousness.

There was one proximate cause for the onset of the confrontation but that can be taken up later. What was undeniable was that the



Palestinian youth take on the Israelis' mighty military machine.

Palestinian youth would not have repeatedly mounted reckless charges against a fully armed Israeli army if there had not been years of rage bottled up inside them. A diet of daily harassment, constant humiliation and to an extent even the denial of their humanity by the Israelis could not have produced in the Palestinians anything other than the willingness to risk everything once the flash-point arrived.

And then there was the man who lit the spark. If there is one Israeli that the Arabs have cause to hate from the core of their being it is Mr. Ariel Sharon, a man who has had Arab blood on his hands for 50 years and acts as if he did not mind if he had to dip them in gore for years to come. In an interview to CNN, Mr. Sharon was to claim that he, as a man who had fought in all of Israel's wars, knew the value of peace. What he did not mention was that those years of warfare also included episodes in which he was present or in the vicinity

when Arabs were massacred out of the line of direct military conflict. (There is no evidence that he was directly involved though all episodes occurred when he was in the area in a commanding capacity).

Mr. Sharon was the man who set up in the early 1950s the notorious Unit 101 tasked to carry out reprisal raids against Palestinian guerrilla bases outside Israel's border. This unit is known to have carried out at least one massacre of innocent civilians, women and children, in what was subsequently categorised as a 'mistake'. Quite recently, the bodies of Egyptians taken prisoner and then killed out of hand during the Suez conflict of 1956 were exhumed. Mr. Sharon led the Israeli armoured drive to the Canal in the course of which these prisoners were taken. Then in 1982 when as Defence Minister he committed the Israeli army to the invasion of Lebanon the massacres at the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps took place. The

massacres of these Palestinian refugees were actually carried out by Lebanese Christian forces allied with Israel but a subsequent official enquiry held Mr. Sharon indirectly responsible.

This was the man who decided to visit the Temple Mount/Al Aqsa complex at the precise moment in history when the question of future control over this site is the one on which the prospects of West Asian peace hinges. It is also a question that arouses much trepidation and concern in Arab minds since the loss of control of the site to Israel will carve a huge dent in their national identity. Mr. Sharon was to say that he paid his visit, along with other hardliners from his Likud party, only to show that Jews must always have the right to visit their holiest site. He, however, inadvertently confirmed the strong suspicion that he had an ulterior motive when he said that the Palestinian reaction to his visit showed that the complex would remain open to people of all faiths only when it was under Israeli control. Therefore he knew that his visit would provoke reaction of the kind it eventually did and his purpose was to prove a political point.

There were apparently even baser political goals that Mr. Sharon was seeking to gain. Just before he announced his visit to the site, Israel's Attorney-General had ruled out the trial of the former Likud Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, on embezzlement charges. Mr. Netanyahu is now free to resume his political career and once he does his first target will be Mr. Sharon who is almost certain to lose the leadership of the Likud. Mr. Sharon had to establish his credentials as the true upholder of Jewish interests in a hurry.

But can Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and his Interior Minister (and acting Foreign Minister), Mr. Shlomo Ben Ami, escape responsibility. Anyone with the faintest acquaintance of Israeli/Palestinian affairs would have known that an event such as Mr. Sharon's visit would provoke the reaction it did. However, Mr. Barak has given sufficient proof of his sincerity vis-a-vis the process of reconciliation with the Arabs and it is very possible that he was outflanked by Mr. Sharon. If Mr. Barak had stopped him, Mr. Sharon would have accused him of being ready to surrender the very basis of Israeli identity.

Threat to Barak Govt. recedes

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 30. Israeli and Palestinian leaders are trying to keep their hard and soft options open even as the clock ticks down to a denouement. Events are still being driven by the dynamics of politics but the economic costs of the continuing confrontation have built up to the point where they are beginning to have an impact. The brinkmanship by both sides is not sustainable and vital decisions will probably have to be taken within a matter of weeks.

Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, was expected to face a barrage of criticism when the Knesset (Parliament) convenes for its winter session later on Monday. Mr. Barak retains the assured support of just about a quarter of the parliamentarians and a bill for early elections had been passed by an overwhelming majority at its first reading before the Knesset recessed three months ago.

Till the last weekend, it had appeared that Mr. Barak would face a no-confidence motion as soon as the Knesset re-convened but the danger has abated for the moment. Ongoing parleys with the Opposition Likud party on the formation of a unity Government and the fact that Mr. Barak also has other options have had Israeli politicians second-guessing about the efficacy of a no-confidence vote.

Fears about returning to the electorate just 18 months after the last election also dampens enthusiasm for a no-confidence



Ariel Sharon



Ehud Barak

vote that will automatically result in the dissolution of Parliament.

Deal-making with the Likud has stalled because Mr. Barak refuses to give the Opposition leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon, a veto over "diplomatic and security" issues that form the substance of negotiations with the Palestinians. Mr. Barak is reportedly willing to provide Mr. Sharon access to classified materials and to involve him in all aspects of the negotiations but he will not hand over decision-making power to Mr. Sharon. That provides one indication that Mr. Barak has not abandoned hopes of arriving at a final settlement with the Palestinians. If Mr. Barak had handed over veto power to the hardline Mr. Sharon, it would in effect have meant that he had decided to close down negotiations with the Pal-

estinians. There are other indications that Mr. Barak still hopes that that U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, will bail out the negotiation process after the election of Nov. 7. Mr. Barak has accepted Mr. Clinton's invitation to meet him in Washington and the acting Foreign Minister, Mr. Shlomo Ben Ami, is to visit the U.S. to gauge which way the administration is leaning.

Speculation in Israel is that Mr. Clinton will hear out Mr. Barak's ideas on the shape of a final settlement as also that of the Palestinian President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and then present the U.S.'s bridging proposals as the frame-work for an acceptable settlement. The speculation is that post-November 7, Mr. Clinton will be able to take a decisive view on the West Asian matter without

having to be concerned about how the response to these ideas from Jewish voters will affect the candidatures of his wife and his Vice-President.

In this context, the news that Mr. Barak is to request Mr. Clinton to declare Israel to be a strategic ally of the U.S. looks like another indicator that not all hope is lost. Mr. Barak is perhaps making this request because he anticipates that Mr. Clinton will press him to accept some fairly unpalatable compromises in the final settlement with the Palestinians. The acquisition of a status as a U.S. strategic ally will sugar-coat the pill. Notably, Mr. Barak has not as yet taken off the table the proposals he put forward at Camp David.

If Mr. Barak is playing hard and soft in the lead-up to a meeting with Mr. Clinton, so is Mr. Arafat. In fact, he is doing so in more categorical terms. Mr. Arafat and his aides maintain that the current uprising will continue till the realisation of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital irrespective of any activity on the diplomatic front.

However, the Palestinians have withdrawn a Nov. 15 deadline for a unilateral declaration of independence. His senior aides have suddenly become far more active in explaining to the Israeli public the underlying causes for the outbreak of rioting and impressing upon them the need for an acceptance of the Palestinians' just demands.

THE HINDU

31 OCT 2000

Palestine best born out of peace

Knesset member Uri Savir tells ERIC SILVER that Israel has ignored the depth of Palestinian grassroots disappointment. Priorities have to be redefined. Peace dividends have to go from the bottom up. The people out on the streets are more the have-nots than the haves. What is being seen now is also a rebellion against the elite

FOR three months in 1993, Uri Savir, the then director-general of the Israeli foreign ministry, sat secretly in Oslo and hammered out an agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation that kindled hopes of a peaceful end to a century of belligerence.

Seven years later, despite this autumn's reversion to violence, he is still convinced that peace is possible — and that the sooner Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat get back to the negotiating table the better. What they need, he argues, is the courage to make the kind of compromises

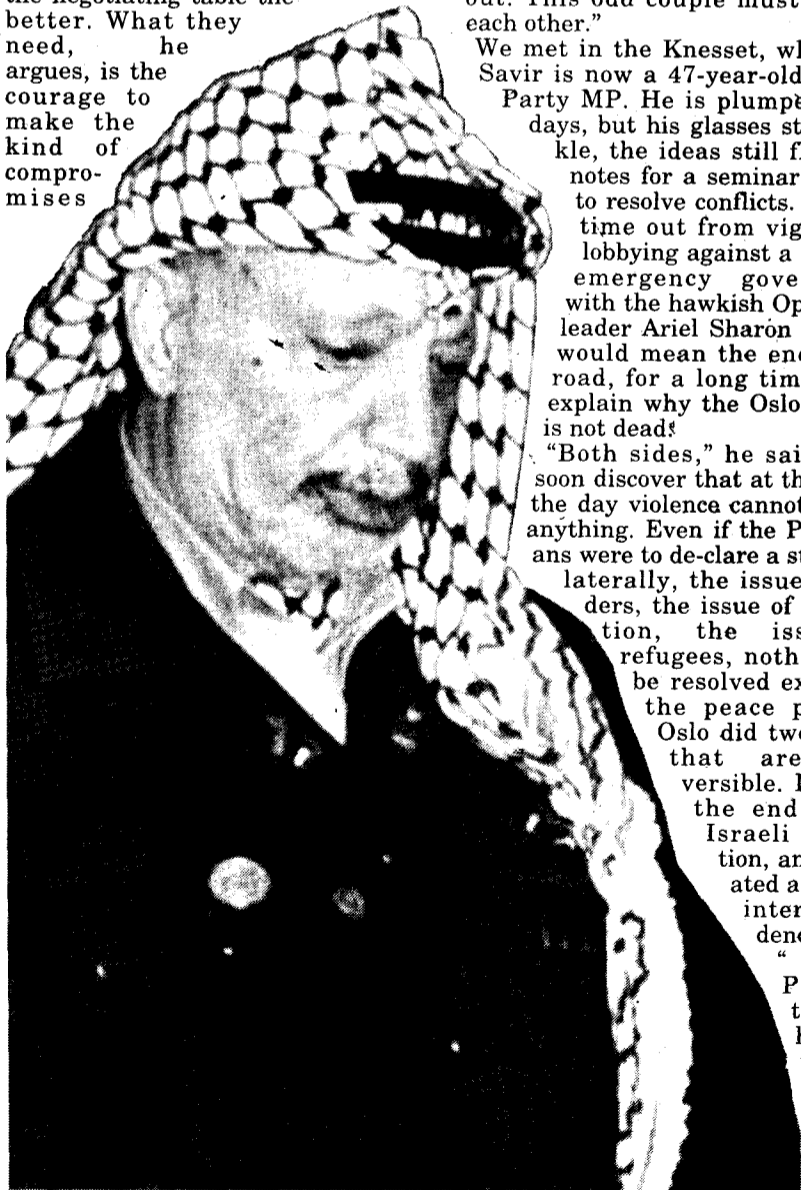
was not just the courage to meet and make a compromise, but the courage to withstand internal opposition. For deals that were unpopular, Rabin paid with his life, Mr Peres with his political life, and Mr Arafat took great risks. But ultimately their countries were better off.

Bill Clinton, he suggests, deserves a Nobel Prize for his persistence in trying to rescue the process. There's just one more thing the US President must do: "He has to lock Mr Barak and Mr Arafat in a room and walk out. This odd couple must talk to each other."

We met in the Knesset, where Mr Savir is now a 47-year-old Centre Party MP. He is plumper these days, but his glasses still twinkle, the ideas still flow like notes for a seminar on how to resolve conflicts. He took time out from vigorously lobbying against a national emergency government with the hawkish Opposition leader Ariel Sharon — "that would mean the end of the road, for a long time" — to explain why the Oslo process is not dead.

"Both sides," he said, "will soon discover that at the end of the day violence cannot resolve anything. Even if the Palestinians were to declare a state unilaterally, the issue of borders, the issue of recognition, the issue of refugees, nothing will be resolved except by the peace process. Oslo did two things that are irreversible. It began the end of the Israeli occupation, and it created a sense of inter-dependence."

The Palestinians have to understand, as we have to understand,



Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Mr Arafat made then to fight for them. "Peace," he insists, "is not made out of consensus. What was so great about Rabin, Mr Peres and Mr Arafat

that nation-building and peace go hand-in-hand. Peace is not just something they give to Israel. If Palestine can be born in an agreement of peace, it will be a different Palestine than if

it's born out of hostility."

What, then, should Mr Barak do to get the process back on track? The Prime Minister had to reaffirm that Mr Arafat remained a partner, provided he recognised that violence had no part in negotiations, and provided he made a 100 per cent effort to prevent terrorism. "Based on these premises," Mr Savir said, "we have to make every effort not just to renew the peace process, but to conclude it."

After the two leaders seemed to have got so close at Camp David in July, I asked, what went wrong? "Camp David was a mistake," Mr Savir



Bill Clinton should lock Yehud Barak (above) and Yasser Arafat in a room and walk out. This odd couple must talk to each other.

answered. "You cannot resolve 100 years of conflict in two weeks at Camp David. It was too much a make-it or break-it. We avoided a small crisis, then and got a bigger crisis later."

More specifically, he argued that Israel ignored the depth of Palestinian grassroots disappointment with the fruits of peace. "We'll have to redefine the priorities. The peace dividends have to go from the bottom up. The people out on the streets are more the have-nots than the haves. Those who have gained from the peace process are the elites. What we are seeing now is also a rebellion against the elite. We have to invest a thousand times more resources in socio-economic programmes and peace-building programmes."

The two parties, he added, failed to learn a key lesson of Oslo: that Israelis and Palestinians should negotiate with each other, not the Americans, and they should do so in secret. "Had Oslo been conducted the way Camp David was conducted, we'd never have achieved our compromises. We need the Americans for safety nets against crises, for a strategic umbrella, for the aid issues and the security issues. "But the core diplomacy has to be bilateral and well-prepared because that is how you build the necessary trust."

Mr Savir acknowledged that there had been plenty of bilateral meetings before the summit, but they had been too public. "The fact that you know about all of these meetings — and probably also their content — the next day makes diplomacy impossible. Imagine in the middle of Oslo

that Israelis had known that we proposed to let Mr Arafat come to Gaza, and the Palestinians had known that Mr Arafat gave up on the West Bank in the first stage of autonomy, there would never have been a deal. And now we're dealing with weightier issues."

So, where do they go from here? Israel, Mr Savir argued, had to learn that "military power hardly counts any more." The Palestinians had to learn that international support was not enough. They had to convince Israeli public opinion. "They have an incredible opportunity to achieve an agreement that will not give them all, but will give them a state on most of the West Bank and all of Gaza, with some hold also in Jerusalem, with a serious solution to the refugee problem."

"They have more to lose than us. We are not just split, we are schizophrenic. We can be tough and short-sighted, or we can be open-minded and generous. Therefore, those who create this violence — even if it's out of frustration, even if it's out of some justified claims, it doesn't matter — they're making an historical mistake."

For all the bluster and bloodshed, Mr Savir concluded, Mr Arafat remained the best, if not the only, partner for peace Israel has. "Maybe there'll be other leaders who'll be better neighbours, who will speak softer, but Mr Arafat is a symbol who can make the ultimate compromise. And I think the same is true of Mr Barak."

(The author is The Statesman's Jerusalem-based correspondent)



An Israeli soldier passes burning tyres during clashes with Palestinian stone throwers near the Karni commercial crossing to the east of Gaza Strip on Sunday. At least nine Palestinians were injured when Israeli soldiers opened fire on Palestinian stone throwers at the site. — Reuters

WEST ASIA / PALESTINIAN FEARS

More interlocutors a solution?

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 29. The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, was known to have held the view at the time of the Camp David talks in July that such a summit intended to finally settle his people's dispute with Israel was premature.

After a month of fierce conflict between Palestinian youth and Israeli security forces, the hopes for an early end to the decades-long conflict have dwindled considerably though even now a negotiated settlement offers the only way out of a situation that offers little comfort to either side. Mr. Arafat cannot perhaps end the current confrontation on his own but he also gives the impression that he is waiting for something to happen before he makes a move.

It was an apparently very reluctant Mr. Arafat who had gone to Camp David and his interlocutors found him withdrawn and non-committal during the days of negotiations. He was said to have told the U.S. mediators that he felt the time was not right for clinching the deal. Soon after the Camp David talks concluded, Mr. Arafat went around the world asking for pledges of support for a declaration of state-hood. Almost every single leader he met told him that while they supported Palestinian state-hood in principle they would not be happy if such a declaration was made in a context other than a negotiated settlement.

The next deadline that Mr. Arafat has set for a unilateral declaration of state-hood is November 15 that he will declare state-hood on that date if a final settlement has not been reached by then. While the Palestinians have garnered a lot of sympathy world-wide on account of the unequal combat between their youth and the Israeli troops, it is very unlikely that this sympathy will translate into a willingness to support a unilateral declaration of statehood. Such a declaration would kill the negotiations and probably prolong the Israel-Palestine dispute for a very long time and the world has gone

weary of the dispute.

The month-long confrontation that has left more than 130 Palestinians dead has clarified the true nature of the conflict between the two West Asian people. Most governments would not have any hesitation in agreeing that the Palestinians are trying to free themselves from occupation and that the dispute is therefore of a qualitatively different nature from the list of differences that have been agitated in the negotiations.

This is not a view that finds support within a U.S. administration that has exclusively managed the negotiations for the past seven years. But the European Union and Russia appear ready to recognise the true nature of the Palestinian struggle. They are also now trying to butt into the negotiations though the U.S. does not appear eager to have them in.

If the Russians and Europeans do come in it will be easier for Mr. Arafat to sell any eventual agreement to his people. No matter how good the agreement is, it will always be a little unpalatable to the Palestinians if they feel that it has been rammed down their throats by a U.S.-Israeli combine. Adding on the Europeans and Russia at these later stages might help ease any agreement through.

All this of course presupposes that an agreement is still obtainable and that Mr. Arafat might be interested in preparing his people to accept it. He certainly wants an international recognition of his people's sufferings and that he is getting at the moment. He needed to remind the Israelis that they too need the peace and as the Israelis consider the long-term costs of lording it over the Palestinians he might be able to achieve this through.

The near-agreement forged at Camp David, and for which a bit of fine-tuning has been done since, does come close to meeting the attainable requirements of either side. Mr. Arafat had not prepared his people for that agreement. The question is whether he can sell it now.

THE HINDU

30 OCT 2000

One land, two nations

19-16
28/10

MORE THAN seven years of interaction between the leaders of Israelis and Palestinians were supposed to have developed a level of trust between the two peoples. After a month of fierce clashes between Israeli security men and Palestinian civilians, punctuated by the first suicide bomb attack in more than a year that took place on Thursday, the level of trust that would have enabled the two sides to settle their dispute looked like something that would never be achieved. But both sides still say that they are committed to achieving peace — and the alternative is so miserable to contemplate — that the question must be asked whether they can come to a sustainable agreement even if they do not trust each other.

Developments such as those which have been taking place in West Asia expose some of the fundamental limitations of the media. In trying to disseminate information about what is happening journalists have to concentrate on the immediate, on what is new. That which is new develops out of the old but journalism in practise is rarely given the gift of presenting the totality with all aspects blended in the right proportion. When the efforts at peace appear to be on course the fact that old animosities have not been forgotten is overlooked and when conflict breaks out the fact that some bridges have been built is forgotten.

In a rare and very useful piece of journalism, the Israeli newspaper, *Haartez*, recently carried a report of how the moderates in both camps have been interacting with each other since rioting broke out on September 28. According to this report, contacts between Israeli peaceniks and their Palestinian acquaintances and friends had virtually broken down in the early stages of the conflict and were only being re-established very slowly. Those Israelis who were interviewed invariably said that the initial exchange of greetings over the telephone were warm and effusive. But once they got down to specifics the Palestinians expressed their anger and bitterness at the failure of the Israeli left to make its voice heard.

The report brought out some noteworthy aspects of the situation. For one, if the Palestinians' understandable bitterness is set aside for the moment, it is evident from the very fact of contact that people on both sides believe that there are people of goodwill on the other. Second, these were the first signs of the re-awakening of a recognition that people of goodwill on both sides of the fence will have to begin to work together again. But the Israelis interviewed also seemed to be taken aback by the vehemence of the Palestinians'



A youth carrying the Palestinian flag runs for cover from Israeli troops... a beleaguered nation.

It will not be reasonable to expect the Palestinians to change their fundamental attitudes towards the Israelis so long as there is no improvement in their actual situation. KESAVA MENON on West Asia's angst.

complaints. Therein the report brought out the fundamental problem that people on either side of the fence, perhaps more so on the Israeli side, have not learnt to look at the situation from the other side's point of view.

Take, for example, the Israelis' knee-jerk reaction that recent events have shown that their security, individual more than collective, is as much in jeopardy as ever. This despite the fact that the Palestinians have not carried out a single attack across the borders of Israel proper and despite the fact that not a single Israeli non-settler civilian has been killed in clashes with Palestinians. Violent confrontations of the past were always accompanied by terror attacks, or attempts at them, on targets inside Israel. Such a situation has not developed till now (even Thursday's bomb attack was on Israeli troops posted in Gaza).

If the Israelis fail to recognise that their situation has indeed improved in some respects, and to a limited extent at least, they also fail to

recognise that there are many respects in which the Palestinians' condition has not improved. Fundamentally, the Palestinians are still far from being independent of Israel's control and in at least one respect — in terms of the land lost to Jewish settlements and roads connecting them — are worse off than they were before the negotiations got started. Any neutral visitor can easily discern how the Palestinians' condition is much worse than that of the Israelis and with a little effort can understand how the contrast will add resentment to long-standing animosities.

It would not have been reasonable to expect the Palestinians to change their fundamental attitudes towards the Israelis so long as there was no change in their actual situation. The interim period of the Oslo processes was intended to bring about incremental changes that could lead to such an attitudinal shift that the Palestinians might finally agree to the compromises that would be necessary. However, the change in the ground situation has been so superficial and even retrograde in certain respects that no attitudinal change could have taken place. It is, however, unfortunate that the pent up resentments have exploded just when it appeared that the compromises the Palestinians would be called on to make were something that they could be expected to live with.

It is probably too late in the day to effectuate changes that will induce the Palestinians to think that it will be worth their while to deal with the Israelis, though there is stray talk about getting Israel to go through with further troop re-deployments in the West Bank.

The Middle East muddle

Back to the trenches

It was hoped that the violence between the Palestinians and the Israelis which occurred in the beginning of October would come to an end with the verbal agreements between President Clinton, Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and President Hosni Mubarak at Sharm-el-Sheikh on October 17. The meeting of heads of government of 16 Arab states which concluded on October 22, however, indicates that the revival of peace in the Middle East could be a distant prospect.

This is the first time since 1991 that a major PLO-Israeli clash has occurred re-kindling Arab-Israeli antagonism back to the levels which existed up to 1973-74. This is also the first time that India has to react to this crisis in the context of its equally good relations with Arab countries and with Israel. The situation has been compounded further by violence between Israeli armed forces and Palestinian youth in all the Arab settlements within Israel. Arafat at the end of the Arab League summit announced that the Palestinian objective is to clear the road to Jerusalem which is the capital of the Palestinian state. What is most alarming is Prime Minister Barak undertaking negotiations with the extremist right-wing leader Sharon to form a new coalition government. The formation of such a government would have profound negative impact on the peace process.

The present conflict originating in Israeli leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Wailing Wall near the Al Aqsa mosque early in October has resulted in nearly 150 deaths and several thousand injured. Though there have been sporadic violence, interaction between the PLO and the Israelis was continuing since their Oslo and Madrid meetings in the early 1990s. Arafat and his government returned to Gaza. A Palestinian authority came into existence with jurisdiction over several Palestinian areas. The predications on which Arafat returned to Gaza, namely, that a comprehensive

peace settlement will be arrived at, that Israel will desist from settlements on the West Bank and even dismantle some of them, that the status of Jerusalem will be resolved by negotiations, keeping minimum Palestinian aspirations in mind, have not been fulfilled despite several bilateral meetings between Arafat on the one hand, the Israeli Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Ehud Barak on the other. Several meetings held under the umbrella of President Clinton also did not bring about any concrete result.

Arafat had planned to declare the coming to being of an independent Palestinian state on September 15 within the framework of the



J.N. DIXIT

the violent events have been far-reaching.

Our reactions should be primarily governed by our general commitment to fulfill all the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people

long drawn out discussions of over a decade but both Israel and the US blocked him from taking this decision. Objectively speaking, leaving aside Israeli and US reservations about the creation of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state, and Israel's reluctance about dismantling some of the Jewish settlements on the West Bank and about conceding any specific concession on Jerusalem, Barak apparently put on the table a fairly good package of proposals about improving conditions in the refugee camps, about not allowing Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas and about economic assistance to the Palestinian authority. But this was not sufficient to meet the fundamental expectations of the PLO and the Palestinian people which they had entertained on the basis of the previous rounds of negotiations.

Though Arafat and Barak were present at Sharm-el-Sheikh, they did not meet each other or had any direct discussion. The declaration made there states that an international fact-finding body would be set up to investigate the cause of the violence. Preceding this Barak and Arafat will order their forces to stop firing at each other and would take steps to stop Jewish settlements, and Palestinian militia firing at civilians on each side. Arafat has been requested to take steps to prevent violent agitation and attacks by Palestinian youth against Israeli border forces. Israel is to redeploy its troops,

withdraw its helicopter and armour away from Palestinian settlements and refugee camps. All this is to be done in about a month's time by which period a fact-finding mission will commence its work. The implementation of these decisions remain uncertain.

To move on to an assessment of India's role in this conflict, for the first time both Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat wrote to Prime Minister Vajpayee seeking India's assistance in resolving the crisis. India's official response has not been made public. The political significance of India receiving this communication is that both sides believe in India's credibility as an impartial interlocutor. Arafat feels that India can be a factor in persuading Israel to pull back from excessive violence.

Barak feels that given good relations between the two countries and the mutual benefit derived therefrom, India as an old friend of PLO could persuade Arafat to return to the negotiating table. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh has indicated that India would be willing to engage in bilateral discussions with Israel on the one hand and PLO and Arab countries on the other, as well as with the US, to further the process started at Sharm-el-Sheikh. Jaswant Singh has rightly pointed out that US and Egypt are already mediating, so India does not have to get involved in any formal mediatory role.

There should be no question of our supporting the perceptions and advocacies of either side. Our reactions should be primarily governed by our general commitment to fulfill all the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and more importantly by our vital national and strategic interests. Israel should also become aware of the fact that in the long term its survival depends on avoiding isolation and coming to terms with the PLO.

Shekhar Guj Interest with

Indian National Front

RS's Influence

—ANTRIKSH DASOT
Mumbai

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Justice for farmers

Sir: This refers to the article "Perils of political protectionism: The 'Jai Kisan trap'" by Shekhar Gupta (IE, Oct. 21).

Though agriculture is the source of livelihood of more than 70 per cent of the population in India it contributes only 30 per cent to the national income. The area under foodgrains production has reached a plateau since the 1970s. Per hectare yield of rice in India is only 20 quintals though we have the potential to produce more than 50 quintals. The situation is even worse in regard to other crops.

Even our fertilizer consumption per hectare is 80 kg, which is one-fifth of that of South Korea. Production of oilseeds and pulses has been low due to inadequate fertilizer application. Every year we lose more than 10 per cent of foodgrains due to poor storage and transportation facilities. We lose more than 60 per cent of water in conveyance with our system of canals. This can be brought down to below 30 per cent if we take steps to stop seepage, percolation and evaporation of water, as is done in Israel. Merely giving slogans like "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan" will not solve our agricultural problems. Policies like having fixed procurement prices have brought no great benefit to poor farmers nor helped in increasing food production. The impact of the green revolution is over. We have to restructure our educational and agricultural policies so that we can blend agriculture and technology in order to do actual justice to our farmers.

—ANTRIKSH DASOT
Mumbai

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FLASHPOINT REACHED!

5/6 Anything can happen in West Asia 26/10

THOSE who follow the course of the so-called peace negotiations between Arab and Israeli in West Asia must be struck by the familiarity of the design. The Americans, led by President Clinton seem to have the idea fixed in their heads that all that is necessary is to push the two leaders, then push again and a little later try pushing much harder. Whenever tensions mount in the area, the White House is ready with its peremptory invitations, which, it is understood may not be denied. Camp David, then Camp David again, then the White House and so the show goes on. Both Israeli leaders, who keep changing and Yasser Arafat, who manages to stay put — although for how long is a question no one should be bold enough to answer — drop everything and rush to see Bill Clinton whenever the summons comes. No one asks the question whether the two leaders are any longer in a position to deliver, they have their own constituencies to tend and must be allowed to do so; it would do a world of good for the Americans to understand that. How inane these exercises have become came alive when the latest accord at Sharam-el-Sheik made not the slightest difference to the fighting. The Americans are generous. Israel is wholly dependent on their largesse and the Palestinians would not have had their airport at Gaza among other things, were it not for American assistance. There was a variation on the theme in the context of the post Kargil developments when Prime Minister Vajpayee was invited to Washington; he had the good sense to point out that at this time of trial and testing, his place was with his people. It was accepted with good grace.

Flashpoint has been reached and passed in West Asia. Barak says he no longer considers Arafat as his partner for peace; in return, Arafat invites Barak to go to hell and when he reaches, to stay there. And yet one is struck with the helplessness of the Palestinian people. Their media spokesman was frank enough the other day to confess that in answer to the current offensive launched by the Israelis with tanks, the Palestinians have no plan of action, they never had. All along it is Israel who initiates action and the Arabs who merely react. That it is not so simple can be readily conceded. Israel feels the need to respond in strength; they do not have the strategic reserves of land to permit the luxury of the conventional attacks and retorts, regroup and attack again, they have to be seen to be reacting more ferociously than perhaps the logic of action and reaction being equal and opposite will allow. Where does everybody go from here, including the Americans? The current diversion of an Albright mission to North Korea will keep the presidential campaign appear to be seized of major concerns of American policy and so they should. Kim Jong Il is desparate, his people are starving in the communist paradise fashioned by his late father. Communist China can do little more than utter soundbites and only the Americans are in a position to offer the food they need. If they can lever a closure of the dangerous nuclear programme, including sales to other rogue states for sheer need of cash, something will have been achieved.

To return to the Middle East, flying visits in the other direction from Washington to Jerusalem are not working either. The need is not for American tutelage, it is for leadership, local leadership. Indeed statesmanship of the kind Anwar Sadat showed by traveling to Jerusalem his mind clear, his purpose resolute. And Israel and Egypt have been friends ever since. One question arises. Has Arafat been reduced in stature by his inability to stand up to the Americans. He does not have to stare back at them, but he can be his own man. And thereby hangs a tale.

Clinton may meet Barak, Arafat in Washington

REUTERS

JERUSALEM, Oct. 25. — Mr Bill Clinton may hold separate meetings in Washington with Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ehud Barak and Palestinian President Mr Yasser Arafat.

The White House said Mr Clinton had raised the possibility of separate meetings in a telephone conversation with Mr Arafat after the Palestinian leader told the US President he was not prepared to sit down with Mr Barak.

But, the spokesman cautioned: "at this point, it's only a possibility... We have not set any specifics on when and how we would consult regarding a path back to negotiations."

Mr Clinton urged the Palestinian leader to stick to a truce agreed at a summit in

HILLARY GETS FUNDS FROM ANTI-ISRAEL GROUP

NEW YORK, Oct. 25. — A group of US Muslims that supports the armed Palestinian resistance against Israel organised a fundraiser for Mrs Hillary Clinton, raising \$ 50,000 for her campaign, according to the *Daily News*.

Mrs Clinton's spokesman confirmed the fundraiser but insisted she had not known the \$ 500 a ticket gathering in Boston had been sponsored by the American Muslim Alliance. — AFP

Egypt a week ago.

An Israeli diplomatic source today said Mr Barak had told Mr Clinton over telephone that he would agree to a meeting only if Mr Arafat took steps to curb the fighting, which has claimed the lives of at least 131 people.

Mr Barak despatched a top security aide, Yossi Ginnosour, to meet Mr Arafat and the Palestinian preventive security chief in Gaza late yesterday to

"ask Arafat to stop the violence", an Israeli source said.

Mr Barak, who is pushing to draw Right-wing Likud Party hawk Mr Ariel Sharon into an emergency coalition, said today that any unity government would leave the door open to dialogue with the Palestinians provided hostilities ceased.

"Israel's emergency government, if it is formed, will always be ready to discuss a serious political agreement, in

the case of course that the Palestinian side is ready," Mr Barak told Russia's Ekho Moskvoy radio station.

"But peace will never be the result of violence, of forceful pressure," he said.

Mr Barak urged Mr Vladimir Putin to ask Mr Arafat to halt the fighting.

Meanwhile, violence continues.

A roadside bomb exploded near an Israeli army convoy in the southern Gaza Strip today and suspected Palestinian gunmen opened fire after the blast. But no one was injured.

Travellers warned: The US state department has warned Americans to avoid travelling to Israel because of a "heightened threat of terrorist incidents in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza".

THE STATESMAN

25 OCT 2000

Tensions remain high

HD-16
2/10

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 25. West Asia continues to be balanced on the knife edge with chances that the developments could go in either direction more or less even. A new initiative from Washington, contacts between security chiefs of Israel and the Palestinian Authority and even wet weather could cause a break in the confrontations. On the other hand, tensions remain high and neither side has as yet moved to roll back the conditions that cause the confrontation.

The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, is reportedly exploring the possibility of meeting the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, separately. This is reportedly not as yet a clear invitation and neither of the West Asian leaders has indicated how they would respond to the feeler.

However, the situation has gone beyond the stage where symbolic gestures or talks that could provide either West Asian leader with a face-saving way of backing off from the confrontation could be effective. They have not as yet heeded the commitment they made to Mr. Clinton and a bevy of other leaders a week ago that they would take steps to defuse the situation. Mr. Clinton will probably have to do more besides hard talk intended to get both leaders to re-focus on the stakes in issue.

The chief of Israel Defences Forces, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, was also scheduled to meet the heads of the Palestinian Preventive security in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank — Mr. Mohammed Dahlan and Mr. Jibril Rajoub respectively. This is the first time in weeks that news about such a meeting has been publicised

though Palestinian sources say that contacts have been maintained even when the conflict was at its peak. Mr. Dahlan and Mr. Rajoub are among the more powerful of Mr. Arafat's lieutenants and they are the people who have worked with the Israeli military to prevent conflicts over the past few years till September 28 this year.

Today's rain in Gaza that deterred youth from going out and stoning Israeli pickets might have provided the providential break. If there are no clashes today there will be no deaths of Palestinian youth at Israeli hand and that might break the vicious cycle in which riots have led to deaths and the funerals of those killed have led to yet more riots.

Israel still insists that the Palestinian Authority has to take the first step by holding back their youth from approaching Israeli pickets. But there seems to be more reason in the Palestinian demand that the Israelis pull back their troops from sites close to populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip so that they do not continue to provide provocation by their presence.

The fact that most of the day has gone by without major incident does not mean very much since the clashes have invariably broke out later in the day. Since last week-end, the clashes have even continued through the night with Palestinians opening fire on a Jewish neighbourhood of Jerusalem and a Jewish settlement and the Israeli responding rockets fired by helicopter gun-ships and tank shells. Neither side has softened the rhetoric that they hurl at each other.

Mr. Barak has not given up his efforts to get the Opposition leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon, to join him in a coalition government. If there is

a silver lining in this dismal scene it is in the fact that Mr. Barak has not so far given in to Mr. Sharon's demand that Mr. Barak withdraw the offers he made to the Palestinian at the Camp David summit.

Mr. Sharon's ideas for dealing with the Palestinians is a long-term interim agreement during which Israel will retain what they will determine are "security pockets". This is a formula for the continuance of the present unstable situation and/or an effort to make the Palestinian submit to an under-dog status. It is not at all a "peace process" though Mr. Sharon, who instigated the current confrontation, has the audacity to call it such.

Clinton's efforts

AFP reports:

The Israeli army is gearing up for a prolonged struggle against the Palestinians, as the death toll mounts, with fears that the fighting could last into next year.

Two Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli troops in the Palestinian territories yesterday as Mr. Barak sought to join forces with the right wing in a move critics say will kill the peace process.

The deaths brought the toll from almost four weeks of violence to 138. All but eight of the fatalities have been Arabs, while some 4,000 people have been wounded.

In Washington, the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, whose time in office is waning, made a last-ditch attempt to get Mr. Barak and Mr. Arafat back on the peace track.

In a telephone conversation with Mr. Arafat yesterday, Mr. Clinton suggested that Mr. Arafat and Mr. Barak might meet separately with him in Washington, the White House said.

THE HINDU

25 OCT 2000

Russia may soon be empty of people

Fred Weir
Moscow, October 25

RUSSIA IS experiencing its biggest peacetime loss of population in history, with experts warning large areas of the world's largest country may be empty within a few decades.

That grim picture emerges from a report due to be presented to President Vladimir Putin next week by Russian Health Minister Yury Shevchenko.

The report shows that Russia's population shrunk by more than half a million people in the first eight months of this year, the steepest drop ever during peacetime.

According to the study, Russians have been dying younger and having fewer children due to a post-Soviet cocktail of bad news, including rising rates of poverty, illness, stress, alcoholism, civil conflict and industrial accidents.

Experts say drug abuse and sexually-transmitted diseases are potent new factors in declining male life expectancy, which has plunged from 64 years in the 1980s to less than 59 years today.

Other dire indicators include the news that Russian women currently have 1.17 children, far below the 2.5 kids per woman that would be required to maintain the population.

Over 15 per cent of Russian couples are infertile, due to environmental reasons, and 75 per cent of women report serious problems during pregnancy, the report says.

If the trends continue, Russia's population will fall to just 134-million by the year 2015, down from nearly 150-million at the collapse of the Soviet Union nine years ago.

"This cloud has no silver lining," Mr. Shevchenko told a press conference. "The Russian nation is literally dying out".

Clinton likely to invite Barak, Arafat

Invitation hinges on implementation of Sharm-el-Sheikh accord

Washington, October 25

US PRESIDENT Bill Clinton may invite Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat to meet with him separately in Washington, if there is progress on implementing the Sharm-el-Sheikh accord, the White House has said.

White House spokesman P J Crowley said yesterday if the progress had been made on the three areas of the accord, that is, "concrete steps to improve security, a formula for a fact-finding mission, and finding path to return to peace process, then, as we said in Sharm-el-Sheikh, you open the door to moving back towards the political process".

"In that context, the President raised the possibility of having the Chairman (Arafat) and the Prime Minister (Barak) come separately to Washington, but at this point it's only a possibility," Crowley said.

US citizens' warned: Meanwhile, the State Department has warned

West Asia crisis

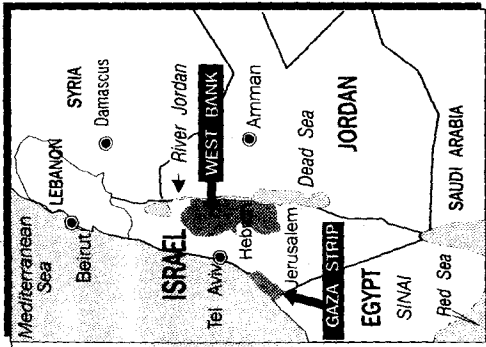
More than 135 people killed and 4,000 wounded in three-and-a-half weeks of violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

The fate of around 2,00,000 Jewish settlers, who live in and around 160 blocks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, has been among the most contentious issues standing in the way of an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord.

Israel has suspended peace talks with Palestinians.

Morocco has cut diplomatic ties with Israel.

US President Bill Clinton will continue to consult both sides, urge them to end bloody clashes and implement the security provisions of Sharm-el-Sheikh Summit.



Americans to avoid travel to Israel because of a 'heightened threat of terrorist incidents in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.'

"American citizens should exercise caution and avoid shopping areas, malls, public buses and bus stops as well as crowded areas and

demonstrations," the department said in a statement yesterday.

The statement noted that violent clashes continue throughout the West Bank and Gaza. US government employees have been barred from travelling to the West Bank and Gaza and urged to avoid East Jerusalem.

GAZA CITY: The Israeli army is gearing up for a prolonged struggle against the Palestinians, with fears that the fighting could last into next year. Two Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli troops in the Palestinian territories yesterday. The deaths brought the toll from four weeks of violence to 138.

The Israeli military was not optimistic of a settlement and was preparing for the long haul. The "confrontations are not going to end from one day to the next," Israeli army spokesman Gen. Ron Kitrey said.

Chief of Staff Gen. Shaul Mofaz predicted that the clashes would last at least a year.

(AP, AFP)

Barak keeps up efforts for emergency govt

W. Asha
M
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JERUSALEM, Oct. 24. — The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Ehud Barak, and Right-wing leader, Mr Ariel Sharon are trying hard to form an emergency government amid more bloodshed and increased tension in West Asia.

Mr Barak and Mr Sharon failed to agree to form a government yesterday.

Israel has suspended peace talks with the Palestinians, and Israel's chief military spokesman today said the army believed a wave of Israeli-Palestinian clashes was likely to continue for some time and was planning accordingly.

"We are not talking about a short-lived adventure," Brigadier-General Ron Kitrey told Israel's Army Radio.

But Brig-Gen Kitrey said the army did not believe the violence would flare into full-fledged war.

"I don't think you hear the word 'war' very much. That is not the correct definition...

GAZA AIRPORT REOPENS

GAZA, Oct. 24. — Israel has reopened the international airport in the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip, restoring air links with the outside world, a Palestinian official said today.

"The airport is back to normal functioning. Two flights have already left this morning," Mr Sulaiman Abu Haleeb, the director-general of the airport, said. "I asked my Israeli counterparts yesterday not to take any steps that would undermine Palestinian aviation and to stick to the signed protocol," he said.

The airport was closed after Palestinian police entered the facility and Israeli security personnel examining luggage said they had left because they feared for their safety. — Reuters

That is a different league. We are involved in fighting," he said.

Brig-Gen Kitrey said the Palestinians had taken a "strategic decision" whereby "one way or another they are moving towards an independent Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem".

Arab solidarity with the Palestinians was also ratcheted up yesterday.

Morocco announced it was breaking all diplomatic ties with Israel. Rabat's move follows a similar decision by

Tunisia taken at the Cairo summit over the weekend.

The bloody clashes between Israeli troops and armed Palestinian activists continued on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, regardless of the political and military moves. Another Palestinian was killed by a shell fired by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank town of Hebron in an incident that also left the man's four children wounded.

Two more Palestinian teenagers died yesterday of injuries sustained after being hit last week by Israeli gunfire

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25/10
taking the death toll from three-and-a-half-weeks of violence thereby to 135.

Amid the continuing violence, US forces in the Gulf have been put on a higher state of alert in response to "specific information", a senior US defence official said.

The US President, Mr Bill Clinton, will continue to consult both sides urging them to end bloody clashes, White House sources said.

"We think it is important for both the Israelis and the Palestinians to implement the security provisions of Sharm El-Sheikh. That is the only real way to end violence there," White House press secretary, Mr Jake Siewert, told reporters.

Meanwhile, dismissing reports that Moscow was being sidelined in the West Asia peace process, the Russian foreign minister, Mr Igor Ivanov, has said "a new set of proposals" are on the drawing board to seek a durable peace between the two warring factions there, adds a report from Moscow.

THE STATESMAN

25 OCT 2000

Accord eludes Barak as violence continues

HD 25/10

JERUSALEM, OCT. 24. The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and right-wing Likud Party leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon, wrapped up a meeting today without reaching an accord on the formation of an emergency government, according to a Likud spokesman, Mr. Ofir Akunis. The two have nevertheless agreed to meet again in 30 hours.

Mr. Barak hopes to form a Government of national emergency in the face of continued violence in the Palestinian territories, and formed a Cabinet team to speed up talks with the Likud Party after unilaterally suspending the West Asia peace process.

Mr. Barak presented Likud with a six-point plan, including one clause stipulating that the Cabinet must agree to any resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians.

'Israel preparing for a long campaign'

Israel's army is preparing for a long campaign of Palestinian violence amid persistent tension in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, an army spokesman said today.

"The army is preparing for a long campaign with our Palestinian neighbours, as the confrontations are not going to end from one day to the next," Israeli army spokesman General Ron Kitrey told Public Radio.

Seven Palestinians were wounded, one seriously, when youths clashed with Israeli troops near Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip, hospital sources said today.

In Palestinian-controlled Hebron in the southern West Bank, a 55-year-old Palestinian was killed and his four children were injured when their home was hit by an Israeli tank shell fired in retaliation for Palestinian gunfire directed at a Jewish settlement in the town.

Mr. Barak today accused the

Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, of choosing the "path of conflict" and said he would gain nothing from it. "At the moment, the Palestinian Authority and Arafat have chosen the path of conflict in an attempt to make us fold and to get us to surrender our vital interests through force," he said while touring the town of Kiryat Malachi in southern Israel.

In Washington, White House

Press Secretary, Mr. Jake Siewert, told reporters that the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, would continue to consult both sides urging them to end bloody clashes.

"We think it is important for both the Israelis and the Palestinians to implement the security provisions of Sharm el-Sheikh. That is the only real way to end violence there," he said. — PTI, Reuters, AFP

U.S. forces on alert in W. Asia

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, OCT. 24. The United States military has been put on high alert in parts of West Asia because of indications of terrorist threats. "The reason it was done was the receipt of specific threats against U.S. forces in those areas, but from sources whose credibility is unknown," an unnamed Defence Department official has said.

The high state of alert was posted for U.S. troops and facilities in Bahrain, Qatar and Turkey. One of the reasons was the attack on the USS Cole on October 12 at the port of Aden in Yemen that left 17 American sailors dead and injured 39 others.

Bahrain is the headquarters for the U.S. Central Command's naval forces and the Fifth Fleet. Following the Aden blast, reports had it that all ships of the Fifth Fleet had been moved to sea as a precautionary step. The U.S. military presence in Qatar is limited with a small group of Air Force personnel stationed there.

The Incirlik Air Force Base in Turkey serves as the focal point for the U.S. and Britain to enforce the "no fly zone" over northern Iraq. The U.S. has bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman.

Since the attack on the USS Cole, a lot of focus has been on Osama bin Laden and the outfit he heads, Al Qaeda, with some convinced the Saudi exile had a hand in the incident. The nature of the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and on the USS Cole was similar, it is being said. The bombing of American embassies in Africa killed nearly 300 people.

Along with the attention on Osama bin Laden in recent days is the view that if Washington does indeed come up with evidence linking the USS Cole bombing and Al Qaeda, there will be a military retribution of sorts. After embassy bombings in Africa, the U.S. attacked targets in Sudan and bin Laden's suspected hideouts in Afghanistan.

THE HINDU

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BARAK WOOS SHARON, HALTS TALKS

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It's war or peace: Arafat

JERUSALEM, OCT. 23. The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, moved to bring the hawkish Mr. Ariel Sharon of the right wing Likud Party into an emergency Government today, as the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, warned Israel it would have to choose whether it wanted war or peace.

Mr. Barak formed a Cabinet team to negotiate with Mr. Sharon on the formation of a national unity Government, possibly by the weekend, despite resistance from within his own Government and the right.

Mr. Sharon is a sworn enemy of peace concessions to Palestinians since the 1993 Oslo autonomy accords.

Earlier, Mr. Barak announced the suspension of the moribund peace process and Mr. Arafat told him to "go to hell".

While condemning the "language of threats" which emerged from an Arab summit which ended in the Egyptian capital of Cairo on Sunday, he declared that Israel would suspend the seven-year peace process.

The "time out", during which Israel will break off all talks with the Palestinians, will remain in place as long as the violence continues, a Government spokesman confirmed later.

Mr. Arafat angrily rejected the move, saying Mr. Barak could "go to hell". "My response is that our people are continuing on the road to Jerusalem, capital of the independent Palestinian state, whether (Mr. Barak) accepts or does not accept, let him "go to hell".

"It is for Israel to say in the coming weeks if



Barak

Arafat

it wants to resume the peace process or if it is going to continue down the same path which will lead to an explosion and unleash a war which no one will be able to stop," he told the Saudi daily *Al-Watan*.

Mr. Arafat warned Israel that it could only stop Palestinian demonstrations by meeting its commitments to the peace process.

Gaza airport closed

Israel said today it had closed Gaza international airport, cutting off the Palestinians' air links to the outside world. A spokeswoman for Mr. Barak declined to give further details. Under interim peace deals, Israel controls border passages in the Gaza strip and West Bank. An

Israeli security source said the airport was closed after Palestinian police entered the facility and Israeli security personnel who were examining luggage left "because they were afraid the police were going to shoot them". The source said the airport would probably be reopened after the police left and the Palestinians made sure the incident would not be repeated.

West Bank town circled

Israeli troops overnight circled the Palestinian area of Beit Jala near the West Bank town of Bethlehem after gunfire from the area repeatedly targeted a Jewish settlement.

Attack helicopters fired rockets and machine-guns at three buildings in the town late on Sunday after shooting from the area targeted the settlement of Gilo, south of Jerusalem.

While there were no reports of casualties in the rocket attacks and gunfire, two young Palestinians wounded in clashes with the Israeli Army last week died today.

Their deaths brought to 134 the number of those killed in the recent wave of violence.

Clinton continues peace efforts

The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, kept up the seemingly futile international efforts to ease the situation. He spoke with Mr. Barak for the second time on Sunday in an effort to "find a pathway back to the negotiating table," the White House chief of staff, Mr. John Podesta, said on CNN.— AP, Reuters

THE HINDU

24 OCT 2000



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2000

A SHOWDOWN OVER 'PEACE'

A 'TIME OUT' for reassessing the peace option in dealing with the Palestine question has been suggested by Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak. Although angered over this, the Arab League has managed simply to agree on a solitary aspect of real significance in its latest tussle with the Jewish state over basic political wits. Even in this regard, the League's condemnation of Israel is only a sequel to the lead taken by the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly in reckoning that Israel's security forces have used excessive force against the Palestinian protesters at this time. There is of course a widespread recognition in West Asia that the hapless Palestinians may have already ignited at this stage a second *intifada*, meaning a revolt, against Tel Aviv's territorial and other forms of "aggression" over the 'Arab nation'. Yet, some transparent diplomatic compulsions, especially a policy of not wanting or even appearing to bring the fast-decelerating West Asia peace process to a grinding halt, have induced the League to desist from issuing a collective call for a "holy war" against Israel on this occasion. This explains the 'disconnect' between the mood of the League and the seething anger of the ordinary Arabs over the ongoing turmoil in the Palestinian territories under Tel Aviv's occupation. Independent estimates indicate that at least 120 people have lost their lives in the past three weeks, most of them being Palestinians and the rest Israel's security personnel. In these circumstances, the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, seems to have had no option but to react furiously to the call for a 'time out', or a recess for reflection, during the current peace process or whatever is left of it. In some contrast, the 22-member League as a whole, moderated by Egypt, is seeking to place the entire onus on Israel for the sustainability of a diplomatic process.

The result is the League's affirmation that Tel Aviv's actions will be the sole factor deter-

mining the durability of the qualitatively differing equations between the various Arab States, on the one side, and Israel, on the other. While not advocating a severance of all ties with Tel Aviv, the Arab forum has also refrained from calling off the overall West Asia peace process which began in the early 1990s under the active auspices of the U.S. and the diplomatic courtesy of a collapsing Soviet Union. The League is patently gambling on the diplomacy of a guarded showdown with Israel, given the alternative calls by Iraq and Libya for a religious crusade and a stern battle respectively. The League's broad circumspection in regard to Israel is sought to be balanced by a cumulative offer of \$ 1 billion towards two separate tranches of relief for the Palestinians. This material help will still leave the Palestinian spirit yearning for statehood.

In one sense, the supreme Arab forum may have succeeded in firmly placing the ball for peace talks back in Israel's court, given the latter's call for a "time out" for a reappraisal which does not approximate to a cooling-off period as the prelude to any fresh parleys. In so steering the course of the League, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian leader who hosted its latest emergency summit, seems to have created some elbow room for the outgoing U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, to try and resurrect the peace process. Surely, though, Mr. Clinton will weigh very carefully his remaining options as West Asia's external mediator par excellence. He will need to contend with two important realities. First, the Israel-Palestine accord on a truce intent, which Mr. Clinton helped fashion at Sharm-el-Sheikh only a few days ago has remained a dead letter *ab initio*. Second, the U.S., which abstained without vetoing the U.N. Security Council's recent denunciation of Israel and voted against a similar resolution in the General Assembly, will need time for a *de novo* approach.

THE HINDU

24 OCT 2000

Palestine's angst

By Harold A. Gould

The root cause of what is occurring in Palestine today is... the prolonged perpetuation by Israel of what can only be called a colonialist culture.

THE REASON why conventional diplomacy and the standard negotiating procedures between Muslims and Jews in Palestine are not working today is not because concerned and responsible parties on all sides are not trying hard enough. Camp David, Sharm-el-Sheikh and many peace initiatives that have preceded them attest to that. The reason is: those who pursuing solutions are not searching in the right place. The root cause of what is occurring in Palestine today is not political chicanery, as a number of Western commentators have asserted, but the prolonged perpetuation by Israel of what can only be called a colonialist culture. This has finally created a fatal disconnect between ordinary Palestinians and leaders on both sides of the border. Ordinary Palestinians are saying that they have endured enough denigration and are taking matters into their own hands. The Palestine Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, is no longer effectively leading the Palestinian masses. He is following them, desperately trying to regain enough credibility and control to restore his authority. The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, has lost his credibility as a peace-maker because his conciliatory words and gestures have, like his predecessors, failed to eventuate in solutions. In frustration, he has, like his predecessors, reverted back to the hardline shibboleths that got Israel into this mess in the first place. More than either men realise, events have moved beyond them.

Clearly, the old formulas are not working anymore. The repeated cycles of political confrontation followed by negotiations each time tensions have approached the boiling point have consistently failed to resolve any of the underlying issues that have for so long fuelled Palestinian rage and despair. Genuine political autonomy, free of Israeli military and political hegemony, despite all the promises and assurances, has not been achieved. The *de facto* annexation of Arab land has continued unabated. Since the 1970s, there has been a 73 per cent growth in the number of Jewish settlements. Jerusalem remains unresolved. The plight of the vast refugee populations, who live in squalor and virtual

economic serfdom along Israel's borders, and who have credible claims for compensation for properties lost in the turmoil that followed the establishment of the Israeli state, have never been meaningfully addressed.

Countries like India that went through the colonial experience instinctively understand where Palestinian anger and violence are coming from. Israelis, Americans and most Westerners, like the British during the days of the Raj, still don't get it. What they perceive is Palestinians behaving irrationally, resorting to mob violence when purportedly all they have to do in order to get what they want is to be reasonable and patient; to return to the peace process. In principle, of course, this is a consummation for which all parties might devoutly wish. The problem is that colonialist structures are inherently reactionary, uninclined to relinquish their grip on their subalterns unless they are coerced into realising that the costs of perpetuating subjugation exceed the rewards of abandoning it. That is what the British learnt in India. In the present instance, it is hard for both Israelis and bewildered outsiders to understand why still another dose of vague promises of eventual statehood are not enough of an incentive to keep off the streets and Mr. Arafat at the bargaining table. As in all past colonialisms, to repeat, a point is reached where its victims just refuse to be rational anymore. When that point is reached, sweet reason falls by the wayside. That is what has happened in Palestine today.

It wasn't always that way. Israel did not start out as a colonialist state. The role was thrust upon it by outrageous circumstance. At the time of the country's birth in 1948, Israel was victim, not perpetrator. Let us recall that her creation was bitterly contested by the entire Arab world. The Palestinians, spurred on by extremists like the Mufti of Jerusalem, were in the vanguard of the Muslim armies that would

and Palestinian society were ready for reconciliation. But the effort ended in a fusillade of assassination and suicide bombings. Fundamentalists and extremists on both sides destroyed the dream. The Israeli elections of 1996 which narrowly brought Likud back to power brought with them a revised version of the colonialist model. The new Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, employed obfuscation and endless knit-picking as a means of indefinitely prolonging Israeli domination by stringing out interminably negotiations that were supposed to lead to Palestinian statehood. The silent majority on both sides were sold out by these tactics not only because they once more postponed the inevitable but because they re-energised the fundamentalists and extremists lurking on the fringes of both societies. Jewish and Muslim fanatics knew that reconciliation and equality between the two people would put them out of business. No more latitude for orthodox Jews to continue confiscating Arab land and building settlements where they had no business doing so. No more latitude for Hamas and Hezbollah to continue murdering and maiming innocent people.

The coming of Mr. Barak appeared to offer one more opportunity for the Rabin-Peres model to reassert itself. Especially with the powerful support accorded the effort by the Clinton administration. Camp David seemed to offer hope. But it has in turn failed, not because Mr. Arafat refused to shake hands with Mr. Barak and Mr. Clinton but simply because time has run out. What leaders on all sides of this crisis have got to face is that the Palestinian masses have gone over Mr. Arafat's and Mr. Barak's heads and declared that the only acceptable solution is immediate Palestinian statehood. Nothing less than this will successfully dissolve this crisis because nothing less will terminate the colonialist structure that is fuelling it. If Sharm-el-Sheikh does not establish this fact, then civil disobedience on the streets of Ramallah and in Gaza will. We are witnessing the end of the Israeli Raj just as in 1947 the world witnessed the end of the British Raj.

(The writer is Visiting Professor of South Asian Studies, University of Virginia.)

Arab meet sparks Barak 'time-out'

REUTERS & AFP

JERUSALEM, Oct. 22. — Mr Ehud Barak today said Israel would take a "time-out" from peacemaking with Palestinians after an emergency Arab Summit used what he said was threatening language. Mr Yasser Arafat flayed the decision, telling reporters that Mr Barak could "go to hell".

Arab leaders today gave financial backing to the Palestinian uprising and threatened Israel with a possible break in ties, ending the emergency summit in Cairo that saw more anger than steps aimed at Israel.

The Israeli Prime Minister said his decision, which he hinted didn't have the full backing of his Cabinet, was justified by the failure of the Palestinians to implement the accords reached at the earlier US-sponsored Sharm-el-Sheikh summit. The peace process would be reassessed during the "time-out", he said.

Pressure mounted on him at home too as right-wing Opposition leader Mr Ariel Sharon said Mr Barak would have to renounce the concessions he offered the Palestinians at Camp David if he wanted a national emergency coalition government.

In an action that effectively meant junking the US-brokered truce, Mr Arafat vowed to continue the uprising against Israel at the Arab Summit. But he later tempered this, stressing "peaceful demonstrations".

Arab leaders wrapped up the summit by calling for a War Crimes Tribunal investigation into Israel's handling of the unrest. They stopped short of urging Egypt and Jordan, which have peace treaties with Israel, from severing ties with the Jewish state. Mr Arafat was "happy" that the summit rallied behind the Palestinian uprising, but was disappointed that no commitment was made to boycott the Jewish state, aides said.

Violence flared again in the region today. Three Palestinians, including a 14-year-old, were killed in clashes with Israeli forces.

British mujahideen: Young British Muslims are being trained to make bombs and use Kalashnikov rifles for 'jihad' in Israel, *The Sunday Observer* reported today. The first batch of fighters flew out this month for Lebanon and Jordan. Earlier, some were sent to Kashmir, reports PTI.

■ Photograph on page 10

THE STATESMAN

23 OCT 2000

Libya walks out of Arab meet

UN slams Israel for use of force

United Nations, Oct. 21 (Reuters): The UN General Assembly late yesterday condemned the "excessive use of force" by Israel against Palestinian civilians in a resolution adopted by a vote of 92 to 6 with 46 abstentions after hours of debate.

The United States, Israel and the Pacific ocean states of Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru and Tuvalu opposed the resolution, with US ambassador Richard Holbrooke saying it was biased and would only exacerbate tensions on the ground.

The resolution urged all parties to implement without delay the understandings reached at the recent summit at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, aimed at halting three weeks of bloodshed that has taken 118 lives. Of the dead, 110 are Arabs.

In Cairo, Libya quit an emergency Arab summit today, saying Arab leaders would not cut ties with Israel as a minimum protest against bloody clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops.

"The Libyan delegation concluded that the Arab summit being held in Cairo at present will not take any practical measures that will deter the aggressive Israeli practices," a Libyan statement said as Arab leaders began a second session.

"The delegation announces its withdrawal from the conference... because it did not include a clear resolution calling as a minimum

for cutting Arab relations with the Israeli entity in any area or under any name."

The statement, clearly prepared well ahead of the Libyan walk-out, said the summit had failed to call for "confronting (Israel) with the weapon of direct or indirect boycott".

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi had denounced the summit as a waste of time and sent only Arab League ambassador Abdel-Moneim al-Houli to occupy his country's seat at the opening session.

The summit, which ends tomorrow, is expected to demand a UN war crimes tribunal to try Israelis for "massacres" of Palestinians, but stop short of urging Arab states to sever all ties with the Jewish state.

Day of rage

New clashes erupted between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the West Bank and Gaza on a "day of rage" called to coincide with the Arab summit. At least 36 Palestinians were wounded.

A 15-year-old boy was killed in Gaza and a Palestinian taxi driver was hit by a stray bullet as he cleaned his car.

A deadline to end violence negotiated by US President Bill Clinton on Tuesday expired in a wave of fighting yesterday. Prime Minister Ehud Barak said he would call a "time-out" in peace talks after the Arab summit.

Lanka wins back ground from Tigers

Colombo, Oct. 21 (Reuters): Sri Lankan troops have won back ground lost in this week's latest round of battles with Tamil Tiger rebels in the country's northern Jaffna peninsula, military officials said today.

"We have recaptured three bunker positions and have cleared the area where the fighting developed," military spokesman Brig. Sanath Karunaratne said.

The LTTE launched a fierce attack on Thursday near the key town of Nagar Kovil, which forms part of the peninsula's southernmost government army defences.

The surprise rebel attack, some 320 km north of the capital, forced the army to pull back some of its defences around the town by about half a kilometre.

UK recalls 12 subs for checks

London, Oct. 21 (Reuters): Britain's Royal Navy said today it was recalling all its "hunter killer" nuclear powered submarines for safety checks, reducing the country's defence capabilities for a number of weeks at least.

The decision came after experts examined HMS *Tireless*, a Trafalgar class submarine, which developed a leak in the cooling system of its nuclear reactor. All 12 submarines in the Trafalgar and Swiftsure classes would be checked.



AJ.K. Rowling (left) signs a book for Shelby Hill (centre) of Sarasota, Florida, and Rachel Johnson of Burr Ridge, Illinois, in New York. The two girls were among 10 winners of an essay contest on "How the Harry Potter Books Have Changed My Life." (AFP)

Eagle-eyed child spots Potter error

London, Oct. 21 (Reuters): Like most nine-year-olds, Lalla Banjar was spellbound by the latest Harry Potter tale of magic — but she could still spot an error missed by proof readers, editors and even author J.K. Rowling.

Banjar was reading *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* for a second time when she came across the glaring mistake — leading character Crouch, who had gone missing on page 485, had made a sudden and unplanned, reappearance. The mistake appears in the ninth paragraph on page 503 of the 640 page bestseller. Banjar's mother, Tracey, sent an e-mail to the publishers Bloomsbury asking whether the offending sentence, which reads "Dumbledore, come!" said Crouch angrily, was a printing error. "Yes, you are right about the error, we have forwarded your e-mail on to the editorial department," Bloomsbury admitted. The sentence should have referred to Cornelius Fudge and not Crouch. "I was really surprised when I spotted the mistake and then I jumped for joy when I knew I was right," Banjar, from Somerset in western England, told the *Times*.

EU seeks to soften UN resolution condemning Israel

UNITED NATIONS: The European Union tried to soften a UN general assembly draft resolution condemning Israel for excessive use of force against Palestinians ahead of Friday's scheduled debate.

The resolution, which the United States opposes, is expected to be adopted at the end of a special emergency session of the 189-member general assembly that began on Wednesday and resumes late on Friday with a briefing by secretary-general Kofi Annan followed by some 40 speeches.

Mr Annan returned to UN headquarters from a summit in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt on Thursday after helping to broker an agreement between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat aimed at halting violence. He appealed to all sides for restraint.

"I am glad that they are engaged," he said in reference to the general assembly. "But we should all take the necessary steps and pool our collective effort to calm the situation. And I hope that is what will happen."

"Whether we like it or not, in the end there has to be peace. They have to talk to each other. They have to live together. They are condemned to be neighbours," Mr Annan told reporters.

Meanwhile, Israel on Thursday said it would not cooperate with a UN inquiry into a wave of violence, assailing as biased a resolution that accused Israel of "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity".

The Arab-Islamic resolution, adopted at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on Thursday, set up a commission of inquiry into violence that had claimed the lives of 108 people.

"The resolution, accepted by a slight majority of Arab countries and their supporters, is hostile, unbalanced and unnecessary," Israel's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Seema Antil wins gold medal

NEW DELHI: Discus thrower Seema Antil made history by becoming the first Indian athlete ever to win a gold in a world championship. She achieved this distinction on the second day of the 8th World Junior Athletics Championships in Chile on Thursday. (UNI)

indiatimes.com POLL

YESTERDAY'S POLL RESULTS

Will other megabuck TV game shows reduce the popularity of Kaun Banega Crorepati?

Yes	No	Can't say
39%	55%	6%

8,542 VOTES IN ALL

* The poll reflects the opinions of Net users who chose to participate, and not necessarily of the general public.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 OCT 2001

Many hurdles to ceasefire

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 18. A fierce clash in the Gaza Strip today and the hardening of positions by opposition forces in Israel and the Palestinian territories place a huge question mark on the sustainability of the understanding reached at Sharm el Sheikh yesterday. However, it was always clear that the ceasefire, that the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat have promised to implement, will not materialise immediately. In fact, Israeli and Palestinian security chiefs are to meet for the first time today to work out the modalities for enforcing and monitoring the ceasefire.

The clash in the Gaza Strip today reportedly broke out after Jewish settlers stoned passing Palestinian vehicles. In a pattern that has been established since September 28, Palestinian youth retaliated by throwing stones and fire-bombs at the settlement and the Israeli security picket guarding it. The Israeli soldiers opened fire and Palestinian gunmen joined the combat as well. Last night, fierce clashes were also fought in Hebron. These clashes and the criticism of the Sharm el Sheikh talks by hardliners in both camps give rise to the possibility that the understandings arrived at will unravel even before they can be implemented.

The Israeli hardline Opposition leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon has rejected the possibility of his joining an emergency Cabinet that Mr. Barak has been trying to set up. Mr. Sharon said his decision was triggered by Mr. Barak's failure to win Mr. Arafat's assurance that he would re-arrest militants freed during the riots. However, Mr. Sharon's decision could also have been formed on the basis of a calculation that the ceasefire will not last, that Mr. Barak will not survive a no-confidence motion when Parliament reconvenes in 10 days, and that his chances will then be much better than that of Mr. Barak in the elections that are bound to follow. Given Mr. Sharon's crusty belligerence, it is doubtful whether he has factored in the possibility that the ceasefire will last and that Mr. Barak's popularity will be boosted as a result.



A Palestinian throws a stone in the direction of Israeli soldiers as other protesters duck for cover during clashes at Deir-al-Balah near the Jewish settlement of Kfar Darom in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. — Reuters

On the other side of the divide, the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad have declared that the Sharm el Sheikh understanding is not applicable to them and that they will go on with their struggle. Mr. Arafat had released a number of jailed militants and some had escaped from custody when the jailers left their posts in fear of Israeli rocket attacks. According to more authentic reports, Mr. Arafat had not released the bomb experts among the jailed militants and had, in fact, already begun to re-arrest the others before he went to Sharm el Sheikh. For about two years now, Mr. Arafat's security forces had managed an effective clampdown on the Islamic militants and it is probable that they can do so again if they set their minds to it.

It is also probable that the force that has been able to garner the strongest public support in the course of the confrontations with Israel is not the Hamas or the Islamic Jihad but the Tanzim militia affiliated to Mr. Arafat's Fatah faction. Tanzim members are known to have led and co-ordinated the fight against the Israeli soldiers and they provided the bulk of the gunmen on the Palestinian side.

If the Tanzim can channelise the high upsurge of Palestinian resentment along the path of a peaceful struggle and if the two sides implement their agreement to remove points of frictions, reduce the number of places where Israeli security forces and Palestinian civilians are in close proximity to each other, the ceasefire might become more sustainable.

Tension in Britain

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, OCT. 18. Tension has been reported from Jewish areas here following the stabbing of a Jew student in a north London bus yesterday, allegedly by a Muslim youth in what is seen as an echo of the West Asian violence.

The victim, Mayers David Mayers (20), was stabbed 20 times with a knife and is in intensive care in a local hospital.

The attack in broad day light and in full view of other passengers is being linked to "inflammatory" statements from Islamic militants who held a noisy dem-

onstration here a few days ago denouncing Israel. A Syria-born Islamic militant leader, Mr. Omar Bakri Mohammed, was quoted as saying at the rally that "all Israeli targets are legitimate."

However, after yesterday's stabbing, for which Nabi Ould Eddine (27), has been arrested, Mr. Bakri Mohammed declared that Britain's Muslims were "not at war" with the Jews though he warned that if they (the Jews) went about collecting funds for Israel they were "putting themselves in the conflict" and could become "legitimate targets".

Confidence-building measures needed for Israelis, Palestinians

By Jal Taraporevala

MUMBAI: It is a measure of the highly volatile nature of the situation that prevails between the Palestinians and Israelis that the successful implementation of any agreement can no more be taken for granted. The past few weeks have demonstrated just how easily events on the ground can acquire a momentum of their own. This is more true for the Palestinians than for the Israelis.

Indeed, Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, is increasingly having to deal with conflicting pressures. There is some truth in Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's claim that political calculations have prompted Mr Arafat to condone Palestinian violence. Mr Arafat's motiva-

tions in not strongly condemning Palestinian violence should be interpreted in terms of an effort to beef up his own sagging domestic standing and an attempt to give an outlet to pent-up public frustration at the impasse in the peace process.

However, Mr Barak's assertion that Mr Arafat has the power to largely control events in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is not quite valid. Even if Mr Arafat were to adopt a tough stance to contain Palestinian attacks against Israeli targets, it is debatable whether he would be able to achieve much success. After all, many Palestinians have been incensed at what they regard as the disproportionate response of Israeli security forces to protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the moves of Mr Barak to form a National Emergency Government with the Likud Bloc led by the ultra-right wing politician, Ariel

Sharon, and the refusal of Tel Aviv to make more than cosmetic concessions on the future status of East Jerusalem.

Public discontent has also been stoked by the fall in living standards in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the seven years since the signing of the Oslo accords, the allegations of corruption against a number of officials of the Palestinian Authority and the powers of the Israeli security forces to seal off the Palestinian territories at will. Given these factors, Mr Arafat is increasingly finding it difficult to control the activities of the radical groups including Tanzim, which is an offshoot of his own Fatah organisation — not to mention the fundamentalist Hamas movement which has always bitterly opposed his policies.

At the same time, Mr Arafat has little choice but to keep his doors open to negotiations with Israel partly because he has staked his political credibility on achieving success in the peace process and partly because the Palestinians lack the military firepower needed to pressure the Jewish state into making concessions. However, for the time being at least, any talks between the two sides will concentrate on setting confidence building measures in place rather than finding ways of advancing the search for a final status accord. This is a reflection of the current domestic political equation in Israel, the seething anger among Palestinians, the highly contentious nature of the issues involved in reaching a final status agreement and the approaching period of transition before a new administration takes over in Washington.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Clinton signs hi-tech visa bill

WASHINGTON: President Bill Clinton signed into law a programme that greatly increases the number of special work visas for skilled workers while doubling the cost of visas to finance hi-tech training for Americans. "The growing demand for workers with hi-tech skills is a dramatic illustration of the need to put people first and increase our investments in education and training," the President said in a statement on Tuesday. "In today's knowledge-based economy, what you earn depends on what you learn."



Bill Clinton

He also castigated the Cong. for rebuffing Democrats' attempts to attach to the bill changes that would help Hispanic and other poorer immigrants who have been in the country for years. He said he would insist that the Congress pass the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act before it adjourns, which members want to do this week. The bill President Clinton signed was passed after a protracted, bitter fight over the inclusion of the additional provisions. In signing the law aboard Air Force One while returning from the emergency W. Asia talks in Egypt, Mr Clinton also ordered the immigration and naturalization service and other agencies to monitor the implementation of the law to ensure that employers did not use it to bring in workers from abroad to take jobs at lower wages that otherwise would have gone to American workers. (AP)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2000

MANAGING BRINKMANSHIP

THE EMERGENCY SUMMIT, which concluded at the Egyptian resort town of Sharm-el-Sheikh on October 17, was almost entirely a desperate gamble in international mediation, led by the United States and the United Nations in that conspicuous order, to manage the current brinkmanship in political violence in West Asia. The outward result was a commitment expressed by Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to take immediate and concrete measures to de-escalate the violence. Their gentlemen's agreement, brokered by Mr. Bill Clinton in his enduring status as the U.S. President with considerable diplomatic influence in West Asia, still remains to be translated into a ground reality. The latest unrest seems to have been tragically orchestrated by or on behalf of the Israeli Government and the Palestinian resistance movement. A series of clashes, ferocious even by the standards of tragedy in the violence-wracked West Asia, began more than two weeks ago between the Israeli security forces and Palestinian protesters. Many militants, encouraged mostly by the moral support of the ordinary people, virtually revived a familiar but somewhat fading anti-Israel civil disobedience movement in the occupied Palestinian territory, which is under a limited form of ostensible self-rule.

Viewed in West Asia itself as the second "intifada" (Palestinian uprising), the new cascading waves of popular anger against Israel followed an arguably "provocative" visit to a holy site by a Jewish leader with an agenda that was perceived to be politically hawkish. Of greater relevance, though, was the simple fact that tension in any case was running high on account of the Palestinian frustrations and the Israeli apprehensions regarding their obviously divergent ideas about a possible final peace settlement between them. The present round of violence is a negative sign ahead of what can be envisioned as a future end-game in the multilateral diplomacy aimed at

a bilateral accord between Tel Aviv and the Palestinian Authority. The question, with no prescient answer, is about the sustainability of the fresh hopes raised at Sharm-el-Sheikh. The present despondent mood in the region marks a near-total reversal of the measured but apparently meaningful buoyancy that defined the onset of the Oslo process in the early 1990s — "secret" and open West Asian peace parleys that were externally facilitated.

It will be easy to apportion blame for the latest sorry state of affairs, depending on the standpoint of the states concerned. It was only a few days ago that the U.S. abstained while the U.N. Security Council condemned the latest excessive use of force by Israel. But credit must go to Mr. Clinton, besides the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, who hosted the new parleys at Sharm-el-Sheikh as the leader of a country that has already attained a semblance of co-existence with Israel. For Mr. Clinton, who recently tried at Camp David to nudge Mr. Barak and Mr. Arafat to clinch the outlines of a permanent solution, the historic Israel-Palestinian psychological barrier proved insurmountable. Nonetheless, the latest summit may have helped prevent Israel and the Palestinians from sliding to a point of no-return. Now, while peace can of course reign on the overall West Asian scene only if Israel's other disputes with Arab states are also suitably addressed, a forward movement in regard to Palestine, which lies at the core of the regional animosities, will be a critical pace-setter. With the Palestine issue already "internationalised", there is also some scope for a diplomatic facilitation by Russia, aggrieved at present over its exclusion from the latest summitry despite the old Soviet Union's earlier activism. For India, which has now been invited by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to play a role, the choices in international mediation require a careful consideration.

THE HINDU

19 OCT 2000

Peacemakers at work

The worst bout of violence in Palestinian areas in over a decade is likely to leave an indelible mark on the peace process in West Asia. At the very least, it has put the peace process on the back-burner. It has forced the Palestinian and Israeli leadership, as well as the United States and other mediators, to focus on restoring a semblance of peace in the Palestinian areas. This limited goal has itself appeared ambitious, at times, with the violence threatening to escalate and involve the rest of the Arab world. But there are now signs that both the Palestinian and Israeli leadership may be willing to pull back from the brink. Despite pressures from extremists on both sides, Mr Yasser Arafat and Mr Ehud Barak have chosen to attend the summit at Sharm el Sheikh. An immediate de-escalation of tensions in West Asia will be greeted with relief for economic reasons in addition to the political ones. With world oil prices already being as high as they are, the last thing the rest of the world needs is a crisis in West Asia. Even if individual countries manage to find alternative sources for their oil needs, the spurt in prices will have a shattering impact on economies around the world.

Such disaster scenarios may be avoided by the leaders at the Sharm el Sheikh summit. But the bout of violence in the Palestinian areas should point to an aspect of the peace process in West Asia that has not received adequate attention. After a protracted conflict, any agreement will be difficult to sell to people on both sides. No matter how fair a US-brokered peace agreement may be, it may not be seen to be fair by the Palestinians. It is possible that this inherent limitation is finally being recognised. The Sharm el Sheikh summit has found a role for not only Egypt and Jordan, but also the United Nations Secretary-General. If this is an indication of the mediation in West Asia becoming more broad-based, hope could still emerge out of the ashes of the violence in the Palestinian areas.

The Economic Times

18 OCT 2000

Barak, Arafat agree on truce

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (Bahrain), OCT. 17. Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, today agreed to immediately call and implement a ceasefire to end the violence that has rocked West Asia since September 28.

Though no document was signed, the two leaders assented to a "statement of intent" promoted by the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, and his Egyptian counterpart, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, at the Sharm-el-Sheikh summit which ended after the Israeli and Palestinian leaders signalled their assent.

An international fact-finding body is to be set up to probe the causes of the violence and the Israelis and Palestinians will re-

sume their negotiations within two weeks.

Mr. Barak and Mr. Arafat will order their forces not to fire at each other and take steps to stop Jewish settlers and Palestinian militia men firing at people on the other side.

Mr. Arafat may be required to take steps to stop Palestinian youth from throwing stones and fire-bombs at Israeli security forces as they have been doing for the past two weeks and more.

The declaration also requires Israel to re-deploy its troops, with their helicopters and armoured cars, away from the vicinity of Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps and to remove up their blockade of Palestinian-populated areas.

As Mr. Barak pointed out after the summit, the main issue was

not signing of the agreement but its implementation.

Till at least a couple of hours after the announcement of the declaration clashes continued in parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. During the period of the summit, at least three Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops and settlers.

Passions have been running very high and there is a lot of suspicion on each side about the other's intentions. It will therefore take some time for calm to be restored.

The Palestinians, who sought an international commission of inquiry to probe the causes, had to be satisfied with a fact-finding body led by the U.S.

After the declaration, Palestinian militant groups, including the Tanzim affiliated to Mr. Arafat's Fatah faction, said it did not address the root cause of the clashes — Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territories.

India's help sought: Jaswant

NEW DELHI, OCT. 17. Israel and the Palestinian authorities have sought India's mediation in ending violence and establishing peace in the strife-torn Gaza strip and West Bank, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said tonight.

"Representatives of the Palestinian national authority and the Israeli Prime Minister (Mr. Ehud Barak) have urged India to mediate," Mr. Singh told Doordarshan.

Towards this end, "we should either directly talk with Israel or hold discussion with the Arab nations or speak with the United States, which is already mediating," Mr. Singh said. — PTI



The United States President, Mr. Bill Clinton, flanked by the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak (left), and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, at the closing session of the Sharm-el-Sheikh summit on Tuesday. — Reuters

THE HINDU

18 OCT 2000

Palestinians, Israel agree to end violence

Sharm-el-Sheikh (Egypt), Oct. 17

ISRAEL AND the Palestinians today agreed to "immediate concrete measures" to end violence in the West Bank and Gaza. US President Bill Clinton announced at the end of an emergency West Asia Summit.

Barak and Arafat signed no cease-fire agreement and made no statement themselves at the end of two days of talks brokered by Clinton, with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and other leaders.

But US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in a CNN interview, said she expected an immediate cease-fire as a result of the agreement.

Clinton said Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat agreed to publicly call for an end to the violence that has killed more than 100 people in two weeks.

"We have made important commitments here today against a backdrop of tragedy and crisis," Clinton said. But, he added, "We should have no illusions about the difficulties that await us".

Clinton said Israel and the Palestinians needed to get on "the pathway back to negotiations" and announced a US fact-finding effort called for by Israel that would include UN participation demanded by the Palestinians. "Both sides have agreed to issue public statements unequivocally calling for an end of violence," Clinton said.

"They also agreed to take immediate concrete measures to end the current confrontation, eliminate points of friction, ensure an end to violence and incitement, maintain calm and prevent reoccurrence of recent events."

Barak, however, said the test of the agreement will be in its imple-

mentation. "The coming days will tell whether we still have a partner," he said, referring to the Israeli-Palestinian "partnership" in seeking peace.

"If we do find the violence declining, that will be an excellent thing. If it doesn't, then we will know what to do," Barak said.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who opened the summit pointedly blaming Israel for recent violence, said the outcome "may not meet the expectations of our people." It takes a step, however, toward resuming permanent peace efforts "after the region is stabilised," he said.

UN Secretary-General Annan said Barak and Arafat had stepped back from the abyss and renewed their commitment to resolve their differences by peaceful means. He said the summit achieved significant agreement on security, renewing the peace process and on fact-finding.

"It has not been easy. Feelings run high on both sides. Mutual mistrust is deep," Annan said, cautioning both sides against further use of violent language.

The closing session came against a backdrop of more violence in Gaza, as hundreds of Palestinian settlers threw stones and fire-bombs at an Israeli border crossing, drawing return fire that injured 10 demonstrators.

The leaders worked late into the morning hours and were up early again, with Clinton shuttling back and forth between Arafat and Barak to work out the statement.

Clinton's description of the settlement seemed to indicate that Arafat had compromised on his demand for an international fact-finding probe of the violence that tore across the Palestinian territories and Israel after right-wing Israeli leader Ariel Sharon visited a religious site in Jerusalem. (AP)

Clinton meets his objectives



- * Immediate end to the violence
- * Setting up a commission of inquiry into the causes
- * Finding a way back to the peace process

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 OCT 2000

... of the players on the political scene.

XG-10 Douse the fire 15/10

THE WEST Asian peace process has been dealt a cruel blow by the continuing violence in the region. Till the latest disturbances, with its sickening scenes of firing, stone-throwing and lynching, the Israelis and Palestinians were able to resolve a few contentious issues in a spirit of give and take. The question of Jerusalem was the only exception. But the current uprising in West Bank and Gaza and the seemingly excessive use of force by the Israelis seem to have undermined the peace process as never before. The *intifada*-style violence is the result of growing frustration among the Palestinians about their uncertain future. The casualty count is mounting every day. Nearly all the victims are Palestinians. Despite intense pressure from the international community, neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians have taken sufficient measures to contain the outbreak and the aggressive response to it.

Both sides have taken steps which are provocative. If Prime Minister Ehud Barak has invited the Likud party which includes Ariel Sharon, the man widely held responsible for the latest upsurge, to join the Government of national unity, the reported release of some top guns of Hamas has inflamed passions further. Equally disconcerting is the escalation of communal tension which can only strengthen the hands of the Jewish extremists and Hamas. In the long run, such a development will further weaken Mr Arafat's authority and increase Mr Barak's dependence on the ultra-nationalist parties. No Israeli Prime Minister had the kind of mandate for a peace initiative as Mr Barak did when he assumed office. He even commanded a solid backing in Parliament. Today he appears to have squandered his chances.

The peace process which was making a halting progress even during the best of times has now become hostage to intensely emotional domestic politics. If the position of the Barak Government is uncertain in Parliament, Mr Arafat too has suffered a serious erosion of support. Renewed conflict in West Asia will have implications far beyond the region. If the peace initiatives suffer, leaders like Saddam Hussein will be eager to exploit the tense situation. The war-like atmosphere may lead to instability in the international oil markets as well. The two sides have invested far too much in the peace process to drag their feet at this stage. The world community must exert enough pressure on both sides to douse the fire. It will be a great tragedy if seven years of tangible progress and hopes of millions of people to live a life of security and dignity go up in flames.

140-16 WEST ASIA / SUMMIT GETS UNDER WAY 17/10

Stop passing the buck, says Clinton

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, OCT. 16. The emergency summit meeting called to deal with the volatile situation in West Asia got under way today at the Egyptian resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh with the U.S. President, Mr. Clinton, urging Israeli and Palestinian leaders to stop blaming each other and instead concentrate on how they could build a peaceful and stable future for the region.

A few excerpts from the opening remarks made by Mr. Clinton was about the only information leaking out of the plenary session that began this afternoon. The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, are attending the summit being hosted by the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, with King Hussein of Jordan and the European Union Foreign Minister, Mr. Javier Solana, also adding their weight to the deliberations.

Mr. Clinton and Mr. Mubarak are reported to have held separate bilateral meetings with the Israeli and Palestinian leaders this morning. Later in his opening remarks, Mr. Clinton pointed out that while developments over the past two weeks had harmed the peace process, their very occurrence had shown what the alternate scenario would be if there was no peace process. It is, fairly obvious, both from whatever information has leaked out so far and from the logic of circumstances, that Mr. Clinton and the others would try to persuade Mr. Barak and Mr. Arafat to issue a joint declaration calling for an end to the violence.

There are reports in the Israeli media that Mr. Clinton would also like the West Asian leaders to sign up to an agreement to hold another round of talks on the main issues in contention beyond the resolution of the conflict that has rocked the region during the past two and a half weeks.

According to these reports, Mr. Clinton would like these talks to be held and concluded between the end of the U.S. Presidential election on Nov. 7 and Nov. 15, the date that the Palestinians have tentatively set for the declaration of their statehood. Leaders of the Arab world had reportedly told Mr. Clinton that a cooling off period was necessary before substantive negotiations could resume.

A ceasefire agreement to end the latest round of confrontation will also not make



The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton (centre), the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak (foreground), the U.S. special envoy to the West Asia Summit, Mr. Dennis Ross (left), and the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr. Amr Moussa (third from right), wait for the start of the summit at Sharm el-Sheikh on Monday. — AP

much sense if the substantive negotiations are not re-started soon. If there is no hope for a resolution of the issues, and therefore a revived prospect for peace, any ceasefire would soon expire.

Before Mr. Clinton and the other leaders can get Mr. Barak and Mr. Arafat to agree to a time-table for substantive negotiations, they will have to resolve the sharp differences about the methods to deal with the persisting situation of confrontation.

Some of the mechanical problems, like the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the vicinity of Palestinian towns or the controlling of his agitated youth by Mr. Arafat, might be more easily resolved. But the major difference about the format of an investigation into the causes of the recent confrontation could prove difficult to resolve. The Palestinians want an international commission of enquiry to be constituted to look into the causes of the conflict while Israel is opposed to the proposal.

Mr. Clinton is known to prefer a U.S.-led probe team, with representatives of Israel and Palestine aboard and perhaps including oth-

ers as well, that will not only probe the causes but also serve as a mechanism to ensure that those actually doing the fighting from either side disengage. The U.S. apparently also desires that such a mechanism will serve as an instrument to effect better co-ordination between the security services of Israel and the Palestinian Authority so that such conflict does not break out in the future.

One problem in this exercise is that while the U.S. and Israel appear to have one perspective on the nature of the violence inherent in West Asia, the Palestinians have another. Israel especially, and the U.S. to an extent, see recent events as the aberration that needs to be corrected if possible. The Palestinians believe, and have increasingly begun to articulate this belief, that the real violence is being perpetrated by an Israel which occupies their territory and thereby subjects them to colonial oppression. For the Palestinians, this insidious and long-term oppression is the real violence that is being perpetrated in West Asia.

THE HINDU

17 OCT 2000

Expectations low as summit begins

Sharm el-Shiekh, October 16

THE WEST Asian summit began in Egypt today with participants expressing scepticism about the prospects for peace. The summit is seen as a last ditch attempt to end violence between Israelis and Palestinians that has claimed over 100 lives in the last two weeks and derailed the West Asian peace process.

The United States President, Bill Clinton, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, were among the first to arrive at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. They were joined by the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan. Representatives from the European Union and the king of

Jordan were also present. Barak met the host, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in one of the many bilateral meetings that preceded the summit.

Barak had been quoted as saying that he doubted the "current Palestinian leadership" could decide on an agreement. Senior Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, warned not to expect solutions at Sharm el-Sheikh. He said too much is expected of Arafat. Clinton had warned that people "should be under no illusions" about the meeting. The Egyptian foreign minister said there was "no guarantee of success."

The participants have a minimal agenda of getting both sides to agree to stop the violence and set a date for future talks. The US Secretary Of State, Madeleine

Albright, said Washington would seek a truce and try to find ways to prevent a recurrence of violence. The US is offering to lead an investigation into the causes of the violence and drafting a joint declaration condemning the violence but blaming neither side.

Both Barak and Arafat are under domestic pressure not to make concessions. The Israeli leader has laid out a list of objectives he wants from the summit, including the jailing of Islamic terrorist suspects freed from prison last week by the Palestinian Authority. Arafat, who agreed to the summit with reluctance, showed no indication of moderating his demands regarding Jerusalem. Egypt said the summit's main goal should be to make Israel withdraw the troops it sent

into Palestinian areas in the last two weeks. The leader of the Islamicist group, Hamas, Ismael Abu Shanab, called the summit "totally useless" and said the unrest would continue. It was unclear how long the summit would last. Sources in the Egyptian presidential palace spoke of the summit lasting only a few hours. Israeli Army Radio spoke of one or two days. Reportedly, Clinton wants to be back in the US by Wednesday.

Time magazine reports that Arafat "felt cheated" when Barak rejected a plan drawn up by Israeli and Palestinian to divide Jerusalem during the last round of talks. The failure led to present violence. He had been given the impression Barak would agree to divide the city. (Agencies)

Jerusalem

PEACE el-Sheikh cut out bridge b Palestini West Asi Sea divin The sid issues. l Yasser A internati inquiry, p pices, to e current v must see munity b its resolv least tho against Pa ge, unnot negotiator

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 OCT 2000

Hizbollah kidnap casts shadow on summit

W. B. S. C. (N)

FROM SAMIA NAKHOUL

Beirut, Oct. 15 (Reuters): Casting a shadow on tomorrow's US-sponsored peace summit, Lebanon's Hizbollah has said today it had seized an Israeli colonel in a "complex security operation".

Israel's Defence Ministry admitted later that an Israeli army reservist had been taken captive.

"An Israeli civilian, an Israeli army reservist, was kidnapped in a terrorist action after he disappeared from Israel at his own initiative under personal circumstances," the Israeli ministry said in a statement. Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak had earlier told his cabinet he knew of no missing soldier and Lieutenant-General Shaul Mofaz, the army chief, said no Israeli soldier had been seized at the border with the three taken on October 7.

Senior Israeli sources had said, that Israel was investigating whether Hizbollah guerrillas were holding an Israeli businessman apparently missing in Switzerland. First word of the incident came from Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah this morning.

"With God's help, I am honoured to inform you gladly that the Islamic Resistance performed a qualitative and complex security operation, capturing an Israeli



Bill Clinton boards Air Force One. (Reuters)

colonel, who works for an Israeli security apparatus," the Shi'ite Muslim cleric announced at a political conference in Beirut amid applause. Hizbollah, which led the guerrilla campaign that helped end Israel's 22-year occupation of

south Lebanon in May, refused to give further details. Lebanese officials were taken by surprise. "We will announce later the appropriate details at the appropriate time. We will leave them to search for him, for his name, for his tale,"

GrA
Nasrallah told the meeting in a speech broadcast live on Hizbollah al-Manar television. Israel's Channel Two television said the man apparently was taken captive 12 days ago by unspecified Arabs with whom he had business contacts after a dispute over money.

It said they then handed him over to Hizbollah after the pro-Iranian guerrillas snatched three Israeli soldiers at the border last week.

Shortly after Hizbollah's announcement, Hizbollah fighters in civilian clothes, manning positions along the Lebanon-Israel border, advised civilians to keep away from the frontline to avoid being kidnapped by nervous Israeli soldiers.

Israeli helicopter gunships flew constantly over the valleys between the hostile borders while three Israeli gunships faced the southern Lebanese coast.

Some Hizbollah guerrillas stood on roads along Israeli lines to distribute sweets in celebration of the kidnapping, described in the local media as a spectacular feat that further damaged the morale of the Israeli army.

Three Israeli soldiers were captured last week. Hizbollah says it wants to exchange the three for hundreds of Lebanese and Arab prisoners in Israeli jails.

Sombre mood, clashing agendas

FROM HOWARD GOLLER

Jerusalem, Oct. 15 (Reuters): Israelis and Palestinians played down chances that a summit tomorrow with US President Bill Clinton in Egypt could do more than brake a wave of violence that claimed its 100th fatality today.

Israel prime minister Ehud Barak and Palestine President Yasser Arafat will take conflicting agendas to the summit, which will be hosted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana will represent the international community.

Annan and Mubarak met in Sharm el-Sheikh today to prepare

for the summit. Israeli and Palestinian officials say the summit might not even end the violence, let alone renew peacemaking.

Barak blamed Arafat for inciting the unrest. "What the hell kind of purpose could he have in having this kind of violence?" he asked during a *Time* magazine interview. "I already know quite probably we don't have a partner for peace, unfortunately."

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said Arafat would again demand an international inquiry into the violence, a condition that scuppered an Arafat-Barak meeting with US secretary of state Madeleine Albright in Paris on October 4.

"I honestly don't want to raise

anyone's expectations and I don't have high expectations myself," Erekat said. Palestinian lawmaker Hanan Ashrawi said the summit would be "geared towards crisis management, geared towards damage control and putting an end to the Israeli violence on the ground".

Clinton has acknowledged progress would be tough, despite a marked reduction of bloodletting in the past two days. "After the terrible events of the past few days, the situation is still quite tense," he said in Washington on Friday.

Clinton said the goal of the summit — the result of five days of mediation by Annan — was to stop the violence, agree on a "fact-finding mechanism" to look into

what caused the unrest and to get back on the peace track. Barak told his cabinet the aim was to set up an "apparatus" to minimise chances of more violence and examine recent unrest. He spoke of a strong feeling that the peace process in its current format had reached the end of the road.

"Ultimately, we will make peace with the Palestinians but the current Palestinian leadership is currently showing immense difficulty in reaching the decisions related to an agreement." Israeli police, meanwhile, urged the public to be on guard at crowded places for pre-summit bomb attacks by militants of the Hamas and jihad groups opposed to peacemaking.

W. Asia summit begins today amid doubts

SHARM EL-SHEIKH (Egypt): Egypt on Sunday prepared to host a vital summit aimed at stopping Israeli-Palestinian violence amid few illusions about its success, as Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas stoked the tension further by claiming to have captured a senior Israeli officer.

Hezbollah chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah said in Beirut, "The Islamic resistance has succeeded in taking prisoner an Israeli officer with the rank of colonel in a complex operation whose details will be given later."

The Israeli army said it was trying to verify the claim.

On October 7, the Hezbollah snatched three Israeli non-commissioned officers in an ambush in the disputed Shebaa Farms area captured by Israel from Syria in 1967 but claimed by Lebanon.

The move sparked threats of retaliation by Israel, which held Lebanon and Syria, the main power-broker in Beirut, responsible.

Nasrallah said on Thursday that Israel must free all Arab prisoners it holds to obtain the release of the three soldiers.

The announcement by the Iranian and Syrian-backed Hezbollah came as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat prepared to meet at this Egyptian Red Sea resort on Monday.

The summit will also bring in U.S. President Bill Clinton, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah II.

The aim is at least to stop fighting between Israelis and Palestinians which has claimed more than 100 lives following the September 28 visit by Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon to a disputed site in Jerusalem held sacred by both Jews and Muslims.

Though Mr Barak and Mr Arafat yielded to intense international pressure and agreed to attend without pre-conditions, they have not dropped their respective conflicting demands.

Mr Arafat continues to insist on an international inquiry into the causes of the violence, while Israel says it will only accept a limited fact-finding exercise.

Mr Clinton said the summit's central objective would be to stop the violence and agree "on a fact-finding mechanism concerning how this began and how it can be prevented from happening again, and find a way back to dialogue and negotiations."

He urged Americans on Saturday to pray for the success of the conference, while admitting that "ending the violence and getting people of West Asia back to dialogue will be hard after what has happened."

"We should be under no illusions," Mr Clinton added. "The good news is the parties have agreed to meet and the situation appears to be calmer, but the path ahead is difficult."

The attempt to salvage the West Asia peace process comes as Mr Clinton's stature as a peace broker begins to wane. (Agencies)

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Israeli colonel captured, says Hezbollah chief
- Arafat insists on international inquiry
- Russia ready to take part in summit
- Palestinians protest in Sydney



BACK HOME: Union home minister L.K. Advani and U.P. chief minister Ram Prakash Gupta (second from left) salute the RSS flag along with Sangh leaders on the final day of their national security camp in Agra on Sunday. The camp was held to celebrate 75 years of the RSS.

Mumbaikars come out in support of Ranganathan

By Anil Singh

MUMBAI: Alarmed over reports of attempts being made to shunt out municipal commissioner V. Ranganathan, several citizens' groups have written to chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh protesting against such moves and extending support to the civic chief.



V. Ranganathan

It is a shame that an honest and efficient bureaucrat is being made the scapegoat for the recent civic strike," said P.K. Das, joint convenor of the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti.

Many pensioners who work with the advanced locality management (ALM) schemes are appalled that an officer as sincere and transparent as Mr Ranganathan is being targeted by vested interests. "This man has done in five months what others had taken years to do," said S.B. Mehra, a Bandra resident who has in-depth knowledge of the civic

corporation's working because of her involvement with the local ALM. The ALM concept, initiated some years ago to involve citizens in local garbage cleaning drives, has blossomed into a movement.

"We hope the chief minister will not succumb to pressure and transfer Mr Ranganathan," said Sybil Sequira, chairperson of the H-West ward Federation of Associations which represents 19 residents group in the Bandra-Santa Cruz area. She added that such a move would be detrimental to the interests of Mumbaikars and send wrong signals to potential investors.

Clearly, Mumbaikars are following the way showed by Pune-kars and Thaneites who had rallied behind their civic chiefs, Arun Bhatia and T. Chandrashekhar respectively. The Action Network for Good Governance in India (AGNI) has called for an urgent meeting to discuss the issue along with the fall-out of the civic strike.

Arup Sarbadhikary of the Bandra-Bandstand Residents Trust felt the disciplinarian Mr

Ranganathan had stepped on too many corns. "He is trying to enforce a system. Look at the way he had straightened out the petty works contractors."

Even individual citizens, like Edwin Britto of Old Khar Village who has been crusading against illegal structures, have voiced their support for Mr Ranganathan. "We are fortunate to have such a dynamic and fearless officer. He had penalised civic officers despite strong political pressure."

Citizens groups, such as Arunodaya Walkers Club in Bandra (East), unconnected with civic work have also reacted sharply to the reports of vested interests ganging up against the municipal chief. "Politicians of all hues are gunning for Mr Ranganathan. I am afraid he may even quit rather than succumbing to pressure," said one of the club's office-bearers.

Most people do not blame Mr Ranganathan for the way civic union leader Sharad Rao was able to arm-twist the BMC into agreeing to the increased bonus.

Violence: meet to focus on probe forum

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, OCT. 15 A joint call for an end to the violence that has rocked West Asia during the last 17 days will be the minimum expected of the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, by the chief mediator and U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, when the three sit with other leaders at the summit in Sharm el Sheikh tomorrow.

Even that minimum will be difficult to achieve since Israel and the Palestinians alike believe that the other side bears most of the responsibility for instigating and perpetuating the latest spell of violence that has left more than a 100 dead and thousands injured. But a substantive issue that the summitters will try to tackle is the composition and mandate of a forum to probe into the cause of the violence.

Though hard-liners among Israelis and Palestinians have urged their respective leaders to not attend the summit the meeting seems to be on track. Given the fraught situation in West Asia, it is entirely possible that some event could occur in the hours remaining to disrupt the prospects of the summit.

If matters go as planned, however, the U.S., Israeli and Palestinian leaders will be joined by the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. The Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, and Jordan's King Abdullah at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el Sheikh.

While neither Mr. Barak nor Mr. Arafat has publicly acknowledged the other side's demand that they curb their fighters they do seem to be doing so in practice since the last 24 hours have been relatively calm.

Mr. Arafat hopes that the summit will ensure the setting up of an international



Israeli children hold signs during a right-wing demonstration against the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak government's handling of the peace process, in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem on Sunday.

body to investigate the causes of the disturbances. The U.N. Security Council has already found, though not in so many words, that the conflict was provoked by the visit to the Temple Mount/Ai Aqsa complex by the Israeli Opposition leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon. They have also condemned the use of excessive force by Israel. If the Palestinians still insist on the setting up of an international enquiry commission as was suggested in the relevant Security Council Resolution, it is partly because the Israeli government and media have held Mr. Arafat personally responsible for orchestrating the violence.

However, the demand also appears to be tied in with the Palestinian effort to widen the mediating team beyond the U.S. The U.S. had monopolised the process of

Expanding the West Asian negotiations beyond the U.S.- Israel-Palestinian triangle is probably a matter that can only be gone into after tomorrow's summit. However, the Palestinian leadership affirms that they cannot ask their people to refrain from, as they see it, demonstrating their anger at Israeli oppression unless a mechanism is set up to show up the situation for what it is.

In the Palestinian view, the continued Israeli occupation of their territories, the harassment and humiliation that go with it and the frustrations borne out of the non-implementation of many measures prescribed by previous agreements are as much a part of the cause for the disturbances as the provocative visit by Mr. Sharon. An enquiry that highlights this background can do something to mitigate the Palestinians belief that they are isolated and will perhaps bring some balance into the conduct of negotiations in future.

Israel has refused to accept an international enquiry though they seem prepared to go along with the U.S. proposal that a joint team, comprising Palestinian and Israeli security officials by the U.S., probe into the disturbances.

If this particular issue can be finessed it is likely that other matters can be quickly sorted out.

Israel wants the Palestinian Authority to re-arrest some Islamic militants who were released from jail during the disturbances and recover arms from the Tanzim, the militia wing of Mr. Arafat's Fatah faction.

Similarly, the Palestinians want Israel to pull back its troops to their former positions, away from Palestinian towns, and to open the borders between the West Bank and Jordan and between the Gaza Strip and Egypt.

AD-18

16/10

16 OCT 2000

16 OCT 2000

WHEN a British foreign minister seeks peace in West Asia, I reach for my flak-jacket. It was during such a bid by Lord Carrington that the Argentinians invaded the Falklands. It was during another that President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

The West Asia peace process has been running as long as Northern Ireland's. It obsesses British and American leaders, who drop by regularly in Jerusalem to ask after it, as if it were a sick relative.

It is very sick. As the world's diplomats converged on Jerusalem last week, they seemed to sanctify the mayhem by their platitudinous condemnation. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was there with his court. Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov was in town. So was the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, and the French Foreign Minister, representing the EU presidency.

The Norwegians were representing the all-but-dead "Oslo agreement". Israel was said to be "furious" with France. President Bill Clinton was said to have "egg on his face". US secretary of state Madeleine Albright was "hopping mad" with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

If war is diplomacy by other means, diplomacy can easily pass as proxy for war. I prayed that British foreign secretary Robin Cook would resist the urge to rush in. The prayer was forlorn.

He was not going to miss an interventionists' convention. Since the foreign secretary is such a pro-European, could he not have left the EU to hold the fort? The sight of a Frenchman taking a plane to face the cameras was apparently too much for him. He was up and off.

Nor was he content to be a mere onlooker. He preached that the situation was "very grave" and warned the Israelis to set up a "frank and independent" inquiry into the violence. We were in town, he said, to seek a "just and lasting settlement".

It had taken "us" a long time to get this far in the process. "I hope we can get back to talks," he said. What is Mr Cook's mandate for using the first person singular and plural in this place? He is not the ruler of West Asia. He has neither troops nor citizens committed on the ground. While Britain must bear some historical responsibility for the political geography, the practical responsibility is spent.

This is not our land and its territorial conflicts are not our concern, least of all after 20 years of pretending and failing to help sort them out. Britain's foreign secretary claims to be deeply concerned by the working of the Arab-Israeli Security Committee, and by subsequent inquiries into shooting incidents in Gaza and the West Bank. Why?

Just suppose that after the

Too many Cooks

Enthusiasts for peace processes protest that things would be far worse without them. The onus of proof is on them. I cannot see that the Arab-Israeli conflict has been in any way lessened by the attentions of Kofi Annan, Bill Clinton, Robin Cook and the European Union, writes SIMON JENKINS



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat greeting British foreign secretary Robin Cook in Gaza on Wednesday. — AP/PTI.

Omagh bomb, Mr Arafat and Ehud Barak had travelled to London and told Mr Cook that they found the situation in Ulster "very grave" and demanded that he initiate talks with the bombers and reconstitute a North-South dialogue.

Suppose that they had lounged about in a London hotel giving interviews to the media to Mr Cook's disadvantage. I imagine he and the entire British government would have found this a confounded impertinence. There would have been much muttering about wogs meddling in our affairs. Diplomacy is one area of public service in which crypto-racist imperialism is still permissible.

Recent military history has focused on what Michael Ignatieff, in his apologia for the Kosovo adventure, calls "virtual war". This is modern war fought with high technology at arm's length, free of casualties, free of military heroism, free of true victory on the ground, but yielding political kudos.

Such were the wars in Kuwait, Iraq and Yugoslavia. They derive their moral legitimacy by replacing the UN principle of sovereign self-determination with a contradictory principle of humanitarianism.

This is invoked whenever it

suits Western leaders to declare the Christian version of *jehad*, as with Tony Blair's celebrated "Balkan crusade". While extremely dangerous, because unpredictable, to victim states, such wars seem little more than exercises with live ammunition to the West. They are rarely preceded by the normal paraphernalia of ultimatums or UN resolutions.

Clearly nobody has an interest in a renewed war in West Asia, which is why I doubt if one will happen. It would destroy too much that has been achieved by local people and it will be murderous. But too few Palestinians have yet to feel the economic benefits of peace, so who knows?

If the West had the will to intervene militarily, there might be cries for such policing of a newly created Palestine. But this is one theatre in which such intervention is not invoked. There is no crusade in the land of the crusades. So virtual diplomacy must stand in for virtual war. The players are whisked round the world, from Cairo to Oslo to Paris to Washington, to be touched with the rhetoric of pacifism.

Western statesmen who casually blast the hell out of Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic now intone the phraseology of tolerance and talk. Mr Cook may regard Iraqis and Serbs as "only

understanding the language of force". But that is when he is doing the shooting.

My visits to this troubled region have always left me deep in gloom. Where irresistible force meets immovable object over a single plot of land, peace seldom has the best tunes. Sir Henry Maine's dictum, that "war is as old as mankind but peace is a modern invention", seems all too relevant.

The one hope has been that a combination of self-rule and interdependence among the warring parties would steer them towards a sustainable partition. The likelihood was that outside intervention would destabilise it. Where that intervention was from oil-rich Arabia on the one side and no less rich America on the Israeli side, stability was barely conceivable. So it has proved.

Enthusiasts for "peace processes" protest that things would be far worse without them. The onus of proof is on them. I cannot see that the Arab-Israeli conflict has been in any way lessened by the attentions of Mr Annan,

President Clinton, Mr Cook and the EU. They failed conspicuously on Thursday. A sort of stalemate may have been maintained by massive injections of aid and by the restraint of Arab states in not (yet) arming the Palestinian guerrillas.

Yet since Israel has defied UN resolutions and the latest peace process, Mr Arafat cannot jeopardise his declining power by giving diplomatic bouquets to last week's diplomatic tourists.

Meanwhile, American and British bombers sustain Mr Hussein's power-base in Baghdad and thus offer the guerrillas a potential ally of awesome ruthlessness.

This is the vice of virtual diplomacy. Because, like virtual war, its essence is how it plays back home, it need not deal in consequences. There are no national interests at stake. Virtual diplomacy is about rounded phrases, sudden plane trips, photographs with important people and bromides on tolerance. But it is not neutral. Externally brokered peace processes rarely, if ever, "work".

The reason is not hard to see. By publicising a conflict such diplomacy entrenches extremism and makes compromise more dangerous for participants. It makes it more difficult for them to retreat. It encourages everyone on the ground to expect grand outsiders to do the work, to induce concessions from the enemy.

External peacemaking relieves them of the need to talk, entreat, adjust and enforce settlements. Failure can be blamed on the outsiders. Outsiders must pick up the pieces. This has been the pattern for decades in Northern Ireland.

As the historian Edward Luttwak recently wrote, violence must sometimes be left to take its chance at conflict resolution. It is not necessarily the worst mechanism.

Territory has always been disputed. Outsiders can take sides in this violence, as Britain did in Kosovo. This may freeze a dispute, but seldom resolves it. We seem happy to leave war to take its chance in most places, in Kashmir, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. We leave war at work across the Caucasus and much of Africa.

For 50 years, we have failed to persuade Palestinians and Israelis to live along side one another in peace. Perhaps, they should now sort out their respective claims to territory without our help or hindrance.

We have, in the mean time, work of our own to do. We have a West Asia, close to breakdown in Belfast. Back home, Mr Cook.

— *The Times, London*

/net.news/

T-Rex calling

YOU could blame Stephen Spielberg for this site, or thank him, depending on whether you are inclined to view dinosaurs as pop kitsch (as in *Jurassic Park* the film) or serious entertainment (as in *Jurassic Park*, the book, by Michael Crichton). At www.dinofun.com the emphasis is definitely on kitsch, with such links as Dinosaur Products, Dino Match and TicTac Dino. Dinosaur products include such marvels of kitsch culture as 3D Airbrush Dinosaur Shirts and Dinosaur Holographic Lollipops. T-Rex should be turning in his geological grave.

— SNS

French fare

A CALIFORNIA-based dot com, ishopfrance.com, showcases finely crafted products from France. The French-themed boutique site was recently launched. The five virtual sections are "Spa & Bath, Gift, Epicurean, Perfumes and Home Decor". It is designed to address the interests of busy women who demand unique, high-end items. The story behind the product; its origins and tradition have been given. Most of the products are artisanal in nature. The site also features a "Club France" page, which offers news on the hottest trends from France with travelogues and recipes. Sadly, some of the ingredients are only available at ishopfrance.com.

— PressCom

ttucker@integrity.com

If you have interesting insights into the Net, or have discovered a great new site, e-mail details to thestatesman@vsnl.com

The Statesman netpoll

Previous question

Should family-run Indian companies be protected from hostile takeovers?

Yes

59%

No

41%

Unsure

0%

The poll reflects the opinions of Net users who chose to participate, and not necessarily of the general public.

Today's proposition

Israel's response in the current West Asian crisis has been tough but justified?

Cast your vote at

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Israel ready for ceasefire, talks

London, October 15

ISRAEL IS ready to declare an immediate ceasefire and resume peace talks, former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, now Regional Cooperation Minister, told the BBC today, reports AFP.

"Israel is really ready to have a ceasefire immediately and we're ready to renew the peace negotiations," said Peres, a Nobel laureate. He spoke after attending an Israeli Cabinet meeting called in preparation for an emergency Middle East summit due to be held on Monday in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

Peres said that if an accord was reached, "you have to have a complete ceasefire in 12 hours."

He also appealed for a "change of tone in the media, to stop the incitements, to stop the inflammation, to call people to go back to reason." "Nobody has a choice but to continue the peace. Any other alternative will be a tragedy for all parties concerned," Peres stated.

"I think the Palestinians too have

to understand that they're playing with fire. It's not them vis-a-vis Israel only; it's them vis-a-vis the world," he said. "We cannot negotiate with the mob in the street; we cannot negotiate with terror," Peres added.

Russia ready to participate: Russia is ready to participate in the Middle East summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt "on the same level as the other participants," the Russian Foreign Ministry said today, according to reports from Moscow.

"Russia wants the summit to succeed, and is therefore ready to participate in it on the same level as the other participants," the ministry said in a statement.

In Washington, President Bill Clinton appeared to have scaled down his expectations from the meeting. Instead of the grand peace accord that he has been eyeing for so long, Mr Clinton now seems to be looking essentially for a ceasefire, given the rigid positions adopted by the Palestinians and the Israelis alike.

See also Page 13

Chances of Rajkumar's release soar

FOR THE first time since Kannada cine star Rajkumar was kidnapped by bandit Veerappan 76 days ago, hopes are running high of his possible release from captivity.

According to indications here, the possibility of the hostages' release has gone up following Veerappan's request for four more members in the team of emissaries led by original negotiator, *Nakkeeran* editor R.R. Gopal. Apparently the governments of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are already deliberating over where Rajkumar and the other two hostages should be taken after they are released — Chennai or Bangalore.

While the Karunanidhi Government is said to be keen on having the superstar in Chennai, Karnataka Chief Minister S. M. Krishna is attempting to convince his Tamil Nadu counterpart to bring him to Bangalore first.

The eldest son of the superstar, Shivaraj Kumar, said they were waiting for word from Chennai. "Once we get a signal, we will go to Chennai", he said. **HTC, Bangalore**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 OCT 2000

Arafat gives in, to attend summit

ST-1
15/10
ERIC SILVER *W. Asa*
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JERUSALEM, Oct. 14. — Mr Yasser Arafat and Mr Ehud Barak today agreed to attend a summit in Egypt, raising hopes of an end to two weeks of violence in West Asia.

The Palestinian President dropped his demand for what had been a deal-breaker — an international commission of inquiry into the violence.

Hopes of a revival of the peace process was evident in President Bill Clinton's optimism that a breakthrough might be imminent, even as the death toll in the clashes rose to at least 96, mostly Palestinians.

Mr Clinton said today he would attend the summit.

Russian President Mr Vladimir Putin urged Mr Arafat and Mr Barak to take decisive steps to stop the violence in West Asia.

The UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, who has camped in the region for a

week to broker peace, said the summit would take place in Egypt tomorrow or the day after, and without conditions.

A UN spokesperson said the summit would be held within the next 48 hours with the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh the "probable" venue.

Mr Nabil Shaath, a senior Arafat aide, said the Palestinians expected an Israeli retreat from the edge of Palestinian-controlled towns and the loosening of a closure to allow medicine and food into Palestinian areas. Israeli Prime Minister Mr Barak's office, on the other hand, said it expected Mr Arafat to re-arrest the dozens of Islamic militants released from Palestinian jails.

The Palestinian demand to

convene an international inquiry into the reasons for the violence didn't figure in the two side's wish lists. Mr Barak had adamantly rejected that condition, saying that he only trusted the USA to lead such an inquiry.

Mr Barak's office said the summit would not treat the substantive peace issues that have been all but waylaid by the violence. Instead, it would formalise a ceasefire.

Mr Annan also said the main goal would be a ceasefire. He expected President Clinton and Egyptian President Mr Hosni Mubarak to work out the details.

Mr Clinton said: "We may get a breakthrough sometime in the next several hours. We're working hard trying to turn this thing around."

Today's agreement rewarded intensive diplomatic activity by Messrs Annan, Clinton and Mubarak.

Mr Arafat seems to have blinked first. Till this morning, he had insisted on an Israeli troop pull-

out from Palestinian towns and villages, and the international inquiry. He also preferred to go to an Arab summit next weekend before meeting Mr Barak.

Under pressure from the UN, the USA and pro-Western Arab states like Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, who feared regional unrest might threaten their own regimes, he agreed to meet the Israelis unconditionally.

Mr Barak then dropped his parallel demand for Mr Arafat to call a halt to the violence. His spokesman insisted he had not lost hope of peace. The unconditional summit left him with a free hand to respond with force if Israeli soldiers or civilians were attacked.

Jaswant visit put off

NEW DELHI, Oct. 14. — Mr Jaswant Singh's visit to Saudi Arabia was "re-scheduled" at the last minute today because of the West Asia conflict. — SNS

■ Details on page 10

■ Another report on page 7

THE STATESMAN

15 OCT 2000

Living with the enemy



A PEOPLE IN CHAINS: Palestinians demonstrate for their brethren in Israeli jails.

EXREMELY RELIGIOUS Jews in Israel have the vote, get comfortable stipends from the Government, get state funding for their schools and do not have to send their wards for military service. Arab citizens of Israel, do have the vote, they do pay taxes, do not send their wards for military service unless they are Bedouin or Druze and get much less state support than any other segment of Israel's population. When the former riot, as they very often do, they are treated with what can only be described as utmost gentleness given the methods policemen use worldwide. When the latter riot as they did last week, in one of the rare instances since the founding of Israel, they are shot at.

This difference in the way that Israel treated its Arab citizens — loyal for the most part and peaceful till they had reason to believe that their holiest shrine had been desecrated — gives an indication of the fundamental attitudinal problem that Israel has in its dealings with the Arab world. Terms such as racism or religious chauvinism are too trite, too simplistic, to sum up the emotional mix with which Israel looks at the Arab world. There is a carry-over of the siege mentality which the Jews seem to have built into their genetic code over two centuries of

ostracism. There is also a definite cultural dis-affinity between the more modernised Jews and the Arabs. To the Jews the Arab is, as Edward Said has put it, the Other and not a benign but a menacing Other.

What the Jews of Israel consistently, and quite mystifyingly, overlook is that the Other is so menacing precisely because the Jews have usurped their rights. Arab ire at the loss of their rights is compounded by this refusal to acknowledge this usurpation and the unwillingness of the Jews and the world to affirm the validity of their Narrative (to use another favourite expression of Said's). Piled above this basic stratum of resentment are the memories of daily humiliation, petty harassment and overall disdain that they experience in their interaction with the Jews of Israel.

Despite this fundamental attitudinal incompatibility, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs (or at least as many of them as are represented by the PLO) decided that they did need to arrive at an arrangement whereby they could co-exist. The Oslo processes whereby they have tried to achieve this framework of co-existence did not directly address this fundamental problem. The art of statesmanship has probably not developed to the degree that it



A framework for co-existence can only be built on a cold calculation of self-interest.
KESAVA MENON
writes on the West Asia crisis.

can directly serve such an objective though the gushy sentimental photo sessions that have been staged on several occasions might have created the impression that the brotherhood of man was around the corner.

The inherent hope in the Oslo processes was that once the framework of co-existence had been erected the two people would indeed begin to, and that through their interaction over time they would each finally transcend the tendency to view the Other as someone basically hateful. The inherent and unavoidable drawback in the Oslo processes was that it sought to make two peoples, who have a fundamental distrust of the other side's motives and values, work together. Israeli Jews fear that the Palestinians are only interested in arriving at a truce

of a few decades so that they can gather their strength to eventually smother the Jewish state.

The Palestinians fear that Israel is merely creating a new device whereby it can perpetuate its subjugation of the Arab. A co-existence that will allow both peoples to lead free, peaceful and prosperous lives is an untested notion.

Given the levels of distrust, it was always on the cards that the Oslo processes could suffer serious, even irreversible, setbacks at any time. Have the events of the past fortnight that have left nearly a 100 dead and over 2000 wounded, all of them Arab bar a handful, damaged the Oslo processes to an irreparable degree? If so it would be a tragedy since the framework for co-existence was not only almost completely ready in draft form but was also almost firm enough (in the sense of it being fortified by justice) for it to be viable in the long-term.

There is currently deep disappointment on both sides at the evidence of a lack of attitudinal change in the other. The disappointment could be strong enough to cause an unshakeable disenchantment with the Oslo processes.

One encouraging sign is that the leadership on either side has not reached that level of disenchantment. Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, had said that if the violence continued for a few more days he would have to draw the conclusion that Israel did not have a partner for peace. But by the middle of the week he was getting ready to do what he could to repair the Oslo processes. To his credit the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, did not make such a conclusive judgment on the prospects of the Oslo processes even at the worst of times. There are even some analysts who believe that the cathartic blood-letting was perhaps necessary.

That is a macabre thought. But if the events of the past fortnight have vapourised the sentimentality surrounding Oslo, both sides could perhaps see that attitudinal changes are not what the Oslo processes are directly or primarily about. A framework for co-existence can only be built on a cold calculation of self-interest.

Hijackers: We are against presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia

Dubai, October 15

THE HIJACK of the Jeddah-London Saudi Airline, which also had an Indian passenger on board, ended in Baghdad late last night after all the 103 passengers and crew members were released unharmed and the two hijackers, both Saudis, arrested in Baghdad.

The hijackers who commandeered the flight shortly after leaving Egyptian airspace first tried to land in Damascus but then ordered the flight to be taken to the Saddam International Airport where they surrendered and sought political asylum in Iraq.

Speaking before the release, an Iraqi Interior Ministry official, Taher Haboush, said the hijackers had said they seized the plane because they were upset over an

investigation into the Saudi human rights situation that was favourable to the government. The hijackers also said they ordered the plane to fly to Baghdad because Iraq rejected "US hegemony", Haboush said.

State television and airport officials said that the nearly seven-and-a-half-hour crisis ended late yesterday after high-ranking government officials negotiated with the hijackers, who then surrendered peacefully. No other details were immediately available as to how the hijacking ended.

The two hijackers were later allowed to speak freely with reporters. They praised Iraqi authorities and criticised their own government. "We carried out the operation because we believe in the principles of justice and equality", one said. The other said the

Saudi people were against the presence of US troops in their territory. The hijackers, who refused to give their names, said they haven't asked for political asylum, countering an earlier report. They also said they did not intend to stay in Iraq.

It wasn't immediately clear if the hijackers were armed or what other means they used to seize control of the aircraft. A hijacker had at one point threatened to blow up the plane unless it was allowed to fly to Baghdad, Saudi officials said on condition of anonymity.

Saudi Arabian airlines officials in Jiddah said the plane had 90 passengers and 15 crew, led by an Ethiopian captain. The passenger figure included the two hijackers.

(PTI)

Iranian Foreign Minister meets Saddam on historic Iraq visit

Dubai, October 15

IRANIAN FOREIGN Minister Kamal Kharrazi, who is currently on a historic visit to Iraq with which it fought a bitter eight year war from 1980, met Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Saturday stressing that Iran was determined to settle all outstanding problems relating to the war.

Referring to the 1975 Algiers accord between Iran and Iraq, Kharrazi said the implementation of the agreement is the guarantor of the interests, security and stability of the two countries and the agreement is the basis of bilateral relations, the Iranian news agency IRNA said.

During the pathbreaking meeting, which was overshadowed by

the violence in Palestine, the Iraqi President pointed to his own role in the discussions leading to the signing of the Algiers accord and said the existing political will in the two countries can resolve the remaining issues and restore good neighbourly relations.

He added that based on such political will, measures should be quickly taken to settle the problems remaining from the war.

The visit is expected to revive the joint committees set up in 1997 to settle problems proceeding from the Iraqi-imposed war such as the demarcation of the border lines between the two countries, exchange of prisoners of war — a thorny issue for both countries, business affairs and

security matters. The visit of the Iranian Foreign Minister was front-paged by Dailies in Baghdad which highlighted the fact that Kharrazi flew directly into Iraq against a UN flight embargo since the Iraq-Kuwait war of 1990.

Tehran has opposed the sanction but this is the first time it has openly committed a perceived violation of the sanctions.

Kharrazi's visit is the first by an Iranian Foreign Minister since Ali Akbar Velayati came to Iraq in November 1990 before the war. Iran and Iraq have diplomatic ties at the level of charge d'affaires and Tehran is yet to return the planes sent by Iraq during the war with Kuwait for apparent safe custody.

(PTI)

WITH this man's death, Oslo has died, and with this man's burial, they bury Oslo. That was the message Mordechai Eliahu, a former chief rabbi of Israel, delivered to more than 1,000 mourners on Wednesday, at the funeral of Hillel Lieberman, a 36-year-old, New York-born rabbi, whose bullet-riddled body was found last weekend in a cave near the Palestinian town of Nablus.

Rabbi Eliahu, a stocky, white-bearded figure who still sports the blue, gold-embroidered robes of his old office, has long been a theological champion of Jewish settlement in the Promised Land. Their presence, he told his gun-toting congregation in the neat, red-roofed Jewish village of Elon Moreh, on a windy hilltop two kilometres east of Nablus, would speed up the coming of the Messiah.

He was mourning a disciple, but rejoicing at what he saw as the demise of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process launched in Oslo seven years ago.

On the same day, 120 km south, in Gaza City, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, founder and spiritual leader of the Hamas Islamic Resistance, demanded that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat break off contact with Israel. Hamas, he asserted, will not cease the struggle and resistance operations. The struggle will continue as long as the occupation continues. Interviewed by the Tel-Aviv tabloid, *Yediot Aharonot*, the frail, wheelchair-

bound Muslim cleric sent this grim message to the citizens of Israel: You are living on occupied land that you stole. You are living on land whose homes you destroyed and whose sons were killed. You have no future in this region.

As the bloodshed of the past two weeks fast approaches 100 dead — mostly Palestinians, but an increasing number of Israeli soldiers and civilians, like Rabbi Lieberman — and thousands wounded, the enemies of a negotiated, compromise peace feel as if they are winning. And for now at least, the evidence is on their side. The mad rush to war accelerated midweek with the killing of another Palestinian boy, Sami Abu Jazar (12) by Israeli troops in Gaza Strip and the lynching by a Palestinian mob (under the noses of Palestinian policemen) of two middle-aged Israeli reserve soldiers, who strayed across the line into the West Bank town of Ramallah. A Palestinian witness said the mob hanged the soldiers, then burned their bodies.

Israel retaliated with air strikes on Palestinian offices in Ramallah and Gaza. The main target seemed to have been Mr Arafat's headquarters. The current clashes erupted after a demonstrative 28 September visit by Israeli Opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Jews revere it because Solomon built his House of the Lord there. To the Muslims, it is the Haram ash Sharif, their third holiest mosque after those of

Dialogue of the deaf

Even peace campaigners admit that the utopian dream of a new West Asia is in the deep freeze. Politicians must change tack, says ERIC SILVER



Body of a 12-year-old boy covered with the Palestinian flag. He was shot in Gaza Strip during clashes at the Netzarim Junction, triggered by Ariel Sharon's visit to Temple Mount last week. — AP/PTI.

Mecca and Medina. Most Israelis admit that Mr Sharon's visit was the spark that lit the tinder. But increasingly, Israelis of the Left and the Right accuse Mr Arafat of seizing on it as a pretext to revive the Intifada uprising.

The main difference between the 1987-1993 Intifada and this 2000 model is that the Palestinian side has guns, rocks and petrol bombs. This government, protested acting foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, has gone to the outer limits of the capacity of any Israeli government to reach a reasonable compromise with the Palestinians. Then there was this outburst of violence. He accused Mr Arafat's Palestinian Authority of orchestrating it to win the sympathy of the international community. This cynical attempt to lubricate the improvement of an international image with Palestinian blood is tragic, said Mr Ben-Ami, who has borne the brunt of the mayhem on two fronts. For, he is also Israel's internal security minister.

Speaking from her home in Ramallah, soon after the lynching of the two Israeli soldiers, Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi held out little hope of early de-escalation. "I think Israel should withdraw from our towns and villages, then say let's talk and come to arrangements. Then it might be possible to scale things down. So long as they are there, it's impossible".

But Prime Minister Ehud Barak's first response was to rocket Ramallah and Gaza. His next was to lay siege with tanks to the major Palestinian cities. Calls for him to form an emergency national-unity government intensified. One of its staunchest advocates is communications minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, a retired General and former West Bank commander. It would include Right-wingers like Mr Sharon, whose Likud party says it will serve under Mr Barak only if he abandons the Oslo accords. Justice minister Yossi Beilin, an architect of the 1993 breakthrough, pledged to thwart any such expansion. "I will work to

ensure that a Labour-Likud government is not established", he said, "because the significance in the eyes of the world would be an assertion that Israel is the one that is bringing an end to the peace process". As the turmoil mounts, he looks increasingly like the boy sticking his finger in the dike. So do the efforts of international statesmen, led by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to broker a truce and bring the warring sides together.

Talks by proxy between Mr Arafat and Mr Barak sounds like a dialogue of the deaf. Mr Arafat wants a broad, international inquiry into the causes of the strife.

Mr Barak wants a smaller one, chaired by his US friends, so that Israel is not manoeuvred into the dock. President Bill Clinton wants to convene an urgent West-Asian summit. Mr Barak says yes. Mr Arafat, backed by the putative host, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, says they must have an Arab summit first. That is due end of next week.

The two weeks of escalating violence have thrown the Israeli Left into a painful crisis, said Janet Aviad, a veteran leader of the Peace Now movement: "Even people like me, who have worked for peace at the grassroots, have doubts now about the trustworthiness of their Palestinian friends. Everyone has been shocked by the expressions of hatred for each other on both sides".

She is convinced, though, that Israelis and Palestinians have no alternative to resuming the peace negotiations, though she can't say when. Even peace campaigners acknowledge that the utopian dream of a new West Asia is in the deep freeze, if not dead. The politicians, suggested Aviad, an American-born sociologist, would have to take a pragmatic, sanguine approach — to separate these two people as much as possible, to place them on an equal footing, and hope that we will transcend the hostility.

Just as the Israeli Right brags, "We told you so about Palestinian good faith", the Left says, "We

told you so about the burgeoning Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza". The slow and steady expansion of the settlements, argued Aviad, had angered the Palestinians and created a great security burden for Israel.

The sooner settlement activity is stopped and the most problematic settlements are removed, the

better. Maybe, but the settlers are more militant than ever. Shner Katz, a black-bearded teacher in his 40s, has lived in Shilo, between Ramallah and Nablus, with his wife and children for 10 years.

"It's hard," he said after Lieberman's West Bank funeral. "We've been stoned. Were being shot at all the time. We don't

know how much longer we can stand such a situation". Did that mean he was preparing to pull out? "Never", he snorted. "Only our dead bodies will leave this place. This is our country, this is our home."

(The author is The Statesman's Jerusalem-based correspondent)

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FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

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S ₁	U ₁	B ₃	I ₁	T ₁	E ₁	M ₃	RACK 2 = 67
F ₄	O ₁	R ₁	E ₁	L ₁	E ₁	G ₂	RACK 3 = 83
C ₃	O ₁	R ₁	K ₅	E ₁	D ₂		RACK 4 = 13
C ₃	E ₁	N ₁	O ₁	T ₁	E ₁		RACK 5 = 9

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Barak to form emergency Cabinet

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 13. All the atavistic rages and hatreds of West Asia have been revived in full force following the lynching of two Israeli soldiers and the rocket attacks on high-profile Palestinian targets yesterday. The slide towards intensified antagonism is being sped with the moves to form a national emergency Cabinet in Israel and the reported release of Hamas militants by the Palestinian Authority. There is a prospect of worse to come today as the Palestinians observe a "Day of Rage". Amid all this, the efforts to get the various leaders together appear desperate.

Yesterday, Israeli helicopter gun ships fired rockets on select Palestinian targets in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The police station, where the two Israeli soldiers were killed by a mob, was completely destroyed as was a Palestinian T.V. station that was reported to have made incendiary broadcasts during the two weeks over which riots have been raging. Rockets were also fired on a security shed just about 50 metres from the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat while he was inside his offices. But the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak has clarified that there was no intention to target Mr. Arafat personally. Palestinian police compounds in Nablus and Jericho were also attacked, the latter after a synagogue in the town was set ablaze, and the port in Gaza was also hit.

After yesterday's incidents, Israel has sealed off the entire Gaza



An Indonesian Muslim woman cries as she prays along with thousands of others at the Parliament building in Jakarta on Friday, during a protest condemning Israeli attacks on Palestinians in the continuing conflict in West Asia. Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim nation. — AP

Strip and ringed the Palestinian towns with tanks. International crossing points between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and between the West Bank and Jordan have also been closed. In effect, the Palestinians have been put into separate geographical boxes with Israeli military helicopters hovering overhead. Despite this ominous military ring around them, Palestinian militants have called for a "Day of rage" today.

Till the time of noon prayers there were only reports of isolated stone-throwing. But there is every possibility that the Palestinian youth will resume their confrontations with the Israeli security forces later in the day.

An already tense atmosphere has been further exacerbated with reports that the Palestinian Authority has released from custody a large number of Hamas militants, including experts in bomb-making and terror attacks. These reports have to be treated with scepticism at the moment since the information has been provided by Israeli security men who appear to have been spreading rumors or slanting the news for some unknown reason.

Mr. Amira Haas, the intrepid Jewish correspondent of *Haaretz*, who lives and reports from within the Arab community, had recently given a report of how Israeli security men had painted the release of some Hamas members

as a sinister move by the Palestinian Authority when, in fact, they had been released because their terms of imprisonment were actually over.

The slide toward an ending of the peace process has been speeded up with Mr. Barak's invitation to the Opposition, including Mr. Ariel Sharon, the man who provoked these disturbances, to join a national emergency government. Mr. Barak has hinted that he expects such a government to be formed in the next four or five days. At the moment this could still be treated as a bluff intended to pressure the Palestinian leadership since Mr. Barak has refused to entertain the Opposition's condition that he must repudiate all offer he has thus far made to the Palestinians before they join the Cabinet.

While the tensions on the ground have captured everyone's attention for the obvious reasons, there also appears to be some desperate games of brinkmanship being played by the leaders of both sides. It is as if the leaders on both sides are aware that they will eventually have to meet and talk and are trying to ensure that they have the stronger card when they sit at the table. Mr. Barak has said that he would attend the four or five-way summit that the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton would like the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak to host at Sharm al Sheikh if Mr. Arafat agrees that the U.S. proposals (presented after the Camp David talks in July) are made the basis of negotiations.

14 OCT 2000

Israeli raids, Hamas men aggravate crisis

Barak to form emergency Govt • How soldiers were lynched by Palestinian mob

Jerusalem, October 13

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Ehud Barak met right-wing opposition leader Ariel Sharon, Israeli television reported only hours after Barak announced plans to form an "emergency" government.

Barak said last evening he planned to set up a "government of national emergency" in the next three to four days following the latest escalation of violence in the Palestinian territories.

He described Sharon as a "very important partner" in that venture.

Barak made the announcement following a wave of Israeli air strikes against Palestinian targets in retaliation for the lynching of three soldiers by an angry Palestinian mob in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

"If peace is dead, I can see no reason why we shouldn't have a national unity government if a conflict is imposed upon us," Barak told a subsequent interview with CNN television yesterday.

"I don't think that Likud or the right-wing in Israel is against peace. They might have certain differences with us ... But they are not anti-peace."

The television said Barak was planning to give Sharon a report on security issues. Barak has been without a majority in Parliament and faces a possible vote for early elections when the parliament

reconvenes on October 29.

Meanwhile, Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat has freed dozens of Islamic militants from prisons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, setting Israel on edge with growing fears of new terror attacks.

Supporters of the militant Hamas group were quick to issue new threats. Israel would "swim in a pool of blood," one man shouted into a megaphone as hundreds of Hamas members rallied outside prison in the West Bank town of Nablus. Moments later, the gate swung open, and 35 Hamas and Islamic Jihad men walked out.

The releases - along with Israeli attacks on Palestinian towns and the torching of an ancient West Bank synagogue by Palestinians - wiped out in just a few hours the complex understandings forged in seven years of peacemaking.

According to a report from Gaza City, Hamas said the Palestinian Authority released most of its activists. The Authority released 21 militants earlier in the week.

The two most senior Hamas militants still not set free are Mahmoud Abu Hannud and Mohammed Deif.

Barak said yesterday he considered the release of Hamas prisoners "worrying".

In a related development, Jewish settlers went on the rampage near Hebron, shooting and wounding three Palestinians.

(Agencies)

Suzanne Goldenberg
Ramallah, October 13

HE HELD up his palms to the crowd. They were red with blood. As the mob bayed, a body clad only in grey underpants shot through the corner window of the Ramallah police station. It left a smear of blood on its descent. With that, Israel and the Palestinians were effectively at war.

Witnesses described the scenes in which at least two Israeli soldiers died at the hands of a Palestinian lynch mob.

As the Israelis arrived at the police station yesterday morning, a crowd of more than 1,000 people was collecting at Ramallah's nearby grand mosque for the funerals of two men killed by Israeli soldiers.

This was a crowd on the edge of reason, fired up by the bloody images on official television, by martial music and by posters of dead Palestinians staring out from posters plastered all over town.

Over 100 Palestinians have died in the past fortnight. Almost every funeral has ended with more violence. Yesterday's was a mob hungry for bloody revenge.

The Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak called the killings "a cold-blooded lynching". An Israeli military spokesman said the dead men were army reservists in plain clothes who were sent to reinforce a Jewish settlement north of

Ramallah. "On the way to the base, they literally got lost," said Captain Natan Gold.

They were apprehended by Palestinian police at a checkpoint near the town. "They were forced to go to the station." Nachman Shai, an Israeli government spokesman held the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat responsible for their fate. "There is no doubt...the Palestinian mob was given a free hand to do whatever it wanted," he said.

Ramallah residents were convinced the two men had been members of an elite Israeli army undercover unit.

No matter, once the Israelis got to the police station they were doomed. Tribal hatreds now rule the hearts of Israelis and Palestinians. "I have lived here 31 years, but I can not walk in Ramallah alone because people think I am Jewish," said Elizabeth Khayyo, a local Armenian. "Where is peace? It is in a sack."

Within moments, word spread throughout Ramallah. Perhaps 2,000 men began swarming around the station.

Armed Palestinian police mounted the walls. But they were no contest for the mob. Screaming "Death to the Jews," and "Don't betray us, hand them over," they surged in waves towards the station, brandishing guns, knives and iron bars. "You could not count the people. They were just pushing,

pushing forward," said one witness.

The mob stampeded through the gates. Young men began scaling the walls of the station and overhanging trees. The police did not even fire in the air.

Moments later a man appeared at a window, his bloodstained hands raised in triumph.

One man was dumped out of the window. Then, witnesses said, three others were dragged out by the mob, leaving dark streaks of blood on the pavement. They were frog-marched towards the main square.

Some witnesses said the men were passed from hand to hand over the heads of their captors as the mob made a victory procession around the stone lions of Manara Square. Others said the men were stabbed and their bodies burnt. Eventually two bodies were handed over to Israeli forces. They were burnt and severely mutilated.

In Ramallah, a deep sense of dread descended as the Palestinians awaited Israel's inevitable retribution. Plain-clothed gunmen began to hunt down and beat reporters and cameramen. Police with loudspeakers ordered people to return to their homes.

(Guardian News Service)

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 OCT 2000

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WEST ASIA / ARAFAT, ALBRIGHT MEET MUBARAK

Ceasefire holds for now

6/10

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 5. While high-level talks held in Paris and Cairo failed to produce results, Israeli and Palestinian security chiefs appear to be enforcing a truce agreement they made in the early hours of the morning. Israeli troops and tanks were pulling back from their previous positions near Palestinian populated areas and Arab youth seem to have refrained for much of the day from confronting Israeli security men. If the truce holds till nightfall, today would be the first peaceful day after a whole week of confrontations in which over 70 have died and over a thousand injured, most of them Palestinians.

Palestinian security men were reported to have stopped youth heading for confrontations for the first time since clashes broke out last Thursday. While Israelis accuse the Palestinians of not having done enough to stop the confrontations, and also point out that shots were fired at Israeli security men, it is highly probable that the Palestinian security forces could not have done much given the rage that has gripped the Arabs. The indiscriminate and ruthless use of force by the Israelis and the large number of deaths, including that of over a dozen children, had fuelled rage to a fever pitch. There was also such a mismatch between Israeli forces who used helicopter gunships, tanks and missiles against Arab youth, armed mostly with stones and molotov cocktails and a few automatics that the Palestinian security chiefs did not feel that they could intervene any earlier.

Action by the security chiefs in Israel/Palestine was matched by an agreement arrived at in tripartite talks held in Paris between the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat and the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright. According to agency reports, the Palestinians undertook to keep their security forces away from Israeli positions at three sensitive points where most of the clashes have taken place. Besides agreeing to pull back their troops, the Israelis said they would ensure that regulations on opening fire on protesters are enforced and that they

would make slight adjustments to their deployments around Palestinian townships.

At the Paris talks the two sides were also said to have agreed on carrying out a security assessment with inputs from CIA experts. It is not clear whether the agreement between the security chiefs in Israel/Palestine was a result of this agreement. The Palestinians had wanted an enquiry by an international body into the causes of the disturbances but Israel had demurred stating that it did not want outsiders to enquire into its affairs.

At one stage, Mr. Arafat was said to have stormed out of the meeting saying that the refusal to institute an external enquiry was a humiliation. However, Mr. Barak later said the two sides had accepted U.S. ideas that "each side will examine its own activities, sit together to clarify what happened and then we'll sit with our American partners to see what happened and try and make sure that (there will be) better co-ordination in the future and that such events can not be repeated." The French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac and the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan were also involved in the efforts at reconciliation.

Today, Mr. Arafat and Ms. Albright flew to the Egyptian resort of Sharm al Sheikh for a further round of talks with the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak. Mr. Barak was also scheduled to attend the Sharm al Sheikh meeting but failed to turn up. Yesterday, Mr. Mubarak had given hints that he would try to move the talks back to the main issues in the negotiations in an effort to transcend recent events. It was unclear whether Mr. Barak wanted to avoid an impression that he was eager to get back to the negotiations before the confrontations had been conclusively ended.

The Israeli Prime Minister has said that he will not negotiate with the spectre of violence hanging in the background. It was also not clear whether Mr. Barak had advance notice of the criticism that the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr. Amr Moussa was to level at the Israeli Opposition leader, Mr. Ariel Sharon in the course of a press conference at Sharm al Sheikh.

THE HINDU

6 OCT 2000

Middle East peace talks fail

Dialogue to continue at Egyptian President's invitation

Paris, October 5

TALKS BETWEEN the Palestinian, Israeli and US leaders on ways to halt Israel-Arab violence ended in Paris early today without agreement, a senior Palestinian official said.

"The only agreement is to continue in Sharm El-Sheikh today," Yasser Abed Rabbo told Reuters, referring to plans for more talks at the Egyptian resort, hosted by President Hosni Mubarak.

"We have not agreed on any point in the security document that was supposed to be finalised tonight. We rejected the concept of the document, which tried to equate between the Palestinians and the Israelis in responsibility for the massacres in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip."

At least 66 people, mainly Arabs, have been killed in violence which erupted last week. The Paris talks involved US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.



Yasser Arafat

"We insist on an international inquiry. The Israelis want only an American committee while we want the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to participate in naming this committee and following up its functions," the Palestinian official said.

Palestinians say the violence was sparked by Arab anger over a visit by Israel's right-wing opposition leader Ariel Sharon to a Jerusalem



Madeleine Albright

shrine holy to the Muslims and the Jews. Israel says the Palestinians used this as a pretext for the violence.

As the Paris talks went on, witnesses in the West Bank city of Hebron said Israeli helicopters sprayed bullets onto Palestinian homes. An Israeli Army spokeswoman denied there were helicopters in the area.

In Egypt, hundreds of demon-



Ehud Barak

strators marched on the Israeli Embassy in Cairo yesterday and burned Israeli flags outside. Thousands of Syrian demonstrators hurled stones at the US Embassy in Damascus.

Arafat left the talks at the US Ambassador's residence to get some sleep at his hotel, but left senior negotiator Saeb Erekat to continue hammering out details on the security deal. (Reuters)

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West moves to defuse W.Asia crisis

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 4. While hectic diplomatic efforts have been mounted to defuse the situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories, violent confrontations continue on the ground.

At least seven more Palestinians are reported to have been killed since a ceasefire that came into effect in the early hours of yesterday collapsed by late afternoon.

Today, on the seventh day of the conflict, clashes continued between Palestinian civilians and Israeli security men at a number of places.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat have flown to Paris to meet the French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac and the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright in an effort to restore peace.

Mr. Barak and Mr. Arafat have already met separately with the French President and the U.S. Secretary and they are scheduled to meet together in Ms. Albright's presence.

The Israeli and Palestinian leaders will be flying to Cairo tomorrow to carry forward the diplomatic efforts with the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak.

The Palestinians have set three conditions for the talks. They want Israel to cease hostilities, withdraw its troops from the vi-

cinity of Palestinian population centres and agree to an international enquiry into the cause for the confrontation.

From the fact that Israel had pulled some of its troops back during the short truce yesterday, it would appear that it will not have a problem in respect of two of the Palestinian demands.

However, Israel has said that it is not prepared to let the world probe into its internal affairs. This is, in fact, the main Palestinian demand and it is unclear as to how the impasse on this point can be sorted out.

While the leaders were busy in Paris clashes continued in the region. It appears that since yesterday the Israeli Arabs, who had joined their Palestinian brethren in their protests, have calmed down.

However, Palestinian youth continued to stone Israeli security pickets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from yesterday afternoon and most of today.

Yesterday, an ominous turn was given to the developments when Palestinians in civilian dress opened fire with automatic weapons on Israeli troops. Since they were in civilian dress it is not possible to accuse the Palestinian security forces of having waged war on the Israeli army.

All sides seem to be playing safe and describing these gunmen as members of different Palestinian political factions.

THE HINDU

5 OCT 2000

Conflict Zone

President Bill Clinton's words on the violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in West Bank and the Gaza said it all. "I think it will be better tomorrow, I hope it will," he said, a clear indication that no one really knows which way the volatile relations between the two sides will go. Though a ceasefire has been announced, it is still far too early to ascertain whether it will hold. Undoubtedly, at present, Israel has a greater incentive to see that the ceasefire is not breached since its image has taken a severe beating following the publication of photographs of a father unsuccessfully shielding his little son from a hail of Israeli bullets. The small boy was killed minutes after the picture was taken; his final moments have shocked the world and exposed the ugly face of Israel's brutality towards those caught in a conflict not of their own making. The tensions began when right-wing Israeli leader Ariel Sharon visited a shrine in Jerusalem sacred to both Jews and Muslims, which according to the Palestinians, defiled the site. While Mr Sharon has every right to visit a shrine holy to Jews, the seasoned politician in him ought to have been alert to the dangers of doing so at a time when Palestinians in general have been frustrated over the lack of progress in the peace process. It is Jerusalem which is the biggest stumbling block to a lasting peace and on which Israel is loath to negotiate. But the kind of violent eruptions that have repeatedly taken place should be evidence to Israel that sooner rather than later, it will have to tackle this issue.

For Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, the latest round of clashes signify an almost personal defeat. Reigning in his restive people, Mr Arafat has stayed the course of the peace process; Mr Barak has risked his premiership to stay in the ring. The violence can only strengthen the hands of the naysayers on both sides who had been marginalised in recent times. The tensions may end for the present, but in a way, they signal that the process is back to somewhere near square one. The scars of these clashes will not easily heal and it will be months before a level of trust is built up again. In the following days, the two leaders will find themselves under extreme pressure not to take the first step to getting the peace process back on course. The only hope of getting a move on is President Clinton's intense involvement in the process. With barely a few months left of his presidency, he is not going to let what might have been a partial foreign policy success in West Asia fall to pieces. Washington's big guns led by Mr Clinton and Secretary Albright have focused all their attentions on the situation and this is a positive sign. But at the end of the day, the desire for peace has to come from within, it cannot be imposed by Washington or any other power. Closer home, we have the example of Kashmir where we have seen the futility of trying to impose various peace models framed without the active participation of the people whom they affect directly.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2001

Barak, Arafat will meet to find solution to West Asia crisis

PARIS: Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will meet U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright here on Wednesday, keeping alive hopes of an Arab-Israeli peace pact after five days of the region's worst violence in years.

"The purpose of our meetings is to find a way to end the violence, restore calm and ensure that there is no repeat of such an escalation," Ms Albright said in a statement on Tuesday. "We'll start with bilaterals between the U.S. and each of them and take it from there," a senior state department official remarked.

By Tuesday morning, 37 Palestinians, eight Israeli Arabs, an Israeli border policeman, an Israeli soldier and an Israeli Jewish civilian had been killed in the clashes which started last Thursday.

Ms Albright will visit the Ger-

man city of Dresden for 10th anniversary celebrations of German reunification but will return to Paris instead of flying back home as planned. She told a news conference in Paris that it was a tragedy

most shockingly a terrified 12-year-old boy being killed as his father tried to shield him from crossfire have been pictured on television, painting a picture of chaos after years of stop-start talks and interim accords which have deferred the toughest issues.

U.S. President Bill Clinton seems determined to keep trying for an accord which has eluded him despite a marathon summit at Camp David in July. One of the taboos was laying out options for the toughest issue of all — the fate of Jerusalem. "Israelis and

Palestinians have cooperated in the past to achieve historic agreements as well as practical cooperation on the ground," Ms Albright said, adding, "They must find a way again to end the current psychology of confrontation and begin to restore the psychology of peace-making," she added. (Reuters)



Ehud Barak

Albright

Yasser Arafat

that violence had returned just when peace was within grasp. "There's no question that what has been happening the last few days is a tragedy, and perhaps even an even greater tragedy than usual because we are close to coming to some solution," she said. Live gunfire, slumped bodies and perhaps

Arafat, Barak to meet Albright

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 3. Hopes increased of an end to the violent confrontations that have rocked Israel and the Palestinian territories for the last six days as combatants from the two sides pulled back. Israeli troops were reported to be pulling back from the frontlines of the confrontation and Arab civilians, both Palestinians and Arab citizens of Israel, have eased off their "stone and rock" attacks on Israeli security men.

Intensive efforts are also underway at the local and international level to ensure a more permanent end to the hostilities. The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak and the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat are to fly to Paris tomorrow to meet the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright to discuss the latest crisis.

The relative calm witnessed this morning could be misleading if judged by the events of yesterday. In the morning yesterday, it had appeared that the clashes were petering off. However, clashes flared up later in the day in which nineteen persons, most of them Palestinians or Israeli Arabs, were killed. Fifty-six persons, only a few of them Israeli security men or civilians and the rest Arab, have died in the six days of violence and more than a thousand are believed to have been injured. A new dimension was added to the violence yesterday when Israeli helicopter gun-ships fired rockets on a Gaza City apartment block. (Gaza City has been under full Palestinian control for almost five years now). In an earlier clash, anti-tank missiles were used.

Although shots are said to have been fired from the Palestinian side on a few occasions, the dominant image is that of Arab youth fighting Israeli soldiers with stones, rocks and molotov cocktails. While the violence was set off by the visit of the Israeli Opposition leader, Mr.



A Palestinian woman carrying an AK-47 automatic weapon raises slogans during the funeral procession of Wael Qatawi, in the West Bank town of Nablus on Tuesday. Qatawi (16) was killed in clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians on Monday. — AP

Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount/Al Aqsa complex on Thursday it was intensified and fuelled over the last two days by the Arab perception that the Israelis were resorting to ruthless and indiscriminate force. After all, rocks and stones against bullets, anti-tank missiles

and rockets is an absolute no-contest.

Arab anger was also fuelled by the deaths of children, 12 and 10-year olds, and the haunting televised killing of 12-year-old Rami al Durra. The youngster and his father were hiding behind a concrete water cistern as they were caught up in an apparent ceasefire. While Israeli officials have said that they are going to enquire whether the shots were fired from their side, independent observers, including Western journalists, are in no doubt that Rami was killed by Israeli gunfire. In fact, the *The Guardian correspondent* reported that from the fact there were 12 bullet craters on the water cistern, it appeared that Rami's death was deliberate. A French TV crew has captured the image of the 12-year-old clinging desperately to the back of his father Mr. Jamal al Durra, who was trying to signal to the soldiers not to shoot, slumping as bullets struck him and then dying in the arms of his wounded father. An ambulance driver, who tried to go to their rescue, was also shot dead.

Such deaths ensuing in the course of clashes between totally mismatched forces have incensed the Arab world. In fact, most of the rioting yesterday was by Israeli Arabs who, according to the agencies, had turned the Galilee Valley in northern Israel into a war zone. Almost every Israeli settlement in the West Bank and the soldiers guarding them had been surrounded by stone-throwing Arab youth.

Judging from the reactions from some Israeli officials and sections of the media, it appears that there are still people in Israel who simply do not "get it". Mr. Sharon, who in the judgment of all neutral observers, had sparked off the violence, went on CNN to brazenly state that his visit to the Temple Mount/Al Aqsa complex was not provocative and that full responsibility for the violence and the deaths that ensued lay with Mr. Arafat.

THE HINDU

4 OCT 2000

~~P~~alestinian, Israeli leaders plead for peace

Jerusalem, October 2

HG-13 3710

PALESTINIAN AND Israeli leaders each called on the other to ceasefire after four days of heavy fighting - while their armed forces appeared to be preparing for even greater hostilities.

The street battles, sparked by a visit Thursday by an Israeli hard-liner to a disputed holy site in Jerusalem, had taken 31 lives by yesterday: 29 Palestinians, one Israeli-Arab, and one Israeli soldier. More than 1,000 people were injured, by Palestinian count.

"Stop shooting our soldiers, our old people, our youths, our women," Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said in a statement. "Get Israeli soldiers out of Palestinian cities and refugee camps." "In the next few days, the most important thing is to put an end to the clashes and the bloodshed," Prime Minister Ehud Arafat told Israel radio.

Both leaders were engaged in intensive behind-the-scenes diplomacy aimed at salvaging the peace talks - and at explaining their version of events to other world leaders.

Arafat later released a statement summarising

a phone conversation with US President Bill Clinton, who is sponsoring the talks. Clinton expressed his condolences to Arafat and called on both sides "to do one's best to stop these events and to work quickly to save the peace process," the statement said.

Herzog said Barak was eager to return to the talks. "We are at such a stage in the negotiations that could lead to the end of the conflict-but such developments could lead to deadlock."

While the leaders protested their peaceful intentions, their top soldiers prepared for an intensification of the violence. (AP)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 OCT 2000

519 Palestinians want UN probe

DPA & REUTERS

JERUSALEM. Oct. 1. — The Palestine Cabinet has called on the UN security council and the secretary general to probe the clashes in West Bank and Gaza in which 16 Palestinians have been killed.

Besides, four Palestinians have been declared clinically dead, said the Palestinian health minister, Mr Riad Zanoun.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Ehud Barak, has urged the Palestinian President, Mr Yasser Arafat, over phone to help quell the violence that threatens to plunge West Asia peace process deeper into crisis.

While pleading for Mr Arafat's "personal and immediate intervention", Mr Barak also warned that "Israel would not allow the violence to be a

tool in negotiations." But the Palestinian Cabinet, which met late yesterday at Ramallah in West Bank, gave no indication that it had paid heed To Mr Barak's call.

Palestine security officers denied reports they had met Israeli officers to calm things down. Mohd Dahlan and Mr Jibril Rjoub, commanders of the preventive security forces in Gaza Strip and West Bank, said they had not met the Israeli chief of staff, Mr Shaoul Mofaz.

Mr Dahlan called Mr Mofaz a "war criminal" for allowing the Israeli army to use excessive firepower, including anti-tank missiles, to quell the "Palestinian uprising".

Palestinians and Israeli security forces battled with guns, sticks and rocks in the third day of clashes in West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. The

worst violence was reported from Nablus and Ramallah.

Israeli forces brought in armoured cars and helicopters as fighting raged in Gaza, a narrow strip of Palestinian-ruled land bordering Egypt. Israeli soldiers fired an anti-tank missile at Palestinian security forces.

The Israeli army prevented Israelis from entering Palestinian-ruled areas for the second day today. Most of the fighting has pitted stone-throwing Palestinians against heavily armed Israeli security forces. But Palestinians also fired back in some areas.

Senior Palestinian peace negotiator, Mr Saeb Erekat, said he was not sure if the negotiations would resume next week as planned. "Israel has to stop this massacre." The militant Palestinian Hamas group called for an end to talks

with Israel and a renewal of violence.

The US President, Mr Bill Clinton has deplored the violence and urged a peaceful resolution. "Emotions are running very high and these are issues that need to be resolved at the negotiating table, not in the streets," a White House spokesman said.

The Gulf Arab states and Yemen condemned Israel for the violence and called on the international community to protect Islamic holy shrines in Jerusalem. The European Union too condemned the violence.

The Lebanon Prime Minister, Mr Selim al-Hoss, urged the international community to help stop the "Israeli aggressions". Russia has called on the sides to stop further bloodshed which might derail the peace talks.

THE STATESMAN

- 2 OCT 2000

110-18 WEST ASIA / SOLDIERS, PALESTINIANS CLASH AGAIN

Sharon action, a calculated move?

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), SEPT. 30. Mr. Ariel Sharon, leader of the Opposition in Israel, seems to be a man who never tires of violence. It is difficult to think of a less charitable explanation for his deliberate provoking of the Palestinians by strutting around the Al Aqsa complex to show that Israel ultimately controls the site. At least seven persons have died and dozens have been injured in the last two days and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces continued today.

Mr. Sharon made his tour of the Al Aqsa complex on Thursday despite warnings from all-around that his action could trigger clashes at a fragile moment in the interaction between Israelis and Palestinians. Negotiators from the two sides have just renewed their discussions in what could be the final effort to sort out the main issues in contention. It is well known that the question of future control over the Al Aqsa complex, known to the Jews as Temple

Mount, is the issue most in contention and the most difficult to resolve.

There also seems to be no doubt that under any agreement the Palestinians will continue to have access to the Al Aqsa complex and the right to pray there. Jews similarly will continue to pray at the Western Wall which runs along one side of the complex. The Al Aqsa area is administered by a Palestinian waqf although Israel maintains a security parameter around the complex. What is in contention is the question of which side will be designated as the sovereign over the site. In essence, this is a symbolic matter since there is little possibility that the situation on the ground will be changed. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, aided by U.S. mediators, are trying to work their way around this very problem.

It was in this atmosphere that Mr. Sharon did his walkabout. He could hardly have overlooked the fact that his tour took place on Thursday, the day before Palestinians gather

in large numbers at the Al Aqsa for Friday prayers. It was almost a dead certainty that the Palestinians would react, sensitive as they are to the fact that the balance of power is against them and given their fear that they might lose sovereignty over Al Aqsa. Events unfolded exactly as could have been predicted. Palestinians who had gathered for Friday prayers began stoning the large Israeli police contingent stationed at the entrance to the complex. The latter retaliated with rubber bullets and live rounds and the rioting has now spread to other parts of the West Bank and to the Gaza Strip. This has been the most violent outbreak in four years.

Mr. Sharon was in command of the Israeli forces in Lebanon when the massacres in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps took place (Christian militiamen allied with Israel slaughtered hundreds of Palestinians, mostly civilians in these refugee camps). That horror has apparently not left any mark on Mr. Sharon. There also appears to have been a cold cynical calculation behind the move. Just a day earlier, the Israeli Attorney-General had concluded that there were insufficient grounds for trying Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, former Prime Minister and erstwhile leader of Mr. Sharon's Likud party, on corruption charges. This decision by the Attorney-General clears the way for Mr. Netanyahu's return to politics.

Mr. Netanyahu is the most influential figure in the central committee of the Likud. Once Mr. Netanyahu re-enters the political arena it is likely that the Likud will slip out of Mr. Sharon's tenuous control. A show of his commitment to Jewish interests fits in with his need to stave off the expected challenge from Mr. Netanyahu.

More clashes

AFP reports from Gaza:

A Palestinian youth was declared clinically dead after being shot by a rubber-coated steel bullet in clashes with Israeli security forces today in Rafah in the south of the Gaza strip, the head of Gaza city's Shifa hospital said.