

India, Israel begin diplomatic engagement

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 15. Israel has begun a new round of diplomatic engagement with India to help stop the spiral of violence and revive the stalled West Asian peace process. Israel's Deputy Director General (Asia and Pacific), Mr. Zvi Gabay, is already in India to discuss the latest stand-off between the Israelis and Palestinians. He has met the Secretary (east) in the foreign office, Mr. K.V. Rajan, and senior officials.

In an informal chat with the media this morning, Mr. Gabay said he was looking towards India for exerting its influence to end the violence between the Israelis and Palestinians so that the core objective of reviving the stalled peace talks could be achieved.

In response to a question, Mr. Gabay said Israel was ready to discuss all issues with the Palestinians including the status of the walled city of Jerusalem. He held the Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, Mr. Yasser Arafat responsible for the recent spurt in violence.

Mr. Gabay pointed out that the current political crisis in Israel had increased the cohesion of all the groups participating in the Israel's ruling coalition government. The visit assumes importance as Israel is aware of India's capacity to influence the Palestinian leadership. The West Asian peace process was a key area of discussion during the visit of the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to Israel and Palestine earlier this year.

THE HINDU

16 NOV 2000

Israel wants India on the side of peace

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, November 15

HT-8 16/12

ISRAEL WANTS India on the side of peace. For this reason, Tel Aviv has dispatched its deputy director general in the foreign ministry, Mr Zvi Gabay, to New Delhi to confer with leaders across the political spectrum here and officials in South Block and explain that Israel is interested in a peaceful solution to the ongoing crisis.

Mr Gabay said today that Israel has promised to "stop retaliation as soon as Mr Arafat stops the shooting". With this simple message, he hopes to gain "understanding" from the Indian side. "The Palestinians can enjoy peace and tranquillity if they want it".

Since the beginning of the present crisis that began in mid-October, India has been touched by high and middle level emissaries from both sides of the divide. Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority chief Yasser Arafat

both contacted Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee seeking India's cooperation to prevent the situation from going bad to worse. The latest missive from Tel Aviv arrived only last week when Mr Barak wrote to Mr Vajpayee a letter that "conveyed the Israeli commitment to peace".

Officials of West Asian countries called on BJP president Bangaru Laxman earlier this month. Yesterday, it was the turn of the Israeli envoy here, Mr David Apeh. Mr Gabay explained that in subsequent days, leaders of other political parties would also be contacted.

Political opinion in India is divided between abject neutrality and open support for the Palestinians. Israel, Ambassador Gabay says, is not interested in competing with Palestinians for India's support. "We are not here to score points. We only want India on the side of peace," said Mr Gabay.

Clearing misgivings about the role of an old India friend, Arafat, is also part of his brief. A

considerable number of Indians have bought the idea that Mr Arafat is not entirely responsible for exacerbating the situation from the Palestinian side. Mr Gabay makes it clear that it is a myth. "He is in total control of the situation and nothing can happen in Palestine without his command. Why doesn't he put the Hamaz militants who he released back in jail?"

Mr Gabay said that though India supported the resolution in the United Nations Human Rights Commission condemning Israel for carrying out atrocities on Palestinians, Israel drew comfort from sizeable portions in the Indian reply, which placed faith in the Sharm el Shaikh Agreement and backed the constitution of a fact finding mission.

The commission, which was supposed to be formed by United States President Bill Clinton, is yet to take shape.

Mr Gabay said that Israel had nothing to hide and hopes the commission's report would be an objective one.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 NOV 2000

NEW DELHI, Nov. 23. — India finds itself on a sticky wicket in West Asia because of its geo-strategic location. It has remained neutral maintaining an equi-distance from both Palestine and Israel.

Keeping a low profile and not being vociferous at all in taking a categorical stand, India has been more realistic. It neither wants to antagonise the Arab league by speaking against the Palestinians nor does it want to snap ties with its new friend, Israel.

Since Arab countries have been the largest suppliers of crude oil and source of hard currency, India has to pursue the traditional Arab policy. Besides, aligning with Israel can also boomerang, causing prejudice to its electoral prospects at home by alienating the Muslim population.

Ambassadors from the 18-member Arab League have individually met BJP president Mr. Bangaru Laxman and discussed the "present volatile situation" in West Asia.

Speaking to The Statesman, Mr Laxman said India hasn't changed its policy on West Asia.

India takes cautious step on West Asia

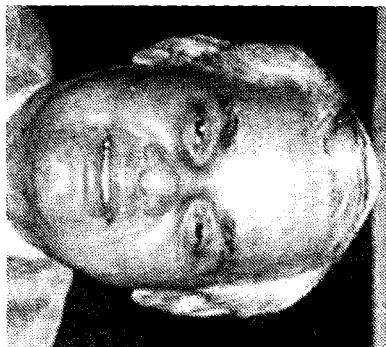
It has remained committed to its principals and not deviated from its moral stand on the Palestinians' "just demand." But, at the same time, since "India is only benefited" by its diplomatic relationship with Israel in sectors such as agriculture, terrorism combat and security, it has not deviated from its bilateral issues.

India's military needs are only likely to grow. There is tremendous need for inputs, import of components and collaboration in core technologies such as missiles, tanks and aircraft. Besides, the cost of research and development could turn out to be quite crippling in economic terms for India, says an analyst.

India nurturing its diplomatic ties with Israel is seen as a strategic move. After all Israel is ready to provide state-of-the-art equipment and technology to strengthen the military status by cooperating in electronics, missile technology and intelligence. And certainly, for India, building ties with Israel could be an effective counter-balance to Pakistan's



Mr Ehud Barak



Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee



Mr Yasser Arafat

military as well as political tactics. On the other hand, for the Israelis, India is a lucrative market.

India also doesn't want to take a strong stand especially when internationally the wave has been more or less in favour of Israel. On 27 October, in the Human Rights Commission, 19 voted in support of Israel, 16 opposed and 17 remained absent. Moreover, even the Sharm el-Sheikh summit resolution was also welcomed

by most of the countries.

This clearly indicated that in the international forum, the world was taking an objective view. In such a scenario if India becomes vociferous it will only stand exposed and harm itself internationally as well as internally and perhaps ultimately have to join the "18-member club."

"Vocal language never created an impact earlier... But that does not mean that I want to belittle those instances. We

reported cooperation (which has been denied) in nuclear power because then it becomes a threat for the Arab League.

"There are differences within the Arab league. They have their own problems and each of them is negotiating with some or the other country individually. After losing US support and the eclipse of the Soviet Union, the Arabs now have no other choice but to look for support from India," said a veteran politician.

However, India too perhaps cannot be complacent and maintain a neutral position for long because India's trade which is about 16 billion dollars with the Arab countries, might get jeopardised. India's trade with Israel, on the contrary, is far less. "They (India) know that it cannot afford to ignore," said Dr Sheikh.

India feels that there can only be a political solution to the conflict. A military solution would only harm both the parties. "Perhaps both sides should announce ceasefire, come to the negotiating table

and clinch the issue," said the BJP president.

Dr Sheikh says that the USA has always been partial on the negotiating table, having a tilt towards the Israel because they happen to be the ally of the Americans. However, Mr Aphetk seems to have lost faith on verbal commitments by the Palestinians: "We say words are important (when Palestinians speak about ceasefire) but we want to see in deeds."

No one can predict definitely when this violence will end. While the Israeli ambassador insists that Jerusalem is the main factor for the aggression which is politically and historically important for them, the Palestine ambassador says that the conflict is not mainly on Jerusalem or over religion, it is more over the territories occupied by the Israelis which "should have been given to us."

Dr Sheikh says that 100 per cent of Palestine territory has been occupied by the Israelis, a charge which is denied vehemently by the Israelis. His Israeli counterpart says that Mr Ehud Barak is ready to give state status to the Palestine provided its leader Yasser Arafat comes on the negotiating table and abides by the outcome.

Positive outlook for Indo-Iranian pipeline

HD-13
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By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, NOV. 23. In a pragmatic bid to reduce the political risk involved in transporting natural gas from the Persian Gulf to the Subcontinent via Pakistan, India and Iran may consider inviting international energy companies to run the project and manage the associated liabilities.

At the end of the second round of talks today on natural gas transportation, India and Iran appeared ready to explore ways to skirt around Pakistan's involvement that makes India nervous about joining this valuable mega project.

The Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, Mr. S.M.H. Adeli, who led the Iranian delegation, told *The Hindu* today that the decision to bring in the international energy companies was an "attempt to depoliticise" the project.

Iran is sitting on one of the world's largest reserves of natural gas. India, with its hunger for energy resources, is becoming one of the

world's biggest importers of natural gas.

The plans for getting natural gas from Iran have been held up by India's deep reservations about letting an energy lifeline come through Pakistan and giving the military rulers in Islamabad a powerful leverage.

In a move to address the Indian concerns, Mr. Adeli said Tehran has proposed that the project can be treated as a "bilateral" one involving Iran, the source of natural gas and India, the market.

The two countries could together arrive at an understanding with an international consortium that will run the project and manage the risks of disruption involved in shipping the natural gas through Pakistan.

Under the new proposal neither India nor Iran will need to enter into any "contractual obligations" with Pakistan or rely on Islamabad's security assurances. That responsibility will now lie with the international consortium. India, official sources here said, gave an "at-tentive hearing" to the Iranian proposal.

Mr. Adeli told the Indian side that Iran does not see the gas pipeline through Pakistan "as a political project aimed at solving political issues in the region," and views it as a "purely commercial one". According to Mr. Adeli, many international majors are keen on developing the overland pipeline between India and Iran.

When the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, travelled to Iran last May, it was agreed by the two sides to set up a Joint Working Committee to go into the issues relating to transport of Iranian gas supplies to India.

The mandate of the JWC was to examine the security, political, technical and economic issues related to the transportation of the Iranian gas.

The committee's first meeting was held in Tehran in August. The second round here this week continued the discussions on the different options before the two Governments in moving natural gas from Iran.

THE HINDU

24 NOV 2000

Pakistan seeks to allay Indian security concerns

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 7. Pakistan Petroleum Minister, Mr. Unsmam Aminuddin, has said there was no hurdle from Pakistan's side to the construction of the 1500-km Iran-India natural gas pipeline.

In an interview to the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation, the Minister said Pakistan had positively responded to the Iranian proposal on the pipeline project and was prepared to address all security concerns of India.

"We also consider the project viable and favourable to our own interests. The Pakistan Government attached top priority to the cooperation among the regional countries for development of oil and gas sector," the Minister was quoted as saying.

Last week Pakistan set up a special task force to pursue the project. It went out of its way to emphasise that Iran and India should opt for land route rather than offshore for laying of the pipeline. It also gave a written undertaking to Iran guaranteeing the safety of the project in view of apprehensions expressed by New Delhi on the project's viability given the history of hostilities between the two countries.

Two days before the Teheran meeting, in an interview to the *Khaleej Times*, Mr. Aminuddin had been quoted as saying that both India and Iran were told by Pakistan that land route for the proposed gas pipeline was more practical than the offshore route.

Pakistan is keen on early completion of the project

as it foresees enormous economic benefits from it. According to estimates, the country can expect to earn annually, royalty ranging between \$ 500 to 700 million and \$ 200 million through purchase of gas at a discounted price.

Advantage: Indian sugar firms

In another development that is seen as favouring Indian firms, the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has preponed the schedule for delivery of sugar from exporters by a fortnight.

The TCP had invited bids for supply of 100,000 tonnes of crystal white sugar on August 29. The tenders are to be opened on September 9. As per the original delivery plan, the TCP had asked bidders to quote prices for delivery of 12,500 tonnes of sugar by October 15 and the remaining quantity by October 30.

Now, the TCP has announced a revised schedule according to which the delivery date for the first consignment of 12,500 tonnes is September 30, for the second cargo of 12,500 tonnes, October 7, the third of 37,500 tonnes by October 15 and the last cargo of 37,500 tonnes by October 30.

Documentation of the agreement would take a minimum seven days, leaving only 15 days for delivery of a shipload to Karachi. This has left the field open to Indian sugar exporters, as exporters from other countries could not be expected to meet the deadline.

THE HINDU

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Israel picks India for Phalcon deal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

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JERUSALEM, Sept. 11. — The director-general of Israel's defence ministry made a secret visit to India this past weekend in an effort to promote the sale of military hardware, specifically Israel's Phalcon surveillance and early-warning airplane. The visit comes only two months after Israel caved into US pressure and reneged on a Phalcon sale to China.

The visit was shrouded in secrecy, apparently because the Israelis fear they might face similar US pressure to back off on a possible sale of Phalcon aircraft to India. The USA has furnished Israel with a list of four countries — China, Russia, India and Pakistan — and insisted that it have the right to veto the sales of arms and weapons to these states. (After India conducted a series of nuclear tests in 1998, the USA

imposed sanctions on New Delhi.)

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The Americans opposed the sale of the Phalcon, which contains no US components, to China on the grounds that it would boost the military edge of a country they believe is emerging as a potential strategic foe. When Israel dragged its feet in the face of US demands that it nix the sale, some Congressman threatened to cut American aid to the Jewish state. But India, unlike China, is not perceived by the US as a strategic threat. "I don't really understand the Americans," says Ephraim Inbar, an Israeli strategic analyst at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies near Tel Aviv. "Okay, so they believe that China is going to be a strategic threat. But logic says that the Indians should be their friends." Inbar suggests that the cardinal reason behind US opposition to a Phalcon sale to India is the economic interests of the American military industries.

THE STATESMAN

class. (AFP)

India calls for lifting sanctions against Iraq

DUBAI: India has called for immediate lifting of the United Nations sanctions against Iraq, saying they had proved to be counter-productive and affected the commonman.

"India has been and is against any type of sanctions and we tried on our own to convince bilaterally and multilaterally, even at the U.N. forums, that sanctions against Iraq must be lifted," minister of state for external affairs Ajit Kumar Panja told Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yasin Ramadhan at a meeting in Baghdad on Saturday.

Describing his 35-minute meeting with the Iraqi leader as "very cordial," Mr Panja said on telephone from Baghdad that "we have also expressed our concern to the Iraqi-vice president over the humanitarian situation in Iraq, particularly the high mortality rate among women and children."

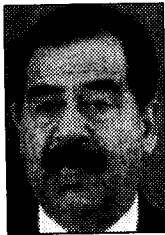
Mr Panja, who arrived in the Iraqi capital on Saturday, leading a strong Indian delegation comprising officials and business representatives, held meetings with Iraqi minister of trade Mehdi Mohammed Saleh and minister of industry and minerals Adnan Abdul Majeed Jassim, besides the Iraqi President. He is scheduled to meet Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, a close confidant of President Saddam Hussein, and ministers of transport and communication, agriculture, health and oil on Sunday. (UNI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

25 SEP 2000

Saddam urges India to improve cultural ties

DUBAI: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has stressed the need for India's deeper involvement in Iraq's reconstruction programme and called for a dialogue between the two countries at the ministerial level to strengthen bilateral ties. Mr Saddam's remarks came at a meeting held in Baghdad with visiting minister of state for external Affairs Ajit Kumar Panja.



Saddam Hussein

Mr Panja, who was on an official visit to Iraq at the head of a high-level delegation comprising business representatives and officials, handed a letter from Mr Vajpayee to the Iraqi president. Informed sources said Mr Panja's meeting with the Iraqi leader was "very friendly and cordial". Iraqi deputy

Prime Minister Tariq Aziz was also present at the meeting. The sources declined to divulge the contents of Mr Vajpayee's letter, which the Iraqi President opened in the presence of Mr Panja.

Mr Saddam was of the view that there should be exchange of university professors and teachers between India and Iraq to intensify cultural links between the two countries. He also suggested that doctors and medical personnel be exchanged between the two countries so that they were up-to-date with latest developments in the field of medical sciences.

The Iraqi President also saw the scope for cooperation between the two countries in the agricultural field. He told Mr Panja that the projects for cooperation between the two countries could be worked out during Iraqi vice-president Taha Yasin Ramadhan's visit to New Delhi in October. (UNI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

16 SEP 2000

Chhota Rajan wants to return to India, says Thai newspaper

BANGKOK: Underworld don Chhota Rajan, who was wounded in a Bangkok shootout earlier this month, wants to fly back to India, the *Bangkok Post* said on Sunday. Chhota Rajan, alias Vijay Daman, told Bangkok police that he wanted to return to India on Monday, the daily reported.

Rajan was wounded in the stomach and arms in a shootout on September 15 at the apartment of his associate Rohit Verma, alias Michael D'Souza. Verma died in the assault, carried out by seven or eight pistol-wielding assassins, and

his wife, Sikandi Hama, was wounded.

Mumbai Interpol has reportedly requested Rajan's extradition, but the Indian government has not officially made the request. Thailand and India have not signed an extradition treaty.

Assistant Bangkok police chief Chaktip Kunchorn Na Ayutthaya told the newspaper that his officers were looking for legal grounds to detain Rajan, who is currently undergoing medical treatment at an undisclosed hospital. Rajan has not committed any

crimes in Thailand that the police there know of. Rajan told Chaktip he wished to return to Mumbai.

But in an exclusive interview with a rival daily, the *Nation*, Rajan was less definite about his travel plans. In response to whether he wished to return to India, Rajan said, "Of course, but I cannot say when." Rajan denied underworld involvement in Bollywood. "Dawood Ibrahim is the man behind all this," he said. But clearly, Rajan has brought a glimpse of Bollywood's gangster cinema genre to Bangkok. (DPA)

Indo-Iranian panel on gas pipeline to meet on Friday

Udayan Nambodiri
New Delhi, August 16

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THE FIRST meeting of the Indo-Iranian Joint Committee, which was set up last month to examine all the aspects of constructing a pipeline in order to transport natural gas from Iran to India, is set to take place in Iran's capital city of Teheran on Friday, a spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs, declared today.

The Indian side will be headed by Mr K.V. Rajan, who is the secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, and comprises officials of the Defence, Petroleum and Commerce Ministries.

The Iranian side will be led by the deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, Mr Adili.

Essentially, the talks are to focus on the feasibility of laying a land pipe between Iran and India, which would be passing through Pakistan.

India has already expressed its disagreement with this proposal as it would involve bringing Pakistan into the picture.

Therefore, India is giving a counter-proposal which involves the setting up of a huge terminal in the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas, where the natural gas can be converted into liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The liquefied natural gas could then be transported to India in special tankers and reconverted into natural gas at an installation in India.

Guided by security considerations, India hopes Iran would not press for the land pipeline proposal.

Implementing the LNG alternative would mean a one-time investment of about \$1.5 billion and an increase of 30 per cent over the land pipe scheme.

However, Iran's deputy Foreign Minister Mohsin Aminzadeh, who

was here last month, told reporters that the proposal is too expensive for Iran to consider.

Iran is trying hard to involve Pakistan into the deal and would like India to consider the Pakistani assurance that it would not disrupt gas supply if the land pipeline is laid through its territory.

While India is maintaining the talks remain bilateral, Teheran says Pakistan could be brought into the deal at a later stage if India agrees to it.

At this stage, however, India is urging Iran to consider the whole matter "holistically".

Australian oil giant BHP, which was engaged by Iran to carry out a pre-feasibility study of the land pipeline proposal, has come out with a favourable report. The company is also interested in investing in the project should it receive India's concurrence. The result of BHP's findings has been passed on to New Delhi.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 AUG 2000

Secret and short Arafat visit holds payoff for friend Delhi

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat flew into Delhi tonight on a shotgun visit, leaving within hours after a dinner meeting with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and other senior Indian leaders.

Ostensibly, the meeting was part of Arafat's consultation process with "some friendly countries" before he takes a decision on declaring an independent Palestinian state on September 13.

The Palestinian super-boss

arrived around 9 pm on a chartered flight from Bangladesh and left for an undisclosed destination after a few hours. For security reasons, neither the Palestinians nor the Indians were willing to disclose where he was headed.

Although details of the meetings were not known beyond his attempt to consult the Indian leadership on the independent Palestinian state, the fact that he chose Delhi as one of his destinations should be a comforting development for the BJP-led government. It has begun to be criti-

cised for moving closer to the Israelis at the cost of India's "time-tested friends" in the Arab world.

For the BJP government, Arafat could not have arrived at a better time. The visits by home minister L.K. Advani and foreign minister Jaswant Singh to West Asia in June-July had triggered a controversy as many saw these as an attempt to cosy up to the Israelis.

Both Advani and Singh had taken pains to balance their visits to the region by spending an equal number of days in Pales-

tine and Israel. But remarks made by the two leaders, particularly by the home minister, on closer nuclear cooperation between Delhi and Tel Aviv fed the anger of those unhappy at a realignment of India's relations within West Asia.

Arafat is a long-lasting friend of India in the Islamic world and his lightning trip will come in handy for the government to silence the critics inside the country and in the Arab region.

Frustrated by Israeli attempts to slow down the pace of peace talks, Arafat is left with lit-

tle option but to go ahead and make a unilateral announcement of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

A similar situation was stopped from developing last year when friends like India suggested to the Palestinian leadership that such a move may prove to be counter-productive for the West Asia peace process.

But Arafat is aware that unless he takes some hard decisions fast, he may start losing support, especially among younger Palestinians who are getting impatient with the slow progress of

the peace talks.

It is not known if India has once again advised caution to the Palestinian leader, but there are indications that Arafat has sought Vajpayee's support at the coming Millennium Summit of the United Nations to mobilise world opinion in favour of an early resolution of the West Asia tangle.

Another round of Palestine-Israeli talks, with President Bill Clinton offering a guiding hand, is scheduled to take place next month, just before Vajpayee's "official" visit to the US begins.

Picture on Page 6



Arafat. (AFP)

GAS LINE CONNECTION / INDIA'S FEARS ALLAYED ✓

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Pak. 'willing' to address security concerns

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 17 Pakistan is willing to address India's security concerns over the proposed 1,500 km overland natural gas pipeline from Iran to India through its territory.

In an interview to the *Khaleej Times* the Pakistan Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister, Mr. Usman Aminuddin, has said that Pakistan has told both India and Iran that land route for the proposed gas pipeline was more practical than the offshore route.

The assurance given by the Pakistan Minister has come at a juncture when the Joint Committee set by India and Iran to study the project is to meet in Teheran tomorrow. The task of the committee is to consider the technical, economic and political aspects of the multi-million project.

After the last meeting of the committee in New Delhi the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Aminzadeh, had said that Iran had recently received guarantees from Pakistan on the security of the project. He was hopeful about prospects of a new energy corridor between the Persian Gulf and India cutting across Pakistani territory.

The proposal to construct the pipeline at an esti-

mated cost of \$3 billion has been hanging in the balance for several years due to the India's fears on the safety of the pipeline that passes through Pakistan given the history of hostilities between the two countries.

The Iranian Minister had talked about the "multilateral and international guarantees" that could be worked out to address India's concerns. These guarantees could be in the form of an agreement among the three nations (India, Pakistan and Iran) and legal commitments from Pakistan to the international consortia which would be investing in the project.

The project was discussed during the visit of the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, in May this year to Teheran after the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, signed a deal with Iran on transfer of Iranian gas to India during his visit to Teheran earlier.

Pakistan is keen on early completion of the project as it foresees enormous economic benefits from it. According to estimates Pakistan can expect to earn annually an amount in royalty ranging between \$500 million to \$700 million and \$200 million through the purchase of gas at a discounted price.

18 AUG 2000

Arafat seeks PM's support for Palestinian cause

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 18. India and Palestine today held high-level talks on the latest developments revolving around the West Asian peace process.

The Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation held discussions with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, on the final obstacles for a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question. Mr. Arafat today arrived from Bangladesh and was recently in China. Mr. Arafat's whirlwind diplomacy had earlier taken him to Europe and Russia.

Mr. Arafat in talks tonight is understood to have sought India's reaction on a variety of issues including the possible unilateral declaration of independence by Palestine. Mr. Arafat had earlier threatened to unilaterally declare Palestine independent on September 13. While unilateral declaration of independence has been met with a lukewarm response in Moscow and most of Europe, China reportedly has welcomed the move.

India, prior to talks with Mr. Arafat, had been extensively briefed by the U.S. on developments in the West Asian peace talks. This subject was discussed in detail during the meeting between the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, on the lines of the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) conference in Bangkok late last



The PLO leader, Mr. Yassar Arafat, with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, at the latter's residence in New Delhi on Friday. — Photo: S. Arneja

month. The U.S. is keen that the dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis is wrapped up by the end of September. Washington reportedly suspects that the Israeli Government may fall when it reopens after its long recess in October.

U.S. diplomacy to see an early settlement of the Palestinian question is now in top gear. Its special envoy, Mr. Dennis Ross, is visiting Israel, and the Egyptian leader, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, has been extensively briefed by Washington so that Arab pressure can

be mounted on Palestinians for a breakthrough.

U.S.-brokered talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis broke down last month on the status of Jerusalem. Both sides see their claim of Jerusalem as central to their national identity. The status of Jerusalem, the final hurdle in the way of a lasting settlement, however, was for the first time seriously discussed during last month's summit meeting between Mr. Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, at Camp David in the U.S.

THE HINDU

19 AUG 2000

Peres briefs PM on W Asia

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 24. — The Israeli minister, Mr Shimon Peres, who arrived here today met the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, late this evening.

It is understood that Mr Peres, a former Prime Minister of Israel and now a minister for regional cooperation, briefed the PM on the West Asian peace process. All issues relating to the situation were discussed.

Mr Peres' short trip comes almost immediately after the visit by Palestinian President, Mr Yasser Arafat, for talks with the Indian government. Mr Arafat, on a trip to drum up support for his plan, to declare the Palestinian state an independent country on September 13, met Indian officials.

Mr Arafat had also visited China, Japan, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

According to foreign ministry officials, "India is supportive of the peace process" involving Israel

and Palestine and does not want it jeopardised. Analysts, however, say India does not favour Mr Arafat unilaterally declaring Palestine an independent state.

For this could force Israel to take unilateral action as well and jeopardise the West Asian peace process.

The agenda of Mr Peres during his short visit will include calling on the President, Mr KR Narayanan, and meetings with the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh and the home minister, Mr LK Advani.

He will be speaking at the Jawaharlal Nehru University tomorrow and the PM will host a dinner in his honour.

Despite India's support for a Palestinian homeland within an internationally recognised framework, New Delhi and Tel Aviv have also built up a strong friendship in recent years.

The two countries have strong links in the defence sector. Recently, Mr Jaswant Singh and Mr L K Advani had visited Israel.

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 2000

Gleeful Delhi wary of Arab reaction

Israel backs bid for UN Council

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 25: In a clear indication of growing ties, Israel today came out with open support for India's entry into the United Nations Security Council.

Highlighting India's "huge size and population", Israel made it clear that Delhi's claim to the coveted seat is justified in every respect. Israel is perhaps the first major country to express support for India's case.

Senior Israeli leader and minister for regional cooperation Shimon Peres described India as "a responsible giant" which "should be in the UNSC".

He argued that one should not relate to India by "memories alone", referring to its colonial past. "India cannot escape its greatness as we in Israel cannot escape our smallness," Peres added.

The Israeli leader's remarks have, predictably, made South Block mandarins happy. But such emphatic support has also raised concerns in a section of the foreign ministry worried by the possibility of Peres' remarks making an adverse impact on some Arab nations.

The reported statements made by home minister L.K. Advani

during his visit to Tel Aviv in June about possible nuclear cooperation between India and Israel, though denied by Delhi, created a major stir in the Arab world. It started viewing the growing bonhomie between the two sides with suspicion, forcing Indian foreign ministry officials to hold a meeting recently with Arab ambassadors here to clear the air.

The Israeli decision to support India's candidature for the Security Council seat stems from its own interests. In the past, Israel has blatantly flouted UN resolutions, indicating that it does not attach much importance to this global council of nations. But, of late, it has been making serious attempts to get back to the mainstream and, as a part of that, taking more interest in UN matters.

The restructuring of the Security Council, though bogged down by conflicting views, is a process which is bound to reach its logical conclusion in the next few years. In such an event, Tel Aviv has to look for friends in the council it can count on for support. Indonesia is one of the candidates, apart from India and Japan, from Asia.

Though Israel is happy with Indonesia under Wahid's leadership, it cannot count on it for sup-

port in the days to come as it is a part of the Islamic world and may end up rallying behind Tel Aviv's neighbours in a crunch situation in West Asia. It has already identified China, Japan and India among its three best bets in Asia. Of these, ties with Delhi seem to be the most attractive.

Apart from the worries in the Arab world about the Israeli support, Indian leaders are also trying to assess to what extent it will help influence the decision of the United States when UNSC is thrown open to new candidates. Some Indian diplomats feel Israel, which has excellent relations with the Americans, will be able to help garner support for Delhi in the US establishment.

It is also being argued that Israel's expression of support may not have the feared negative effect on the Arab world. "It may work in our favour as many of the nations in that part of the world may think of India as a serious candidate and end up supporting it," a senior foreign ministry official said.

In a related move, Parliament's standing committee on foreign affairs has asked the ministry to counter obstacles perceived by the US in its support to India's claim.

■ Another report on Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

26 AUG 2000

Peres denies US pressure on Phalcon sale

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW
DELHI,
Aug. 25. —
The Israeli
minister of
regional
cooperation
today
denied that
USA was
pressuring
Israel not
to sell the



Mr Shimon Peres

Phalcon eye-in-the-sky aircraft
to India.

Mr Shimon Peres told reporters that USA, a country he referred to as a "friend", was not against selling arms to India but to China as there was a fear that the weapons could be used against Taiwan.

"The USA has no problem on the sale of armaments to India. The decision is in Israel's hands," Mr Peres said, denying reports that USA had opposed the sale of the Phalcon airborne warning and control system.

The sale is stuck for another reason. The Phalcon has to be fitted onto an aircraft and the Russian Ilyushin-76 plane appears to be appropriate but the Russians are keen that India buys the A-50, the Russian equivalent of the Phalcon fitted onto a plane. There is a fear that the Russians may hesitate to give India an Il-76 if it does not buy the Russian airborne warning system.

Mr Peres did not seem worried about problems with Palestine regarding the 13 September cut-off date. Mr Yasser Arafat had said that he would unilaterally declare an independent country on 13 September, a point India quietly agrees with.

THE STATESMAN

26 AUG 2000

We want India on side of peace: Peres

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 25

ISRAEL SENIOR Minister Shimon Peres is here for consultations with Indian leaders on the progress of the Middle East Peace Process. He said today that he was satisfied with India's position on the complex situation arising out of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's threat of declaration of Palestinian Statehood on September 13 if the talks produced no results.

"We want India on the side of peace and not on any particular side to the dispute. If India has good relations with the Palestinians it is all right with us. We value India's Panchsheel (Five Principles) approach to disputes," the Minister told reporters today.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had, on his part, told both Mr Arafat who was here on a flying visit last week, and Mr Peres yesterday, that India is a "disinterested observer" to the West Asian conflict but is enjoying friendly relations with all countries of the region.

India supports the MEPP and is against any form of unilateralism.

Mr Peres denied reports that the US was standing in the way of Israel's sale of Falcon radar systems for aircraft to India. Such an objection was given in the case of China because the US was concerned that they may be

deployed against an US ally, Taiwan. "India is not involved in Taiwan so why should the US worry? More than the US, the decision rests on Israel," he maintained.

Mr Peres will spend four days in New Delhi, meeting Indian leaders and intellectuals. Apart from the Prime Minister and President, he met External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, Home Minister L.K. Advani, Defence Minister George Fernandes and Opposition leader Sonia Gandhi. He said: "India's voice is growing in importance in world affairs, and connections between our two countries are improving all the time."

He said the Israel-Palestine peace talks are continuing despite the failure of the Camp David summit in July. "There are only two outstanding issues: refugees and Jerusalem. The gap in definitions is greater than the gap in solutions offered on these two problems".

Mr Peres said Israel has offered the Palestinians some joint ventures, which will go a long way in ushering in the modern age in the war-torn region.



Union Home Minister L K Advani with Israeli Minister for Regional Cooperation at a meeting in the Capital on Friday. Photo: Arvind Yadav

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 AUG 2000

Israel has open mind on Phalcon deal: Peres

By Atul Aneja

HD-1
2/18
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25. Israel has an open mind on selling the Phalcon early warning aircraft, but has not yet been approached by India for their transfer, Israel's former Prime Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, has said.

At a press conference here this morning, Mr. Peres, who is here to brief Indian leaders about Israel's perception of the West Asian peace process, said the transfers of the Phalcon to India could not be barred on any political considerations.

The possibility of the Phalcon deal with India arose on account of Israel's decision not to sell the planes to China. According to Mr. Peres, the deal with Beijing was scuttled because of U.S. concerns about Taiwan. But considerations about Taiwan did not apply to India and Israel's decision on the Phalcons would not be determined by the United States, he said.

He, however, clarified that India and Israel had not begun any negotiations on the Phalcon. "No negotiations have started. It is too early to judge and we have not yet been approached." Israel was ready to cooperate with India in all areas outside the nuclear domain. Nuclear cooperation between the two countries was not on the agenda, he clarified.

Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian leadership are unlikely to be impeded by the pro-

posed unilateral declaration of Palestinian independence by mid-September. "There is nothing holy about the September 13 deadline", Mr. Peres said, adding that the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, had publicly hinted that he may not carry out the threat. The ultimatum of unilateral statehood lacked substance as its implementation on the ground was inconceivable.

Asked to comment on the stance adopted by India on the September 13 deadline, Mr. Peres who met the Prime Minister yesterday indicated that his parleys with Mr. Vajpayee went far beyond the Palestinian ultimatum.

The Israeli Minister said progress on the peace process depended on the resolution of two key issues: the status of the walled city portion of Jerusalem and the rehabilitation of Palestinian refugees. All other aspects, including territorial alignments, security framework and future economic relations between Israel and an independent Palestinian state had already been worked out.

Responding to questions, Mr. Peres underplayed the significance of reports about the internal resistance in Israel and Palestine to the evolving peace deal. Experience showed that public mood was capable of swinging in diametrically opposite directions before major peace agreements were signed.

U.S. pressure irks Israel: Page 14

THE HINDU

26 AUG 2000

RECENTLY, Mr Yasser Arafat, visited President KR Narayanan as he did other heads of state in the capitals of European, Asian and African countries. The Palestinian Authority Chairman was trying to drum up support — after the failure at Camp David II — for a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state on 13 September.

To be fair to Mr Arafat, such a declaration has long been due, but peace is not made on the basis of unilateral declarations.

Europe, including the Palestinians' long-time friend, Russia, is behind the USA in recognising their right to their own state. But no one is keen on the unilateral declaration, including India. So Mr Arafat must wait. He probably knows it would be imprudent to take such a step, but he has to make the effort, given the pressure from his people.

Since 1996, the Palestinian Authority has increasingly been accused of despotism, autocracy and corruption. Mr Arafat and his aides are accused of not serving Palestinian interests but of seeking a legacy for themselves. Every citizen has the right to seek government accountability, and to express their dissatisfaction with it. But that is not to say that they have to rush into the arms of extremism, for that is what the people of Gaza and West Bank are doing.

On 23 July, prominent Palestinian personalities signed a petition addressed to the Palestinian delegation at Camp David. It demanded that any decision reached at the talks be subject to a Palestinian referendum at home and amongst the Palestinians in diaspora. The petition emphasised Palestinian sovereignty over all territories within the borders demarcated on 4 June 1967 — including East Jerusalem — besides implementation of the right for the refugees' return.

After all, the peace process envisages implementation of UNSC Resolutions, Nos 242 and 338 (regarding the 1967 borders), and acceptance of UNGA Resolution No 194 (the Palestinians' right to return). The resolutions had been crucial to Israel's admission into the UN. So the Palestinians' demands, so far, are legitimate. Some amount of domestic pressure is necessary to prevent representatives at the peace talks from compromising on the two core issues.

What is of concern is that another petition by Islamist and nationalist forces (read Hamas) was added, warning the Palestinian delegation against compromising Palestinian rights. What constitutes Palestinian rights here is different from what is enshrined in the UN resolutions 194, 242, 338 and the 1993 Declaration of Principles (and as most of the world understands it).

The July issue of the *Palestinian Times* reports that the ulema of "Palestine" has issued a series of *fatwas* and a manifesto that rejected the Camp David II

Palestinians, be pragmatic!

The Palestinians once lost everything in 1948. They should not repeat their mistake. The world trusts Yasser Arafat. What he might gain for his people might not be all that they want, but it would be something which is better than nothing, says ADITI BHADURI



President KR Narayanan welcomes Yasser Arafat at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on 19 August. — AP/PTI.

talks (before the talks were known to have failed), prohibited Muslims from conceding any part of "Palestine" and/or al-Quds-al Sharif (Jerusalem) to the Zionists and forbade Muslim refugees from bartering land rights in "Palestine" for compensation.

The reason given is that "Palestine" in all its entirety is holy wakf land and no one can concede any part of it to the enemy, or *kafirs* (non-believers with whom the Muslims are at war) and any one who concedes the right of return in exchange for compensation will be deemed an outcaste. An increasing number of Palestinians are, foolishly perhaps, accepting this line.

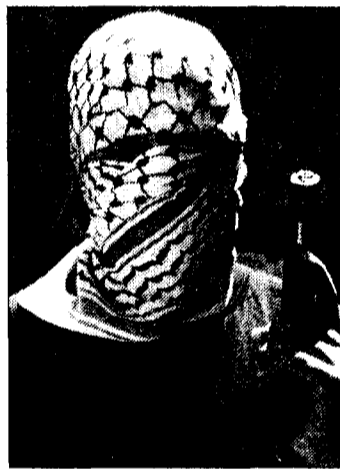
They should understand that the Sheikh Yassins of the world do not win either peace or land for their people. They never did. They only incite and kill.

The *fatwas* are ambiguous. If "Palestine" is holy Muslim land, surely it was holy Jewish land first. Even the Muslims will concede that.

By that logic, it would give Israel the right to occupy "Palestine" in its entirety.

The *fatwas* also mean that the Palestinian Muslims are at war with two-thirds of the world, which is non-Muslim.

Any place that gives a person a home where he can grow his roots is holy land. A person has an inalienable right to own or dispose off property owned by him. Dictating to the contrary is a violation of a person's fundamental right to property. The ulema in Palestine



A Palestinian at a demonstration in Gaza Strip recently.

seems to be doing that.

Every Palestinian refugee has the right to decide individually whether he or she wants to return to the place he/she fled in 1948, or to settle for compensation in return. No authority,

Jewish or Islamic, has the right to deny the individual that. And this is the commitment that the Palestinians should wrest from the Israelis. By issuing the *fatwas* the ulema seems to have acted in a manner more despotic than the Palestinian Authority has been accused of. The Palestinians must realise that the world recognises Mr Arafat, it trusts him, knows him and knows that he is open to negotiations. No other nationalist or Islamist representative of the Palestinians would be as well accepted as Mr Arafat is.

If the Palestinians are disillusioned with the interminable delay in the implementation of the Oslo accords, then they must realise that with their disruptive activities, they can be blamed largely for it. By supporting Hamas and other nationalist groups, they would be serving Israel's cause.

Islamic fundamentalism has in the past few years reared its ugly head in different pockets of the world, including in Arab ones, and leaders of these countries and the world at large are wary of it.

It would never do for the Palestinians to allow fundamentalist forces to gain power in their territories. At the same time, the world is also anxious about the sort of regime that any future Palestinian state might have, given the track record of democracy or the lack of it in the Arab world.

Further, the Palestinians must keep in mind that the developed world is not keen on seeing Christian holy places in Muslim hands. So Hamas coming to power would spell disaster for the Palestinians over the status of Jerusalem. Besides, not every Palestinian is a Muslim, there are Christians and Druse, who have rights equal to any Muslim Palestinian and it would never do to antagonise them when unity is the need of the hour.

Palestinians must not lose sight of the two greatest truths — Israel is here to stay and there is no wishing it away. Second, they have to protect their interests. No one, least of all the Arab world, can be counted on to further the Palestinian cause.

Even in Syria, considered the most anti-Israeli, Palestinians are described at best as "ungrateful". After the Gulf War, they lost their purse strings in Kuwait and angered the other Gulf countries. The Palestinians have never been liked by the Jordanian regime, which considers them to be a major threat to its existence and the Lebanese see them as the main cause of the wreckage of their beautiful land.

Undeniably, the lot of the Palestinians has been unending suffering. Land is never easy to give up and partition is always sad, as we in India know only too well. Yet we were able to reconcile ourselves to it. The Palestinians once lost everything in 1948 when they refused to be pragmatic. 52 years later, they should not repeat their mistake.

What Mr Arafat might gain for the Palestinians may not be everything that the Palestinians want, but it would be something which in the end is better than nothing.

(The author is a research scholar on Israel and the West Asia peace process.)



Hamas activists calling for the liberation of Jerusalem in Gaza City, on Thursday. — AP/PTI

28 AUG 2000

Jaswant in Israel to strengthen security ties

By Atul Aneja

JERUSALEM, JUNE 30. India and Israel are all set to take stock of their relationship with the first-ever visit by an Indian External Affairs Minister to the country beginning today.

Mr. Jaswant Singh, who began the first leg of his tour, called on the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Mr. Yasser Arafat, at Ramallah today. Talks with the Palestine National Authority conclude tomorrow afternoon leading to intensive discussions with the Israeli leadership over the week-end. Both sides realise that their relationship is based on a strong strategic foundation Israel visualises a high stake in India for protecting its long-term national security interests. According to analysts, it is vital for Israel to ensure that its Arab neighbourhood is kept insulated from the South Asia's destabilising shadow. Specifically, Israel wants to ensure that mass destruction technology, including nuclear delivery systems from Pakistan, does not reach its declared foes in the Persian Gulf.

India, which has an adversarial relationship with Pakistan, can help it achieve this. Israel is keen that Iran, with which it has a troubled security relationship, does not benefit from Pakistani know-how in these fields. The Iranian shadow over Israel has become even more pronounced with the gains of the Teheran-backed Hizbollah in neighbouring Lebanon. In other words, Tel Aviv is keen on seeking Indian cooperation for driving a wedge between Sunni-dominated Pakistan and Shiite Iran.

With South East Asia emerging as an important destination for Israeli trade, Tel Aviv has an interest in India for shoring up its maritime security. In fact, India which has the largest navy in the Indian Ocean littoral is well-placed to safeguard commercial shipping lanes in this zone. Tur-



The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, with the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, in the Government office in the West Bank town of Ramallah, on Friday — AP

key and India have emerged as Israel's key partners in safeguarding its vital strategic interests in Asia.

For India, Israel has emerged as a major supplier of hi-tech weaponry. Israel, Russia and France are its main overseas suppliers of military hardware. Defence analysts estimate that Indo-Israeli weapons trade in the last three years may have scaled up to around \$500 millions. The two countries also share an interest in battling terrorism. The key lies in working together for ensuring that terrorism radiating from the Pakistan-Afghanistan axis and extremism in West Asia is kept separated.

Diamond trade

On the commercial side, diamonds dominate the nearly \$one-billion trade. Buying and selling of diamonds take nearly, \$700

millions of this trade. India, with centres in Mumbai, Surat and Bhavnagar, is the world leader in exporting small polished diamonds. Tel Aviv is a leading exporter of large diamonds and is deeply entrenched in the international diamond trading network. In fact, military equipment and diamonds comprise the largest component of Indo-Israeli trade. Mr. Jaswant Singh's visit, while deepening the Indo-Israeli security relationship is likely to focus on expanding commercial linkages. Cooperation in the hi-end computer software industry, where Israel is a world leader is a highly-promising area. The two sides can expand their relationship in the fields of agriculture and water resources.

India is yet to begin a serious economic relationship in the Palestinian areas, including the West

Bank and the Gaza Strip. With a population of around 28 lakhs, which includes a sophisticated entrepreneurial class, there is scope for doing business.

Economic Analysts are of the view that there is scope for Indian industry in the \$four-billion Palestinian economy in the hotel and smallscale industry. Indian entrepreneurs can also participate in the upcoming U.S.-backed Gaza industrial estate. The opportunities which are available here does not mean that formidable hurdles are not in the way. For instance, transit is a problem for this land-locked area. The Palestinian areas, have to depend on Israeli, Jordanian and Egyptian ports for trade. Goods can come into the Gaza through the Raffah crossing from Egypt or into the West Bank via the legendary Allenby bridge from Jordan.

THE HINDU

- 1 JUL 2000

Twin-lane roadmap for Israel ties

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

Jerusalem, June 30: The twin focus of foreign minister Jaswant Singh's four-day official visit to Israel, beginning today, will be on strengthening bilateral ties and the emergence of Tel Aviv as Delhi's new strategic partner in the region.

Singh is the first Indian foreign minister to visit the West Asian country. According to foreign ministry sources, he is likely to give a political direction to the bilateral relations as well as chart out the road-map the two sides need to follow in the coming days.

Israel is important to India for a number of reasons. The two-way trade between them has already reached \$1 billion, with the potential to grow even more. The two sides can also cooperate in areas of science and technology, espe-

cially in the sphere of info-tech.

Delhi can also draw upon Israel's experience in counter-terrorism with an information-sharing arrangement. Moreover, Israel, unlike many western countries, is not averse to selling military hardware to India.

The strong Jewish lobby in the West, particularly in the US, can come to India's help. And India, by giving that recognition to Israel, can complete this symbiosis by ending its diplomatic isolation in Asia. However, despite the growing closeness, both sides are aware of the pitfalls of isolating the Arab lobby within and outside India, one reason why the strategic aspect of the relationship may be played down a bit.

Even if there is an official announcement regarding this new partnership, sources said Singh will take care to make it clear that

West Bank, June 30 (PTI) Jaswant Singh today held an hour-long meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, which he later described as "memorable" and "historic".

At a joint press conference, Palestinian minister for international cooperation Nabeel Shaath said: "The strength of support of India for our rights has been the cornerstone of our policy of seeking peaceful solution that will guarantee the acquisition of these rights and establishment of independent Palestinian state."

Earlier, Jaswant touched down in Jerusalem. "Singh's visit, the first by an Indian external affairs minister after India and Israel established diplomatic ties in 1992, represents yet another step which would further strengthen bilateral ties," an Israeli foreign ministry spokesman said.

it is not at the cost of a third country.

What is interesting is the equal distribution of Singh's four-day visit. While he meets Palestinian leaders on the first two days, he'll spend the remaining two with the Israeli leadership, thereby signalling that despite its affinity

With a strong support for the Palestinian cause in India, the ruling BJP-led coalition doesn't want to give the impression that it is bringing about a fundamental policy change.

India's relations with Israel have gone through several highs and lows. Being a strong backer of the Palestinian cause, it kept its relations with Tel Aviv at a minimal level, agreeing only to open a consulate in Mumbai.

But since 1992, when the two sides agreed to upgrade diplomatic ties at the ambassadors' level by opening embassies in each other's capitals, a fundamental change took place.

Many factors helped in bringing this about. The disintegration of the Soviet Union also coincided with Israel and Palestine making a serious effort to find a negotiated settlement to their disputes.



Jaswant Singh

with Tel Aviv. Delhi is in no mood to abandon Palestine.

The foreign minister's West Asia visit will, therefore, kick off with wide-ranging talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat — an old friend of Delhi — and other senior members of his government.

Delhi renews ties with old friend Palestine

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

Gaza, July 1: India made it clear today that its keenness to improve and strengthen relations with Israel was not at the cost of Palestine and its renewed interest in West Asia should not be seen as a zero-sum game where Delhi had to sacrifice its time-tested ally to pursue the new-found bonhomie with Tel Aviv.

"I am here as an ambassador of India — a land that has always empathised with the aspirations of the people of Palestine," foreign minister Jaswant Singh said. He added: "India's support to Palestine and its land will not alter."

Indicating that Delhi, though a supporter of the West Asia peace process, would like to maintain its neutrality, he said: "I will not go into the game of assigning blame.

There has been slippages in the peace talks and we are concerned about that."

Jaswant is the first Indian minister to come here after the Palestinian National Authority under President Yasser Arafat's leadership was established in 1994. After Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, he is the first minister from Delhi to have come to Gaza for a substantive visit. A few days ago, Union home minister L.K. Advani was here for 30 minutes. The Israeli leg of Jaswant's visit starts from tomorrow.

Last night the foreign minister held a meeting with President Arafat and his senior aides at Ramallah, a short distance away from Jerusalem which is also under the Palestinian National Authority.

The discussions, which lasted an hour, focused on the West Asia

peace process. The discussions were held in a cordial atmosphere and gave the two leaders an opportunity to iterate the historic links between India and Palestine and to re-affirm their friendship.

Singh's decision to start his four-day tour of West Asia with Palestine is aimed at sending out the signal that there will be no fundamental change in India's policy in the region. The drive from Jerusalem to the Gaza Strip does not take more than an hour, but the short distance separates two different worlds: one of prosperous Israel and the other of impoverished Palestinians.

India does not want to lose either of them. It wants to broaden its ties with Israel by strengthening cooperation in the economic and political fields. At the same time, it wants to continue its sup-

port to the Palestinian "just cause and aspirations of its people".

With this in mind, Singh, while inaugurating the Mahatma Gandhi library-cum-student activity centre and the Jawaharlal Nehru library in Gaza, also pledged a credit line offer to the Palestinians and Delhi's help in infrastructure development. Singh made it clear that Delhi will help in areas that would generate income for the Palestinian youth.

What Singh is perhaps trying to achieve by this visit to West Asia is to carve out a role for Delhi in the crucial and volatile region. But for the time being, he does not want to expand India's role in the peace process. By having good relations with the Palestinians and the Israelis, India wants to have leverage with both and "access to the decision making".

HI-TECH DEFENCE IMPORTS

Cooperation with Israel in top gear

By Atul Aneja

JERUSALEM, JULY 1. As India's post-Kargil military modernisation gets into overdrive, military officials and senior bureaucrats involved in hardware purchases are arriving here in droves.

India's Director-General, Artillery, was here recently to Evaluate a future gun system which will follow the Bofors howitzers. The Director-General of the Border Security Force was also here last month to assess the utility of Israeli Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in countering internal security threats. Delegations from the Indian Air force and the Navy are also regularly here as decisions on acquiring airborne radar systems and anti-ship missiles enter the final phase.

Analysts, however, caution that in its enthusiasm to buy hardware with an Israeli tag, India may be compromising on circumspection and losing sight of more suitable alternatives available elsewhere.

Israel, according to sources, has already become India's second largest defence partner after Russia. Equipment for an estimated Rs. 2,000 crores has already been sold to India in the last three years.

The list includes the Searcher UAVs for the Army. These platforms which can give on the spot information about enemy deployments by safely intruding its airspace were used with considerable success during the Kargil war.

For instance, these birds gave pin-point information of the deployment of the Pakistani guns along the Line of Control in the

Jammu sector. But their accuracy was somewhat degraded in the Ladakh sector because of the Searcher's low ceiling. Not surprisingly, the Israelis have now offered Searcher-II which can fly at higher altitudes. The army has decided to buy this equipment which has also been favourably viewed by the IAF. Israel's tireless UAV, Heron, which can fly round the clock has also been tried out by the Army. Besides surveillance and communication gear, the army has bought large quantities of ammunition including sophisticated anti-tank rounds from Israel.

The IAF also enjoys close ties with Israel. It has recently acquired lighting posts from the Israeli firm Rafale for its Mirage-2000 fleet. This equipment can illuminate ground terrain at night, aiding navigation and pin-pointed attacks during darkness. The Israelis are also involved in providing precision-guided equipment to the IAF. The Jaguar bombers, for instance, have been equipped with lasers to direct bombs with high accuracy at high value targets such as bridges or communication nodes. The IAF has also acquired missiles with a programmable flight path which can target key radars of the adversary from long distances. Besides, Israel has been a key player in modernising the IAF's ageing MiG fleet.

A large component of the avionics required for upgradation of MiG-21s is from Israel. Along with France, Israel has transferred a variety of electronic items for the Russian SU-30 planes which India is acquiring in batches.

More reports on Page 11

THE HINDU

2 JUL 2000

Palestine boom beckons India

By Atul Aneja

GAZA CITY, JULY 1. As Palestine undergoes a volatile economic and political transition, India today positioned itself for a stronger economic partnership with the emerging nation.

According to sources, Palestine is likely to experience an economic boom once independent statehood is achieved in the not-so-distant future. The key, therefore, lies in being an "early bird" so that India avails itself of the economic opportunities on the horizon.

Already, the area under the governing Palestine National Authority (PNA) is showing visible signs of growth. Palestine has a \$4-billion economy though nearly \$3 billion is spent on Israeli imports. India exports goods worth \$18 million to \$20 million, either directly or via Israel, Jordan or Egypt.

After independence, the Palestinian market is expected to expand dramatically. It is estimated that \$20 billion to \$30 billion will be pumped into the Palestinian economy. Most of it will come from the international community by way of compensation for Palestinian refugees who have been displaced since the 1940s. A sizeable chunk of this money is likely to go for infrastructure development, laying the basis for a modern economy.

Anticipating these changes, the PNA has begun working overtime for developing a full-fledged harbour on the Mediterranean in Gaza. The project is expected to be completed in the next 25 months says an optimistic Palestinian official. An international airport at Gaza has already been operationalised. A construction boom is visible in Gaza. Cross Israel into Gaza from the Ezer check-point and you will see rows of houses and multistoreyed complexes dotting the city's skyline. Anticipating a boom in real estate prices, a section of the rich in the Palestinian diaspora has begun investing in these properties.

India, on its part, seeks to invest in Palestine's future. The visiting External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, today set the ball rolling, announcing a credit line in principle for Indian investments. A Finance Ministry team is expected to visit Palestine to quantify the loan. "Knowledge-based industry" is likely to become a thrust area, the Minister indicated.

IT sector

Seeing a market in the Information Technology sector, Indian

computer software companies have already established a modest presence here. Satyam Computers, along with TCL, has executed a software development programme for Palestinian telecommunications. Goldstar Infotech, a Hyderabad-based company, is training Palestinians for developing software in Arabic which can then be exported to the large Gulf market.

While entrepreneurs in India's "new economy" are keen, businessmen belonging to the "old economy" are yet to show enthusiasm. For instance, a much-awaited delegation from the Confederation of Indian Industry is yet to show up here.

The External Affairs Minister, called on the PNA President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, last night and reaffirmed that the political foundation for better economic relationship with Palestine was in place. Mr. Singh reiterated that India continued to back the realisation of an independent Palestinian state. Besides, he reiterated India's support for the "land for peace" deal which was anchored in the United Nations resolutions 242 and 338.

THE HINDU

2 JUL 2000

Jaswant visits holy sites in Jerusalem

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JERUSALEM, July 2. — Taking time off from a busy schedule, Mr Jaswant Singh — on a four-day trip to Israel — visited three sacred sites in old Jerusalem today.

At the Western Wall — the holiest site of Judaism and a symbol of Jewish dispersion and suffering — Mr Singh wore a *kipa* (Jewish cap), in keeping with tradition, as he prayed at the ancient yellow-stone wall.

The external affairs minister also visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — the site of Jesus's crucifixion, death and resurrection.

The third stop was at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial. Mr Singh placed a wreath and re-kindled the eternal flame to pay homage to the six million Jewish victims of Nazi horror.

"It must never happen again," was Mr Singh's message in the visitors' book. He also toured the Holocaust museum.

Last evening, Mr Singh visited the hilltop mosque complex where, Muslims believe, Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven. The site is home to the dome of the rock mosque. Jews, on the other hand, say it is the Temple Mount for the Biblical temples that are believed to have stood there once.

Mr Singh met Mr Yasser Arafat yesterday and discussed political and economic relations including the West Asian crisis.

He is the first Indian external affairs minister to visit Israel after the two countries established diplomatic ties in 1992.



Mr Jaswant Singh offers prayers at the Western Wall in the old city of Jerusalem on Sunday. — AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

- 3 JUL 2000

Tel Aviv ducks US on Delhi radar

Democracy parallel helps Jaswant score

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

Trb 15/7
Jerusalem, July 2: Israel today dismissed reported US objections to the sale of a sophisticated radar system to India, playing down Washington's concerns and making it clear that "cooperation between two democracies", like Tel Aviv and Delhi, should be "endorsed".

Foreign minister Jaswant Singh, on his maiden visit to Israel, scored at the first dialogue with the leadership, wrangling an assurance that Tel Aviv will keep Delhi's security concerns in mind while selling arms to Beijing and not encourage any deal that might jeopardise Indo-Israeli ties.

The two sides agreed on a structured dialogue to broadbase ties in the political, economic and security spheres. They decided to set up a joint ministerial commission to have regular dialogues on security, counter-terrorism and cooperation on information technology. But in deference to Indian Muslims and the Arab world, considered to be Delhi's traditional allies, neither termed it as a strategic partnership.

The commission will meet twice a year, alternately in the two capitals, to discuss all political issues at the bilateral, regional and global levels. The one-round-old security dialogue will be continued in Delhi as soon as the dates are finalised. The meeting on counter-terrorism, the groundwork for which was laid during the recent visit of home minister L.K. Advani to Israel, is proposed to be held regularly and will be formalised in the next few weeks.

Singh invited Prime Minister Ehud Barak and foreign minister David Levy to visit India while announcing President K.R. Naray-

anan's Israel tour early next year. He expressed happiness at the large number of young Israeli tourists, describing it as a "vote of confidence from the younger generation for Indo-Israeli ties".

The two sides are reportedly finalising a deal on the sale of "Green Oren", a sophisticated radar system used as a deterrent against ballistic missiles. It is based on the technology of the Falcon, a sophisticated surveillance aircraft already sold to China, for which Israel is under intense pressure from the US.

Washington is apparently trying to prevent the sale of the radar system, saying it will further tilt the security balance in Delhi's favour in volatile South Asia.

But Levy, who met Singh this afternoon, denied any US request not to go ahead with the deal. He maintained that this kind of cooperation was not directed against any third country. "Such cooperation between two democracies should be endorsed," he said.

Singh was diplomatic when asked about the sale of the Falcons to China. "It was a matter of bilateral relations between Israel and China," he said. "India certainly does not judge one bilateral relationship with another and Indo-Israeli relations were also not at the cost of a third country".

On the US' reported anger on the proposed radar deal, he said: "India always does not share the rage of the United States."

Singh said his first visit to the country was in recognition of the "multifaceted relations" between the two sides, and added that "India was keen on weaving these relations more". Earlier, Levy called India a "giant" in Asia with whom Israel had historical and traditional ties.

THE TELEGRAPH

3 JUL 2000

India, Israel to set up joint ministerial commission

Jerusalem

2 JULY

INDIA AND Israel on Sunday decided to set up a joint ministerial commission to look into the entire gamut of cooperation between the two countries and further institutionalise measures on counter-terrorism.

"We have agreed to establish a joint ministerial commission and the details would be worked out. The commission will meet alternatively twice a year in the capital of the two countries," external affairs minister Jaswant Singh told reporters after a meeting with his Israeli counterpart David Levy here.

Singh said the two countries have decided to give a "functional mechanism" to dialogue on counter-terrorism, dates for which would be decided soon.

Singh's remarks on counter-terrorism assume significance in the wake of the visit by home minister L. K. Advani to Israel early last month when he discussed with Israeli leaders and experts ways and means to counter terrorism in India.

Stating that there was a great scope for the promotion of infotech and software cooperation between the two countries, Singh said his ministry would take necessary action so that all regulatory rules and other bureaucratic requirements were met within a specific timeframe.

He said with the appointment of a new national security advisor by Tel Aviv, the next round of dialogue between the national security councils of the two countries would take place in New Delhi and dates for this would be finalised soon.

Singh said his talks with Levy also covered regional, economic and political cooperation between the two countries and both the sides took 'certain' decisions in order to give a fillip to bilateral ties.

He said he has also repeated the invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to visit New Delhi and also invited Levy to India.

— PTI

The Economic Times

3 JUL 200

Israel denies U.S. pressure on arms sale

By Atul Aneja

JERUSALEM, JULY 2. Israel today denied any U.S. pressure on it over the sale of sophisticated military hardware to India even as the two countries decided to add greater content to their political and economic relationships.

"There has been no request (by the U.S.) and co-operation between the two strong democracies can only be endorsed", the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. David Levy said. Mr. Levy made these observations while commenting on a news item in the Israeli press on U.S. pressure against the sale of a sophisticated Israeli radar systems to India. Mr. Levy pointed out that defence co-operation between the two countries was natural and "not directed against any side."

The reported U.S. attempts to prevent the sale of Falcon early warning planes by Israel to China also featured prominently during the joint press conference. Asked to comment on the Israel-China cooperation in this field, the visiting External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh said that the proposed sale of these planes had to be addressed by China and Israel bilaterally.

India's ties with Israel were independent of Tel Aviv's relationship with another country he

observed. He nevertheless hoped that Israel would react to the situation keeping in mind "the quality and depth of its relationship with India". Analysts here point out that the sale of Falcons would significantly enhance the capability of China's relatively weak Air Force.

Both leaders, when asked, evaded the use of the word "strategic" to characterise Indo-Israeli relationship. Mr. Levy, on his part pointed out that India and Israel had "excellent joint interests," Mr. Singh, in turn, described the Indo-Israeli relationship as "multi-faceted". His visit to Israel — the first ever by an Indian Foreign Minister — symbolised the depth of the existing ties between New Delhi and Tel Aviv, he said.

India and Israel have decided to expand the institutional framework of their relationship in three major areas. Both sides during talks decided to set up an Indo-Israeli joint commission which would steer their relationship in the economic, scientific, energy and cultural spheres. Details about the new arrangement would be worked out by the officials of the two sides.

The External Affairs Minister also called on the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak later in the evening.

THE HINDU

1997

Singh blames Israel chill on '47 hangover

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

Jerusalem, July 3: Foreign minister Jaswant Singh has held Indian politicians of the "early years of Independence" responsible for Delhi's continued face-off with Tel Aviv for decades and said their policy of not hurting the sentiments of minorities in the country had imposed an "unstated veto" on India's larger West Asia policy.

"I was always in favour of closer ties with Israel and there were voices raised against this wrong policy," Singh told a gathering of intellectuals and members of thinktanks at the Israeli Foreign Relations Council here last night. But he admitted that the large minority population was one of the main considerations why politicians did not normalise ties with Israel earlier than 1992.

The minister explained that Partition was a "catastrophe" for India and that "there was this feeling that injustice should not be done to the minorities".

"Being a democratic country and the urge of continuing in office being a strong urge among politicians, they felt that the large block of minority votes should not get distracted," he added.

He argued that this finally

forced India's policy towards Israel to become "captive to a domestic policy that came to be unwittingly an unstated veto to India's larger West Asia policy."

But if Singh was trying to convince his Israelis host that all political parties in India were not in favour of a chill in Indo-Israeli relations in the early years, particularly his party, which has always had a close affinity with Tel Aviv, he also tried to make a distinction between "terrorism and Islam".

Singh said terrorism as an ideology is being imposed as the driving force by outfits like the Taliban in Afghanistan. "But it will be an error to equate terrorism with Islam," he said. "It was the rejection of Islam that led to this kind of a situation where terrorism today like a scimitar has spread from the Caucuses to the western province of China."

Answering a question on what kind of cooperation Delhi expects from Tel Aviv on counter-terrorism as the threat posed to the two countries from Islamic terrorist groups is different — Sunni groups are active in India while in Israel, Shi'ites of the Iran-based Hezbollah Mujahideen pose the biggest threat — Singh said terrorism has no religion.

Though Delhi was worried about the spread of Talibanisation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which he described as "some kind of a medievalism", Singh said it would be wrong to address the issue on the premise that Islam was polluted with terrorism.

The minister stressed that terrorism is a global phenomenon which needs to be fought unitedly by all right thinking nations. He said an Indian resolution on a comprehensive convention against terrorism has already been placed before the United Nations and will come up for discussion and debate later in the year.

Though "India and Pakistan are born from the same womb", it will be simplistic to assume that Delhi's policy was Pakistan-centric, he said. Singh added that India is on the move and has the capacity to absorb the blows that Pakistan delivers. "They can bleed us for some time but they cannot detract us from moving forward."

The minister added that though India had taken the initiative of normalising ties with Pakistan by taking the peace bus to Lahore, it should not be assumed that Delhi will continue to undertake such experiments while Islamabad maintained its anti-Indian stand.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 4 JUL 2000

India seeks Israel's help to fight terrorism

JERUSALEM, JULY 3. India and Israel should cooperate in the battle against terrorism, the visiting External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, was quoted as telling his Israeli hosts in Jerusalem.

The suggestion was made during meetings Mr. Singh had with the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister, Mr. David Levy, *The Jerusalem post*, reported today. Mr. Singh told Mr. Levy that there was need to set up a global mechanism against terrorism, and asked for intelligence cooperation between the Governments of Israel and India.

Later at a dinner hosted by the Israeli Council of Foreign Relations, Mr. Singh said while Israel and India faced different types of terrorism, there was nonetheless enough similarity to warrant joint counter-action.

"There is common ground and common consequences of terror and as such, this is a global challenge," the *Post* quoted him as saying. — DPA

CTBT Issue: Page 13

THE HINDU

- 4 JUL 2000

'Yearning for Muslim votes delayed ties with Israel' 4/7

Jerusalem, July 3

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Jaswant Singh has blamed India's past politicians, and their urge to remain in power with the backing of Muslim votes, for the decades of estrangement between India and Israel.

Jaswant Singh noted that India was a democracy "and the urge of continuing in office" was a "very strong urge among politicians."

The large block of Islamic votes in the country could not therefore be ignored.

"India's Israel policy became a captive to domestic policy that came to be unwittingly an unstated veto to India's larger West Asia policy," Singh said, replying to a question at an address on foreign policy at the Israeli Council of Foreign Relations here late yesterday.

He referred to the partition of the subcontinent and described it as "cataclysmic" and a "tectonic shift of consciousness" for India.

He noted that despite Partition, India still had the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia.

"They are our citizens. They have equal rights. Soon after independence, despite what Mahatma Gandhi

No US pressure



J A S W A N T S I N G H has dismissed reports of US pressure on Israel against selling arms to India. "The US often gets enraged about these kinds of issues. We live thousands of miles away and it is not possible to be enraged by the same issue," said Singh.

PTI, Jerusalem

and others said (about all religions being equal), it was felt that injustice should not be caused to the Muslim population.

"After 1947, we got caught in this kind of spectrum," he said, explaining why India established diplomatic relations with Israel only in 1992.

Responding to another question, Mr Singh said it was up to Pakistan to create the conditions necessary for a dialogue with India that has been stalled following last year's Kargil conflict.

"It is Pakistan which turned the bus from Lahore to Kargil. We can't simply go on repeating the kind of Delhi to Lahore bus service."

He was referring to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's fence-mending bus journey to Lahore that preceded the Kargil conflict, when Pakistani-backed forces intruded into the Kargil sector of Jammu and Kashmir across the Line of Control, leading to the worst military face-off between South Asia's arch rivals in nearly three decades.

Singh emphasised that India's main concern was not Pakistan. "India is on the move. India has a tremendous capacity to take blows. They can bleed us for a while, but that will not detract us from carrying on with what we think is right," he said. (LANS)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUL 2000

'Relations with Israel not at the cost of Palestine'

JERUSALEM, JULY 4. A day after his remarks that Muslim vote bank politics in India had delayed establishment of diplomatic ties between New Delhi and Tel Aviv, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said that India's relationship with Israel was not at the cost of its consistent support to the Palestinian cause. *Q - W AT*

Allaying apprehensions that India was tilting towards Israel and moving away from its traditional Arab friends, he told journalists at the end of his four-day visit to Israel on Monday that New Delhi's ties with Tel Aviv were not at the cost of its "consistent" support to the Palestinian cause and their right of an internationally-recognised homeland.

Mr. Singh, who is the first Indian External Affairs Minister to visit Israel since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992, said that politically his trips to Israel and Palestine were separate visits. Geographically, it is not possible to come to Israel and not to go to Palestine or vice versa.

His remarks assume significance in the wake of his state-

ment on Sunday at a seminar that New Delhi's policies toward Israel were based on two aspects-domestic politics because of the Muslim vote bank and unwittingly a kind of unstated veto by New Delhi's larger west Asia policies.

"This phase is over," Mr. Singh said. He told reporters that his visit to Israel has given an impetus to bilateral ties and broken a psychological barrier that had created a political gap between the two countries.

"More than anything else, the visit signifies that a psychological gap has been broken and a political gap bridged," he said.

Referring to his talks with the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, Mr. Singh said he was pleasantly surprised at the former's choice of words in describing ties with India. "Our relationship is intuitive," Mr. Barak told Mr. Singh with a sense of "military directness."

Apart from bilateral ties and future cooperation, Mr. Singh also discussed the west Asia peace process and situation in south Asia with Israeli leaders. — PTI

THE HINDU

- 5 JUL 2000

Ties with Israel not at Palestine's cost: Jaswant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JERUSALEM, July 4. — A day after saying Muslim vote-bank politics in India had delayed diplomatic ties with Israel, Mr Jaswant Singh said last night that friendship with Israel would not compromise India's support for the Palestinian cause.

Allaying fears that New Delhi was tilting towards Tel-Aviv at the expense of its traditional Arab allies, Mr Singh said New Delhi's ties with Tel-Aviv were not at the cost of its "consistent" support to the Palestinian cause and Palestinians' right to an internationally-recognised homeland.

Mr Singh, the first Indian external affairs minister to visit Israel since establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1992, was speaking at the end of his four-day visit to Israel.

He said politically, his trips to Israel and Palestine were two separate visits. Geographically,



Mr Jaswant Singh

it was not possible to come to Israel and not go to Palestine or vice versa, he said.

His remarks appeared significant in the context of his statement on Sunday that New Delhi's policies toward Israel before establishment of full-fledged diplomatic ties in 1992 were based on two aspects — domestic politics based on the Muslim vote bank, and a kind of unstated veto influenced by New Delhi's larger West Asia

policies. "This phase is over", he said.

Mr Singh said his visit to Israel had given an impetus to bilateral ties and broken a psychological barrier that had created a political gap between the two countries.

"More than anything else, the visit signifies that a psychological gap has been broken and political gap bridged," he said.

Referring to his talks with the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Ehud Barak, Mr Singh said he was pleasantly surprised at the former's choice of words in describing ties with India.

"Our relationship is intuitive," Mr Barak had told Mr Singh with a sense of "military directness."

An Israeli foreign ministry spokesman said a "positive atmosphere" characterised Mr Singh's talks with various leaders.

"There is a desire on both sides for strengthening the ties and cooperation between the two countries", he said.

THE STATESMAN

7/5

Delhi unclear on Israel deal

FROM CHANDAN NANDY

New Delhi, July 5: Despite Israel's willingness to help India fight terrorism and strengthen its internal security, New Delhi isn't sure how best to take advantage of this growing strategic alliance.

During his five-day visit to Tel Aviv, home minister L.K. Advani met top Israeli security officials, including the chiefs of its external and internal intelligence agencies. Both sides agreed to set up a Joint Working Group to share intelligence, knowhow and technical expertise.

Though Advani denied that he had gone on a "shopping spree", government sources said Tel Aviv offered hi-tech equipment for border surveillance as well as advanced terrain-specific transport systems. The Israeli Military Industries (IMI) also made a number of presentations, briefing the Indian delegation on border management, counter-terrorism and explosives and ordnance disposal.

Home ministry officials said the Indian team was keen to pick up tabs on strengthening border defence, with special emphasis on infrastructure layout, tactical re-

sponse units, early warning systems and a foolproof command-and-control network. These include static installations, surveillance gear for advance information on intruders, a specialised force and coordination between the four structures.

A team of Israeli security experts are expected to visit India later this month. "We have to thrash out what we need from the point of view of internal security and border management," a senior official said, but was sceptical about how far the government would go to actually procure the hardware Tel Aviv is willing to provide.

"Equipment and hardware related to border and internal security will have to be procured at the earliest. But the bureaucratic process will turn out to be the biggest hurdle," the official said.

There are also various structures within the government with different views on border management. Summing up this divergence of views, an official said: "Although the problem of border management — both along the LoC and in the north-east — is acute, we are not even sure what we want from the Israelis."

THE TELEGRAPH

- 6 JUL 2001

India & the 'New Middle East'

By C. Raja Mohan

India needs to shed its traditional assumptions about the region and the temptation to view it from the prism of its own internal communal divide.

THE FLURRY of current high level Indian visits to Israel have given the impression of a dramatic departure in New Delhi's approach to the Middle East. India's policy, however, has not changed as much as the political landscape of this volatile region has over the last decade. The visits by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and the interesting decision by the West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, to travel to Israel mark an incremental Indian adjustment to the changing ground realities in the Middle East.

Much of the credit for rethinking policy towards the Middle East goes to Rajiv Gandhi who began to reverse his mother's hostile policy towards Israel and explore new possibilities with the Jewish state in the late 1980s. His successor, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, normalised relations with Israel in 1992 which were sustained during Mr. I. K. Gujral's stewardship of the foreign office. The two BJP Governments since then have pursued ties with Israel with much greater enthusiasm.

Although New Delhi's ties with Tel Aviv have begun to bloom in the last two years, it would be a huge error to see the Indian approach towards the Middle East purely in terms of an expanded relationship with Israel. India's policy towards the Middle East must respond to the radical transformation of the politics of the region, particularly since the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The deepening of Indo-Israeli relations has been made feasible by the dramatic decline of Arab rejectionism of Israel. Most Arab nations have given up their refusal to recognise the existence of Israel. The question before the Arab neighbours of Israel is no longer whether they should make peace with Tel Aviv. The debate there has been about the terms of that peace. Many Arab states, which do not have borders with Israel, do maintain the old rhetoric on Arab-Israeli issues. But their security concerns do not stem from the disputes with Israel but those with their own Arab or Muslim neighbours. The small kingdoms of the

been able to paper over the many cracks in the Arab world between moderates and radicals, between republics and monarchies; nor could it overcome the contradiction between Arab and non-Arab Muslim states.

Unlike Arab nationalism, radical political Islam is alive and kicking in the Middle East. But its ability to deliver the goods may be as suspect as that of Pan Arabism. The Islamic revolution in Iran has run into difficulties and elsewhere militant political Islam has largely been contained.

As the political passions of the past cool in the Middle East, and the region experiments with the projects of political modernisation, economic modernisation and social advancement, India has a huge opportunity for deepening its relations with both Arab and non-Arab Islamic nations. To realise its full potential in the "New Middle East", India needs to shed its traditional assumptions about the region and the temptation to view it from the prism of its own internal communal divide.

For example on terrorism, Israel is not the only potential partner India has in the Middle East. Many Arab nations, in particular Egypt and Algeria, have been big victims of international terrorism. And the Arab League, collectively through the Arab League, have begun to take positions against terrorism. Religious extremism also threatens to undermine the existing political order in many states of the Middle East, and India has a huge common ground to exploit.

India has begun to discover new partners in the region, most notably Turkey that straddles the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. As it emerges as one of the world's largest consumers of hydrocarbons, India is exploring the prospects for long-term energy security relationships in the Persian Gulf. In short, recalibrating the ties with Israel can only be one element of India's policy towards the Middle East. India now needs to move quickly to consolidate its recent initiatives to promote economic and political cooperation with key Islamic nations in the Middle East.

thrown the economics of the region into a disarray. Since 1986 per capita incomes in the Middle East have fallen by two per cent a year, the largest decline in any region. With the highest population growth rate anywhere in the world, at 2.7 per cent, the demands on the smaller economic cake have increased.

The economic crisis in the region has undermined two great political triumphs of the past. One was the nationalisation of the oil industry and the other the

WORLD VIEW

successful use of the control of petroleum production to extract political concessions from the West. Both have turned out to be pyrrhic victories. The declining revenues from oil and the inability to modernise the petroleum sector has forced many Arab nations now to invite back the large energy multinationals that were thrown out in the 1960s and 1970s. The petroleum producers of the region are also finding it difficult to coordinate the production of oil and control its price. The recent sharp rise in oil price appears unlikely to be sustained as Saudi Arabia, under American pressure, has agreed increase its production.

The prolonged economic crisis, the declining living standards, and the restiveness of the younger generation is likely to lead to enduring political change in the Middle East. Will it lead to political modernisation or extremism? Both trends are visible. In Iran, the younger generation tired with the oppressive rule of the Islamic clergy has been voting with its feet for the reformist agenda of Mr. Khatami. Elsewhere in the region, there is an Islamic backlash against the misgovernance of the secular but authoritarian regimes. It is unlikely that the Arab world will relight the fires of transcendental Arab nationalism. Pan Arabism, despite its modernist impulses, has failed to build progressive structures at home. Pan Arabism has not

For India, Israel is now a different ball game

ERIC SILVER
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JERUSALEM, July 5. — When I worked in New Delhi as a foreign correspondent in the mid-Eighties after a stint in Jerusalem, one of Rajiv Gandhi's senior advisers hissed at me over a dinner table: "Israel is an aberration."

Extreme that may have been, but it reflected the hostility towards the Jewish state among Congress leaders and the bureaucrats who served them.

A decade and a half later, relations between India and Israel have been transformed.

Ambassadors were exchanged in 1992. And this summer two senior BJP leaders, the home and external affairs ministers, Mr LK Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh, have cemented the friendship with high-profile visits.

Mr Singh indicated privately that the Indian government no longer

'ISRAEL-WEST BENGAL JOINT VENTURES POSSIBLE'

CALCUTTA, July 5. — Joint ventures with West Bengal are possible in several sectors, the Israeli regional cooperation minister, Mr Shimon Peres said in Tel-Aviv yesterday. Mr Jyoti Basu, eager to have closer business ties with Israel, especially in software, tourism and agriculture sectors, discussed the issue with Mr Peres, who is also Israel's former Prime Minister. The two discussed the West Asia peace process too, officials at Writers' Buildings said today.

Mr Somnath Chatterjee, West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation chairman, Mr Harsh Neotia, honorary consul of Israel in Calcutta, and some bureaucrats too were present at the talks. — SNS

ited about expanding the relationship.

To top it, this week Mr Jyoti Basu has been here with a 20-strong West Bengal trade mission, headed by Mr Somnath Chatterjee, WBIDC chairman.

Even veteran Marxists like the octogenarian West Bengal chief minister, ideologues who used to denounce Israel as a tool of Western imperialism and oppres-

It's much easier now that two Arab states, Egypt and Jordan, have signed peace treaties with Israel and the Palestinians are negotiating to establish their own state alongside it.

The presence of Mr Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh, India's ambassador, Mr Ranjan Mathai, told **The Statesman**, signifies that Delhi takes its relationship with Israel very seriously.

important interlocutor. It's a partner for cooperation in the future — extending from the traditional fields of trade, commerce, industry, software and agriculture to sharing perceptions of regional development, and now extending to cooperation in fields such as counter-terrorism and national security.

Israeli officials stress that the cooperation against terrorism does not mean working together in the field. An Indian official concurred: "We are not intending to add to their enemies, and they are not intending to add to ours."

The two countries' enemies may be Islamic ultras. But they are not the same Islamic ultras. Israel's arc of concern sweeps westwards from Iran and Iraq to Syria and Lebanon. India's focuses further east on Pakistan and Afghanistan. It's commonplace to celebrate the two nations' parallel experiences. Mr Singh

■ See ISRAEL: page 8

ISRAEL: Jaswant charms diners

(Continued from page 1)

charmed a dinner of the Israel Council on Foreign Relations with talk of ancient civilisations but new states, who won independence from British colonial rule around the same time, in 1947 and 1948.

Israel and India are bolsterous democracies. But, eight years after the establishment of formal ties, the dialogue has advanced beyond the sentimental. Increasingly, it's built on mutual interest.

Mr Advani spoke openly of nuclear cooperation, though neither he nor his hosts would be drawn into specifics.

Mr Singh and his Israeli counterpart, Mr David Levy, agreed to establish a joint ministerial commission to chart a course for the future.

The kind of cooperation, Mr Mathai explained, is in the fields of learning, technology and methodology. It's not intended to suggest that we have a common enemy. It's not intended to have any joint actions.

On the conventional warfare level, Israel has become a significant supplier of arms and advanced technology to the Indian armed forces. Two recent deals — of the few that they talk about in public — have Israel selling the the Indian Army \$9-million worth of 5.56 calibre ammunition and

an Israeli firm signing a \$47-million contract to upgrade India's 155-mm artillery.

It's reported here that Israel Aircraft Industries is supplying the air force with \$80-million worth of radar-jamming tools for its MiG-21 warplanes.

After his meetings with senior Israeli ministers, Mr Singh was asked about Washington's unremitting pressure on Israel to cancel the sale of *Phalcon* advanced early-warning aircraft to Beijing. He replied that India saw it as a bilateral issue in which it didn't want to interfere.

His reticence may owe something to reports that India too is interested in buying similar spy planes, which use an old Soviet-built Ilyushin airframe packed with Israeli technology. The last thing India can want is to draw US fire on to its own

purchases from Israel, which has defied the US arms embargo imposed after the 1998 nuclear tests by India and Pakistan.

On the civilian front, business between Israel and India has increased five-fold over the past eight years. Two-way trade approached \$1 billion in 1999.

And the upward trend is continuing. In the first quarter of this year, total Israeli exports to India rose by 37 per cent to \$168.8 million.

At one time, most of the trade would have been in diamonds, cut and polished near Tel-Aviv for Indian brides.

Now it ranges from hi-tech and telecommunications to leatherware and sporty Tata utility vehicles.

Not just a woman's best friend, but the whole family's.

THE STATESMAN

• 6 JUL 2000

TIME WE GREW UP!

Relations with Israel hurt no one ⁵¹⁻⁶

THERE is a grain of truth in what Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh said in Israel in explaining why an unnecessary distance has separated the two countries these past decades. In the early years of our independence, when Pandit Nehru was Prime Minister, it is no exaggeration to say that foreign policy consisted largely of a Kashmir policy; those who were not with us were thought to be against us. In pursuit of this approach we went out of our way to get support from as many Muslim countries as we could in order to stymie Pakistan. It was a different matter that we did not succeed and our effort to break into a conference of Muslim nations being held in Rabat on the ground that we had a huge Muslim population failed and President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed suffered avoidable inconvenience. The same approach was followed, *mutatis mutandis*, in domestic policies. To the extent that Indian passports specifically excluded visits to South Africa, because of the apartheid regime there and to Israel, for reasons that did us no particular credit and provided no advantage whatever.

Attempts have been made from time to time to correct this unbalanced and unprincipled approach but it was not until General Moshe Dayan paid a not so secret visit to Prime Minister Morarji Desai in New Delhi that the first hesitant steps were taken to correct the tilt in our policy. It was not until 1992 that proper diplomatic ties were established. Establishment of diplomatic relations implies neither approval nor disapproval of particular policy or policies of the countries in question, it is merely establishment of recognised means of communication between governments and provision of consular relations. Israel has a lot to offer this country — their expertise in agriculture is unique, they have made the desert bloom. Water conservation and solar energy techniques are more advanced in Israel than almost anywhere else; not to speak of excellent small arms supplies and training in tackling the menace of terrorism. Jaswant Singh was therefore right to visit Israel and cement the relationship. It is not to be interpreted as being pro- or anti-Muslim, it merely corrects an aberration which has bedevilled our relationship with a friendly regime for far too long. India has always championed the right of the Palestinians to a homeland of their own and in a sense they have been made to pay the price of European guilt over Hitler's appalling genocide of the Jews and the indescribable cruelty with which the policy was pursued.

There is an application of this policy that we would do well to ponder. Israel and the Palestinians have been at each other's throats ever since the state of Israel was established by a vote in the United Nations after the end of World War II. They are now talking to each other — as even the old warhorse Winston Churchill used to say: Jaw, jaw is preferable to war, war! Pakistan is in search of an identity, it has to live with the reality that there are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan and the religious card cannot be current coin. However, having said that, we are two separate nations and at some point we must learn to talk to each other and save the dreadful sums of money on mutually hostile postures that neither country can afford. This is not to deny that conditions must be propitious and the climate appropriate but we should be alive to the possibility.

In short it is about time we grew up!

THE STATESMAN

- 8 JUL 2000

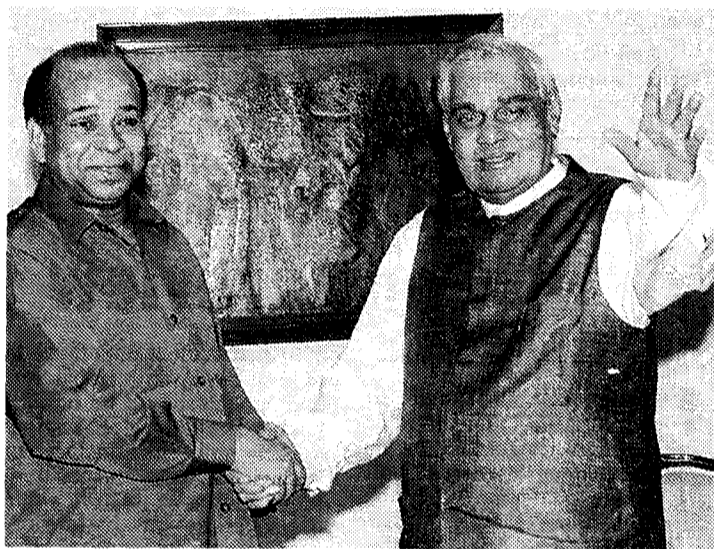
Libyan support to India for U.N. council seat

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 7. Libya today endorsed India's candidature in an expanded U.N. Security Council and looked at ways to expand economic cooperation with it in select sectors.

The visiting Libyan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdel Rahman Shalgam, publicly stated India's participation in the Council during a meeting with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) this morning.

The Libyan Foreign Minister is accompanied by a representative of the Libyan national oil company, indicating that the two countries could be keen to work together in the field of hydrocarbons. The economic thrust of Mr. Shalgam's visit was also evident from the presence of the representatives of the Arab foreign investment company and the Department of Technical Cooperation. Mr. Shalgam during talks with the External Affairs Minister,



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, with the Libyan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdel Rahman Mohammad Shalgam, in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

Mr. Jaswant Singh, exchanged notes on the political situation in their regions. The Libyan Foreign

Minister later called on the Vice-President and the Prime Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee.

THE HINDU

7-7-77

10-13
10/7
Hype over Israeli ties
unwarranted: Faleiro

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 9. The former Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Eduardo Faleiro, today objected to the justification of the cooperation between India and Israel on the plea of alleged threat posed by so-called Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. He cautioned against the present hype in Indo-Israeli relations, at a time when the West Asia peace process was in the doldrums.

"This is most objectionable. Terrorism has no religion. Our Ministers have spoken of a 'civilisational' framework in the context of India's international relations insinuating that India and Israel are on the same side in the 'clash of civilisations', a concept which is mainly directed against the Muslim and Arab world and its norms," he said in a statement here.

Mr. Faleiro, a Rajya Sabha member, said India must guard against communalisation of foreign policy. "It will be unfortu-

nate if the sectarian mindset already being felt in domestic affairs, is now brought to bear on our international relations also," he said. India's cooperation with Israel in the nuclear field was being perceived by the Arab nations as an unfriendly act.

Governors' meet from July 12

NEW DELHI, JULY 9. A wide variety of subjects ranging from the work of the Constitution Review Commission to attacks on Christians and their institutions as well as social, developmental and law and order are expected to figure at the two-day conference of Governors and Lt. Governors convened by the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, from July 12.

The conference is also likely to discuss the issue of Centre-State relations in the wake of the autonomy resolution adopted by the J&K Assembly. — PTI

India and Kuwait sign MoU

Kuwait, July 11

INDIA AND Kuwait have added a new dimension to their relations by signing a Memorandum of Understanding to hold regular foreign office consultations to chalk out common strategies on international issues of mutual interest.

The MoU was signed by visiting Minister of State for External Affairs Ajit Kumar Panja and Kuwaiti Minister of State for

Foreign Affairs Sulaiman Majed Al-Shaheen at a ceremony here last evening.

According to the agreement, the two countries shall hold consultations at official level annually or more frequently alternatively in India or Kuwait on all aspects of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues.

The discussions could also be held between the permanent missions of the two countries in inter-

national organisations or at international conferences.

The ministers described the signing of the MoU, which would remain in force for two years and then get renewed automatically, as "yet another step in the direction of strengthening close bonds of friendship" between the two countries.

Panja said there was commonality of views between India and Kuwait on most of the international issues. (UNI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 JUL 2000

Indo-Iran joint gas panel to meet for first time in July

Indrani Bagchi & Soma Banerjee

NEW DELHI 11 JULY

THE JOINT working group (JWG) to "explore all aspects" of gas transportation from Iran to India will hold its first meeting later this month when a high-level delegation from Iran visits Delhi.

The Indian committee will be headed by the secretary of the ministry of external affairs (MEA) and will consist of senior officials like the joint secretary of IPA, and joint secretary (refinery), as well as senior officials from the ministry of defence.

The India-Iran pipeline project received a new lease of life during foreign minister Jaswant Singh's visit to Iran in May, which resulted in the constitution of the JWG. Iran has been keen to sell gas to India, but India has certain security concerns that need to be assuaged before an onshore pipeline can go through Pakistan.

The project was also taken up at the World Petroleum Congress at Canada and the Union petroleum minister, Mr Ram Naik, recently held discussions with his Iranian counterpart.

The brief for the JWG will



Singh: Exploring new ground

be to explore the relative costs and benefits of onshore, offshore pipelines or LNG transportation.

With Bangladesh almost ruling out exports of gas in the near future — with the country poised for general elections it is a delicate political issue that will only be resolved afterwards, a fact noted by the US President during his recent visit — US oil and gas companies who have high reserves in the western region have been increasing their pressure to restart negotiations with Pakistan.

The Economic Times.

12 JUL 2000

Jaswant's theme for a dream: Iran-India arterial pipeline

Indrani Bagchi
NEW DELHI, 12 JULY

JASWANT SINGH has a dream. That India, as one of the three largest energy markets will be a hub for a network of energy flows from Central Asia, Iran and the UAE. The thing is, for this dream to take shape, the arterial pipeline between Iran and India is a foregone necessity.

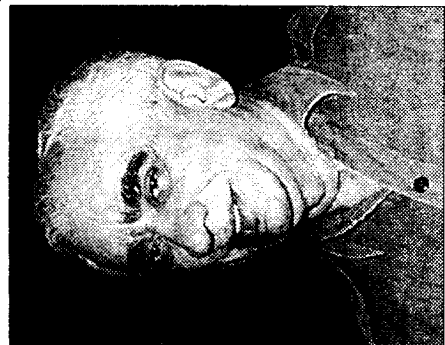
The problem is in the mode of transportation, hence the JWG. As it stands right now, there are three ways of transporting the gas from Iran's Abousaliyeh facilities to Gujarat. The first, cheapest and easiest, is to build over land, through the deserts of Baluchistan and into Barmer. It is Iran's mode of choice as well as Pakistan's, but security hawks in India have their claws out on this one.

The second option is a shallow-water pipeline hugging the continental shelf of Pakistan and India. Pakistan had refused permission for a feasibility study for the pipeline in 1993, but this time round, it is ready with security guarantees to welcome the pipeline. According to the Law of the Sea, pipelines on the edge of the continental shelf only require delineation permission from Pakistan.

The third option is a deepwater pipeline from the Straits of Hormuz to the Arabian Sea. This is the most expensive option and there is no precedent of a similar deepwater pipeline. But this is acceptable to security purists in the establishment who haven't yet married security concerns with economic compulsions. Therefore, Gazprom has been asked to do a

study of services from Oman LNG to Daqhol Power. But while the LNG option sounds safer, the expenses are considerable. Going by 1999 prices, it is in the range of \$2 billion for a liquefaction unit, \$200 million for an LNG tanker (and you need at least 6 to 10 of these) and \$500 million for a re-gasification facility, plus inland pipelines.

Pakistan stands to earn much-needed \$700 million in transit fees from Iran if the pipeline goes through its territory. In two meetings with the Iranian leadership, General Musharraf has said he has given the necessary security guarantees for the pipeline through Pak territory. After the recent ECO meeting he is reported to have given the kind of security guarantees Central Asian countries had given to international



Jaswant: Visionary

study on this option since it has experience in deepwater pipelines from Iran to Turkey.

There is a fourth option which is already in place — LNG. This is currently in operation with start-

energy companies to secure investment.

Iran, for its part has apparently promised a hike in transit fees to Pakistan in return for maximum security guarantees. For Pakistan, alternative pipeline projects from Qatar or Turkmenistan are unviable. The former will have to go under sea while the latter will go through Afghanistan, untouchable for every international financier. Hence, their insistence on the Iran-India pipeline. Moreover, according to estimates, Pakistan will be a net gas importer by 2008.

Purists here balk at the thought of sending a pipeline through Pakistan. Not only because it will put India in a state of strategic dependence on Pakistan, but also the issue of lower costs is not correct.

The Economic Times

13 JUL 2000

Indo-Iran talks to focus on gas transport

By C. Raja Mohan ^{13/7} HD-13

NEW DELHI, JULY 12. Energy, security and Afghanistan will be among the many issues that will figure in the wide-ranging talks between India and Iran here next week.

The Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, Mr. Mohsen Aminzadeh, is arriving on July 19 to continue the high-level political dialogue.

While there is no specific focus on any theme, it is expected that the question of transporting natural gas from Iran to India as well as the latest developments in Afghanistan could figure prominently in the talks.

When the External Affairs Min-

ister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, visited Iran in May, the two sides agreed to set up a Joint Working Group to assess economic and security aspects of natural gas pipelines from the Persian Gulf to India.

The JWG has now been constituted and is scheduled to meet within the next few weeks in Teheran. The JWG will report to the two Foreign Ministers.

The Indian team will be headed by the Secretary (East) in the External Affairs Ministry, Mr. K. V. Rajan. Senior officials from the External Affairs Ministry, Ministry of Petroleum, and the Ministry of Defence will participate in the JWG.

An overland pipeline from Iran, passing through Pakistan, is seen by many as the cheapest option for transporting abundant natural gas from the Persian Gulf to the huge energy market in India.

There are strong reservations in the Government that such a pipeline might give a powerful leverage to Islamabad. Pakistan, which stands to benefit by charging transit fees, has supported the project for an overland pipeline.

India is unlikely to back such a project without substantive security guarantees against disruption of the natural gas supplies by Pakistan.

The JWG will make a technical

assessment all options, including on-shore and off-shore pipelines. During his visit to Iran, Mr. Singh insisted that "there must be a survivable marriage" between the economic and security aspects of the pipelines from the Persian Gulf to the subcontinent.

The latest developments in Afghanistan, where India and Iran have strong and converging security interests, was also expected to come up for discussion next week.

The two sides are likely to exchange views on the renewed fighting in north of Kabul and the current international efforts to end the conflict.

INDIA

INDIA

Calling Jaswant Singh names on Israel

Sanctimonious and amnesiac

THIS week Mani Shanker Aiyar gave a fairly lucid history of India's position on Israel as well as the Palestinian struggle. He then quite pointlessly lunged at Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and the intended one-two has clearly not landed. He has accused Jaswant Singh of being a communalist in the same league as Dara Singh.

According to Aiyar, the Foreign Minister during his recent visit to Israel placed the blame for delaying full diplomatic relations with Israel on the successive Congress administrations' desire to keep the Muslim vote bank intact.

If this, indeed, is what Jaswant Singh said, how does it place the External Affairs Minister in the ranks of communalists? As a reporter in those days on the South Block beat, I know first hand that the "Muslim vote" was something Rajiv Gandhi never understood but was most concerned about.

It was this naive understanding of issues on Rajiv's part which led him to blunders like Shah Bano and the banning of Salman Rushdie. Indeed, he was advised that if he embarked on his election campaign from Ayodhya promising Ram Rajya, he would take the wind out of the "communalists" sail. If he allowed the *shilanyas* on disputed land and then bluffed the minorities that it had been done elsewhere, Muslims would be mighty pleased. He bought this one too hook, line and sinker. Ask Narain Dutt Tewari for the details.

The great issues that were agitating the Muslims were, according to the Congress, Shah Bano, Salman Rushdie, Babri Masjid and relations with Israel.

Some of us argued that this was a completely bogus list which only demonstrated how totally out of touch the Congress leadership (particularly its Muslim figureheads) was with the minorities. What the Muslims needed

was education, entrepreneurial help and a general sense of belonging in the mainstream.

A series of articles I wrote urging normal relations with Israel caught Rajiv's attention. He asked me, as an independent journalist, to prepare a note on how the minorities would respond to full diplomatic relations with Israel.

My argument was straightforward. Camp David was behind us: Egypt, the most important country in the Arab world, had accepted the reality of Israel. King Hussain of Jordan was in constant touch with Israeli leaders as was King Hassan of Morocco. In fact, every time I visited Rabat the person I never failed to see was Andre Azoulay, the king's principal advi-



SAEED NAQVI

lectuals of our times, Edward Said, a Christian.

Of course, there are fundamentalist voices in Israel and the Arab world comfortable with the notion of a Jewish-Muslim conflict in the Middle East. But these marginal (sometimes powerful) groups clash head on with the fundamental reality that the holocaust happened in Europe and not in the Muslim world. The amnesia that is sought to be induced by the western media on this score is one of the less savoury aspects of contemporary journalism.

P.V. Narasimha Rao ultimately decided to exchange Ambassadors because the logic began to sink in that relations with Israel were not a core issue with Indian Muslims. And

lishment? It sustained the myth that New Delhi's relations with Belgrade were sacrosanct because the two were premier capitals when non-alignment was invented by Nehru and Tito. But what did Tito's Yugoslavia have to do with Milosevic's Belgrade? Narasimha Rao's foreign office, in private conversations, was more worried about a Muslim state in Europe than Europe itself. Everything possible was done to block the arrival in New Delhi of the Bosnian foreign minister who ultimately died in an air crash.

The ONGC, which knows a few things about oil, made several trips to Baku, capital of Azerbaijan. After all, Azerbaijan was the hub of all the major oil companies in quest of the new El Dorado. Baku also had ancient civilisational links with India. On the outskirts of the city is the ancient Fire temple with sanskrit *shlokas* inscribed on the walls.

But the Congress establishment could not be persuaded to open a diplomatic mission in Baku. Why? Because Azerbaijan, a Muslim country, had a conflict with Armenia, a Christian country. So the great, secular, Congress establishment chose not to open a mission in either country. The issue, thus yoked together like a pair of bullocks, was handed down to subsequent establishments to sort out.

What took the cake was the invitation issued to Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in 1995 after he spewed venom against Muslims and Jews alike. Since there was no straightforward way of extending hospitality to this rank fascist, he was invited as a guest of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Some cultural relations, devised exclusively by the Congress!

To revert to Israel for a moment. President Ezer Weizman visited New Delhi in 1997. When will our President reciprocate? The Israelis are waiting.

And when the New Delhi-Tel Aviv axis was firmly established what happened? Not a whimper from the Muslims!

96-6 14/7
sor, a practising Jew to boot. The supervising deity for Riyadh and Jerusalem was the same - Americans. Why did we have to be more loyal than the King?

In fact, keeping a legitimate foreign policy option hostage to the fear of minorities walking out on the ruling party if that option were ever exercised would only irritate the majority community.

Moreover, casting the Arab-Israeli dispute as a Jewish-Muslim issue was a total misreading of what was essentially a territorial conflict. The more radical voices among the Palestinians were people like George Habash, obviously a Christian. A Palestinian totally opposed to Yasser Arafat's conciliatory line happens to be one of the great intel-

when the New Delhi-Tel Aviv axis was firmly established, what happened? Not a whimper from the Muslims!

Even so, it is my belief that Narasimha Rao would not have taken the plunge on Israel (the so-called Muslim leaders would have stayed his hand) had the global situation not changed radically. The liberalisation of the Indian economy and relations with Israel were, in the ultimate analysis, dictated by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As for a touch of communalism in foreign affairs, it might be instructive to remember the Bosnian brutality, rape camps, extermination of Muslims in mass graves. And what was the response of the secular Congress estab-

INDIAN EXPRESS

14 JUL 2000

India to allay Arab fears over Israel

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JULY 15. In an attempt to allay the misperceptions generated by the recent visits to Israel by top Indian leaders, the Foreign Office is planning to brief the Ambassadors of the Arab nations this week.

The proposed briefing by Mr. K. V. Rajan, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, comes in the wake of some questions raised by the Arab League on certain aspects of the relations between India and Israel.

A few days ago in Cairo, the Indian Ambassador to Egypt was called into the headquarters of the Arab League and asked about some of the statements allegedly made by the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, during his visit to Israel last month. The mission of the Arab League here has also sought a meeting with senior officials of the Foreign Office.

The Government is expected to brief the Arab Ambassadors together about the visits of both Mr. Advani and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh.

The main concern seems related to a reported statement by Mr. Advani that India was considering cooperation with Israel in the nu-

clear field. Although the Government has clarified that Mr. Advani made no reference to nuclear cooperation with Israel, one or two Arab nations are not entirely mollified.

Reports on Indo-Israeli nuclear cooperation have been fairly frequent in the Arab media. There has also been a systematic campaign by Pakistan in the Arab world about nuclear weapons cooperation between India and Israel. It may be recalled that on the eve of its nuclear tests at the end of May 1998, Pakistan had raised the bogey of a joint attack by India and Israel against its nuclear installations.

When Mr. Jaswant Singh travelled to the United Nations last September, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr. Amre Moussa, raised concerns about Indo-Israeli nuclear cooperation, by making a reference to media reports on the subject. Mr. Singh rejected the allegations.

In dismissing speculation about nuclear cooperation with Israel, the Government is likely to point to the impeccable record of Indian restraint on nuclear technology exports. It may also refer to the stringent guidelines, issued in 1995, that govern India's nuclear exports. Any transfer of nuclear material or tech-

nology will attract international controls to the recipient country. It stands to reason that Israel, which already has a nuclear arsenal, would in no way want to bring in international safeguards over its nuclear programme.

A second area of concern in the Arab world is about the emerging cooperation on countering terrorism between India and Israel. Arab sensitivities appear to have been hurt by the alleged references to "cross-border terrorism" by Mr. Advani.

Some of Israel's Arab neighbours are upset that the talk of "cross-border terrorism" would suggest those who share borders with Israel are terrorist states.

The Government will convey that Mr. Advani was referring to cooperation between India and Israel on proxy wars launched by terrorist groups; and that New Delhi has no desire to suggest that any of the Arab states are terrorist.

India believes that many of the Arab states themselves are victims of terrorism, and that there is considerable common ground between India and leading nations of the Islamic world in countering terrorism and religious extremism.

16 JUL 2007

UAE-India refinery project on the cards

Dubai, July 16

WG-15
17/7

INVESTMENTS BY the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in India are likely to increase three-fold if a refinery project under discussion between the two countries materialises.

A decision on the proposed refinery will depend on the outcome of the visit of a technical team of the International Petroleum Company (IPC) of the UAE to India in August to discuss details of the project, including its

location. An IPC delegation had visited India earlier this year for preliminary studies and come back highly satisfied with the project's feasibility.

If the project comes through, UAE's investments in India will shoot up from the present \$200 million to \$600-800 million, according to Indian Ambassador K.C. Singh.

Singh, explaining the modest investments by the UAE in India so far, described the Indo-UAE relationship as "incremental" in

nature and not subject to sudden vagaries.

The two-way trade between the two countries had touched the \$4 billion mark last year. While UAE's exports to India consisted largely of crude oil, there has been vast diversification in the Indian exports basket to the emirates in recent years, Singh said, adding economic relations between the two countries are at a "take-off stage."

Apart from the refinery project, Singh said India could be a major supplier of alumina for the three

huge smelter plants in the UAE as the country has large deposits of bauxite.

Indian officials feel that UAE's decision to freeze issue of visas to Indians and Pakistanis could turn out to be a blessing in disguise as far as India is concerned as it would help change India's traditional image here as a source for cheap labour.

Expatriate workers, a majority of them Indians, account for more than 60 per cent of UAE's three million population. (LANS)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 JULY 1977

Delhi calms West Asia fears on Tel Aviv ties

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, July 16: Worried that the growing closeness between India and Israel, particularly the proposed nuclear cooperation between the two sides, is being criticised in the Arab world as a major shift in Delhi's policy, South Block is chalking out an elaborate plan in its defence.

India has argued that its closeness with Israel is part of the changing realities in the West Asia, but reiterated that its closeness with Tel Aviv is not at the cost of the Arab world.

But South Block feels that there is no need for foreign minister Jaswant Singh to start an elaborate exercise to explain Delhi's stand to the Arab world and reas-

sure it that there was no fundamental change in India's foreign policy.

Nuclear cooperation between India and Israel is a sensitive issue in the Arab world. Unlike India's, the nuclear programme of Israel has been the subject of speculation for many years among the Arab nations. The fact that Tel Aviv has not signed the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty has strengthened speculation on a clandestine Israeli nuclear programme.

Pakistan had tried to use this fear during its armed intrusion in Kargil last summer. But categorical denial on possible military cooperation between India and Israel, not only from the two sides but also from the US, had helped scotch the rumours.

Remarks by Indian leaders during

their recent visit to Israel has once again forced the issue to resurface.

Indian ambassador in Egypt Shiv Shankar Mukherjee was summoned by Arab League members in Cairo to lodge their protest over the home minister L.K. Advani's comment during last month's visit to Tel Aviv that Delhi was seeking cooperation from the Israelis on the nuclear field.

In addition, during his visit to Israel last week Jaswant — considered moderate and perhaps the most articulate minister in Atal Behari Vajpayee's Cabinet — had blamed the "early leaders" in Delhi for continuing the face-off with Tel Aviv to please their Muslim votebank.

The foreign minister's remarks did little to lift the gloomy mood in the Arab

world. South Block mandarins feel that this can well turn into a major issue for the Opposition to criticise the government in the next session of Parliament starting on July 24.

But sources close to the minister made it clear that there was no need for "either reassuring or apologising to" the Arab leaders for the new thrust in India's foreign policy. They argued that the ground situation had changed and many among the Arab nations were today going out of their way to mend fences with Israelis.

"Every time Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak goes out of the country, he stops at Cairo for consultations with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak," a senior foreign ministry official said. He

pointed out that he does likewise with the Syrians. "We fail to see why hackles are raised every time India moves close to Israel," he added.

Advani categorically denied having made any remarks on a nuclear cooperation between Delhi and Tel Aviv. It was also pointed out that keeping Arab sensitivity in mind, Jaswant had begun his four-day tour of West Asia from Palestine, spending equal time with President Yasser Arafat and other Palestinian leaders, and the Israeli leadership.

Despite these gestures, the attempt to raise controversial issues is being seen in Delhi as an attempt by a section of the Arab world to make every attempt to prevent normalisation of relations between India and Israel.

Oman's bid to seal fertiliser project

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, July 17

THE VISITING Foreign Minister of Oman Yusuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah is learnt to be on a mission to seal up the controversial fertiliser project which received the Cabinet's nod recently despite strong opposition from several quarters in India.

Mr Abdullah on Monday called on Prime Minister A B Vajpayee and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh. The MEA spokesman said "both ministers expressed satisfaction with the decision to go ahead with the \$1.1 billion fertiliser project to be located in Oman".

The project was originally agreed conceived in 1993 as a joint venture between Oman Oil Company and two Indian public sector companies, KRIBHCO and Rasthriya Chemicals and Fertilisers (RCF). But clearance on the implementation of the project was held up after negative reports were received over its viability. Subsequently, RCF backed out and IFFCO entered in its place.

Significantly, the BJP had opposed this project when it was in the opposition. That the controversial Italian company, Snamprogetti, whose business representative in India, Ottavio Quattrochi is a suspect in the Bofors payoff case, was a co-bidder raised hackles in the BJP's quarters. Mr Vajpayee had written over a dozen letters to the then prime minister making out a strong case for retendering.

But in a sudden volte face, the PM cleared it on the eve of his departure for Italy late last month. The considerations against the project included the urea buy-back arrangement which would force the Indian government to buy at a fixed price instead of making it sensitive to prevailing international prices.

India, Oman group to upgrade ties

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 18. India and Oman have decided to set up a high-level inter-ministerial group to push their political, security and economic ties to a new high.

With the foreign office as the nucleus, the "strategic consultative group" will give a higher policy direction to India-Oman ties.

The decision to set up this cell at the level of Secretaries was taken during talks between Oman's visiting Foreign Minister, Mr. Yousuf Bin Abdullah, and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh.

Mr. Abdullah later called on the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee. According to the Foreign Office spokesman, the Prime Minister expressed satisfaction at the decision to form the consultative group. Both sides agreed that New Delhi and Muscat should expand their cooperation in the oil and gas sector.

Official sources here described talks between the Foreign Ministers as "forward looking" as they took off from the decision taken by both sides to implement their long-awaited joint projects.

For instance, the two countries have recently removed the hurdles in the way of establishing a giant Indo-Oman fertilizer plant which has been hanging fire for nearly seven years. The gas-based plant which symbolises a up-turn in the relationship is mostly funded by Oman. It will produce urea which will be purchased by India.

The two sides have also cleared the way for the import of Omanese crude. Oil from Oman, which will be brought in tankers and off-loaded in Gujarat, will be sent through a pipeline to a refinery in Bina

in Madhya Pradesh. The laying of the pipelines had earlier been blocked because of pressure from environmental groups.

These groups had objected to the pipeline because of apprehension that it would cause ecological damage to the thickly-forested belt through which it would pass. The completion of both these projects is likely to lead to a quantum jump in Indo-Oman trade which currently stands at a modest \$ 220 millions.

India, according to analysts, sees Oman as its key strategic ally in the resource-rich Persian Gulf and the wider Indian Ocean rim. Not surprisingly, India, Oman, Australia and South Africa are the pillars of a community of littoral states straddling the commercial sea lanes in the Indian Ocean.

The visiting Foreign Minister, who delivered a lecture on the Indian Ocean Community, advocated that the grouping should be given an economic thrust. The community should result in market expansion and lower production costs because of the resulting economies of scale. He emphasised a larger role for the private sector and the slashing of bureaucratic red tape to achieve higher growth.

The focussed economic orientation of Oman and its refusal to discriminate against the 340,000 Indian settlers there has contributed to the warmth in the relationship between the two countries, the Foreign Office spokesman said.

During talks, India expressed satisfaction over Oman's role in presenting a balanced projection of South Asia in the GCC — a regional grouping of the Persian Gulf states.

THE HINDU

19 JUL 2000

India can strengthen diplomatic relations with Israel without alienating Muslim countries

7-11-1997

Out of the closet

BY J. N. DIXIT

THE LAST two months have witnessed heightened interaction at high political levels between Israel and India. Home Minister L.K. Advani, accompanied by senior officials dealing with counter-insurgency and terrorism, visited Israel in June. He was followed by Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, accompanied by senior members of his Cabinet, was in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem early this month. Defence Minister George Fernandes is likely to visit Israel later.

These events have resulted in cogitations in the media reminiscent of the passionate debate which surrounded India's establishing diplomatic relations with Israel in January 1992. As the Foreign Secretary to the Government, I had a part in implementing the decision of the then Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao. To some extent, therefore, I am able to give the rationale of the decision which is taking full form now. By recognising and formalising our relations with Israel have we abandoned our policy of supporting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people? Have we decided to alienate ourselves from Arab and Muslim countries, especially the Arab countries, relations with whom are of vital political, economic and historical importance to us? Have we, by structuring a cooperative relationship with Israel, indicated our support to Israel's past actions against the Palestinians which we had firmly opposed? Have we abandoned Pandit Nehru's policies on relations with Israel?

Historical accuracy and chronological sequence leading to the opening up of relations with Israel are necessary to provide relevant answers to these questions. The question of recognising Israel is irrelevant. Jawaharlal Nehru had agreed to the recognition of the state of Israel — though we had reservations about the manner in which the UN Resolution constituting the state of Israel was passed. An Israeli Consulate General was allowed to function in Bombay from the Fifties right up to 1992, when the Consulate converted itself into an embassy and re-located itself in Delhi in tandem with our establishing an embassy in Tel Aviv.

The reason for India not following the decision of recognition of the Israeli state with the establishment of diplomatic relations was the aggressive policies of the Western powers vis-a-vis Egypt, in

collaboration with Israel and Israel's acquisitive approach against the Palestinians and their lands. The antagonisms of the Cold War underpinned our policies as West Asia was a significant area of Cold War confrontation till the Seventies.

There was an incremental and qualitative change in the interaction between some important Arab countries and the Palestine Liberation Organisation on the one hand, and Israel on the other, from the early Seventies onwards. Camp David agreements brought a more or less end to military confrontation between Arab countries and Israel. Egypt, Jordan and Morocco were inclined towards a negotiated settlement of the Palestine issue. Other major Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia opposed Egypt pro-forma, but did not translate their opposition into any definite policy decisions.

By 1989-90, the PLO moved towards indirect negotiations with Israel.

Since mid-1991, we received reports from our missions in the US and Scandinavian countries that confidential contacts between the Government of Israel and the PLO were under way through Sudan and Norway. We also received reports that this exercise had the support of both the US and the Russian Federation. More importantly, our diplomatic missions in the Gulf conveyed the assessment that Israeli-PLO contacts had the endorsement of important Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait.

In the post-Gulf War period, establishing relations and initiating across-the-board bilateral cooperation with Israel was advisable because Israel is strategically located on the northern or north-western flank of a number of Muslim countries which have been involved with extremist Islamic fanaticism in the Central and South Asian region.

Despite our support to the Palestinian cause and opposition to Israel for a period of more than four decades, Israel remained supportive of India on issues related to the latter's territorial integrity (including supporting the Indian stand on Jammu and Kashmir).

Israel was — and is — a potential partner for economic, technological and commercial cooperation. It must also be underlined that the Indian decision to enter into a substantive relationship with Israel in 1992 was not taken as an exercise at asserting unilateral sovereignty.

The Government of India extended a special invitation to Yasser Arafat to come to India for prior consultations on this matter. Arafat had discussions with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in New Delhi in January 1992. India formalised its decision only after informing him of our intentions and getting his endorsement.

Indo-Israeli relations have gained in substance and range over the last eight years. I recall two points made to me by the late Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, when I called on him in Jerusalem in March 1993. He expressed the view that after the first Camp David agreements, there was no need for India to be reticent about having relations with Israel. The second point which he made was that he was sensitive to Indian concerns and interests related to its relations with Arab countries. He added that as far as Israel was concerned, there are no limits to Indo-Israeli cooperation — except the limits of Israel's national interests.

India should determine the extent and levels to which it wishes to cooperate with Israel in any sphere of its choice. Despite changes in governments in Israel, the general orientation of its poli-

cies towards India articulated by Rabin remain in place. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres visited India in May 1993. Israeli President Weizmann visited India in 1997. The Chief Ministers of Indian States have visited Israel which have resulted in agricultural and economic cooperation.

The more recent visits of Mr Advani and Jaswant Singh to Israel formalise another dimension of Indo-Israeli cooperation in the sphere of security, counter-terrorism and politico-strategic affairs. It is to be emphasised that having substantive relations with Israel does not mean any dilution of India's deep interest and commitment to sustaining and expanding its relations with Arab countries. Nor does it mean that there is any dilution of India's support to the aspirations of the Palestinian people. This has been conveyed to the Israeli Government and it has understood this approach.

Jaswant Singh's meeting Arafat while visiting Israel is proof enough of the practical framework within which Indo-Israeli relations are developing. Another proof of the validity of this framework is that over the last eight years there has been no erosion or dilution of India's relations with Muslim countries in general or the countries of the Gulf in particular.

Another marginal point of controversy has been Jaswant Singh's statement in Israel that one of the reasons for India delaying the establishment of diplomatic relations with the country was the consideration of Muslim vote bank in India. A view has been expressed that this was a partisan and communal argument. The other view is that he need not have made a public pronouncement on the subject. The reality is that the average Muslim voter in India is not very aware about Indo-Arab or Indo-Israeli issues. However, there is an element of truth in what Jaswant Singh said. It is the leadership of some of our political parties which is inclined to use such an argument on the Muslim vote bank for their own purposes.

I have heard reports that President K.R. Narayanan may visit Israel later this year or early next year. It will be a major signal that India's foreign policy is no longer subject to burdens of the past or irrelevant inhibitions.



Saying Shalom: Jaswant Singh in Jerusalem

India irked over Iran's pipeline stand

Udayan Nambodiri
New Delhi, July 20

IRAN WANTS to bring Pakistan into the picture on the gas pipeline talks with India, but India is not favourably inclined towards this move. Iran's deputy foreign minister, Mohsin Aminzadeh, said today that Pakistan should be involved at some stage during the negotiations, but an External Affairs Ministry spokesman maintained the talks should remain bilateral.

Mr Aminzadeh revealed today that Pakistani Energy Minister had recently given a "written guarantee" that the Pakistan Government would ensure security to a gas pipeline if one is laid to transport natural gas from Iran to India through its territory.

He maintained that Pakistan should be involved in the discussions as a land pipeline would be a cheaper option to Liquefied Natural

Gas (LNG) option which India says would suit its energy security interests.

The Indian stand is in sharp contrast to this. New Delhi is preparing for the first meeting of the Joint Committee formed early June to examine all aspects of gas transportation with the firm resolve to block Iranian moves to "trilateralise" what it maintains is a bilateral agreement dating back to 1993 on energy co-operation. Secretary (east) in the MEA, K V Rajan, would lead the multi-disciplinary official delegation to the talks scheduled for next month in Teheran.

During his talks here with his Indian counterparts over the past two days, Mr Aminzadeh stressed on the economic benefits that could be accrued from the proposed pipeline. "We have passed on to India and Pakistan the finding of a pre-feasibility study by the Australian firm, BHP, which was ordered by us and provide enough

evidence of gains for all three countries. BHP has subsequently shown interest in investing in the project," he said.

However, the Iranian delegation glossed over India's threat perception on Pakistan's involvement in the project, saying Pakistan could be bound up into honouring its commitment by multi-lateral guarantees and various other legal clauses. "The option of transporting CNG converted into LNG is much costlier and the revenues would not be attractive," Mr Aminzadeh commented.

India, however, maintains that the LNG option would cost only about 30 per cent extra besides a one-time investment of around \$1 billion towards conversion and reconversion installations. "Though a little more costly, there is no threat to this supply being interrupted by an unfriendly party at any time in the future," an official said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JUL 2000

Indo-Iran gas pipeline to be a reality soon

Indrani Bagchi
NEW DELHI 20 JULY

THE IRAN-India gas pipeline moved a shade closer to reality as Iran shared with India the substance of Pakistani security guarantees of a pipeline through its territory. The visiting deputy foreign minister of Iran, Mr Mohsin Aminzadeh, said: "After several declarations, Islamabad has given us a written guarantee to provide security to the proposed pipeline through a letter by the Pakistani energy minister."

Mr Aminzadeh was also encouraged by what he felt was "a positive attitude" by Indian negotiators. There is substantial opposition to the idea in India, which has raised fears of Pakistani fundamentalists disrupting supplies questioning Pakistan's credibility regarding international obligations and objecting to, what some people feel is, India's strategic dependence on Pakistan.

Others object to opening up avenues of dialogue with Pakistan now, when India is on a "benign neglect" drive.

The next stage of the discussions will be in Teheran next month when the secretary (east),

Mr K.V. Rajan, of MEA leads a team of experts for the first joint working group meeting.

Iran, Mr Aminzadeh said, is sensitive to India's concerns. Therefore, the discussions on the pipeline will be "bilateral" for the first phase, and Pakistan could be involved only in the second phase of discussions. In Teheran in May Mr Jaswant Singh had said that the agreement was bilateral, not trilateral.

The substance of the discussions now centre on the security of

PIPE DREAMS

the pipeline, which is the single biggest hurdle to an overland pipeline between Iran and India. The MEA spokesman on Thursday said: "There is a complementary deal between India and Iran on the issue of energy security."

Pakistan could be tied to iron-clad international and multilateral guarantees to ensure the safety of the pipeline. This, Mr Aminzadeh believes, can be in the form of a contract between the three countries or Pakistani guarantees to international energy companies participating in the project in

accordance with international law and insurance terms.

While it might seem that India is being obstructionist regarding security of the pipeline, Iran is equally concerned since, as a supplier, once the pipeline becomes operational, any disruption will become the responsibility of Iran.

Mr Aminzadeh said: "we hope to get this sorted out in the next round of discussions." The political and security aspects of the project is very important, and Iran, he said, was talking to both India and Pakistan bilaterally. Ram Naik recently said: "The supplier (Iran) has to ensure that he is in a position to supply to India without difficulties and Iran will let us know about the security issues soon," he said.

Iran is keen on the overland option, which makes sense viewed in purely dispassionate economic terms. Mr Aminzadeh said the substantial economic benefits for all three countries made it impossible to "ignore" the project. Feasibility studies should determine the economic logic of the pipeline, he added. Pakistan stands to gain about \$600-\$700 in transit fees.

India may enter Islamic forum

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 20 JULY

IRAN MAY support India's observer status in the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), the Iranian deputy foreign minister Mohsin Aminzadeh said on Thursday.

Exhibiting a significant shift in Iranian foreign policy, Mr Aminzadeh said: "India should get observer status in the OIC." Adding that the decisions in the OIC are generally made by consensus, Mr Aminzadeh hoped "other members would have no objections to it."

India has not formally asked for such a status, but there has been several informal efforts to get India into this organisation. Mr Aminzadeh said, India's candidature was a testimony to the large number of Muslims in this country.

Former foreign secretary J.N. Dixit said, the shift in Iran's policy was "a positive development for India."

The Economic Times

21 JUL 2000

Indian soldiers now maintain peace in Lebanon

JERUSALEM: After showing valour in Sierra Leone, a group of 50 Indian peacekeepers early on Sunday took up positions along the Lebanese-Israeli border in a zone formerly occupied by Israel.

On the Al-Labbouneh hill close to Nagourra on the Lebanese border with Israel, the Indian peacekeepers hoisted the U.N. flag and set up four tents after the Lebanese government gave green signal for deploying more of the international force.

The Indian soldiers, who form part of peacekeepers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), erected road blockades to keep a cattleherder and his flock from following them.

"This is an historic moment for UNIFIL,

which after 22 years in the field in south Lebanon is now finally beginning to fulfil its original mandate," the force's spokesman Daljeet Bagga was quoted as saying.

A unit of about 50 other Irish peacekeepers in five white armoured vehicles, accompanied by a bulldozer, moved to an area on the border just across from the Israeli town of Metulla.

As they deployed, two U.N. soldiers stopped by for coffee at a nearby position of Hezbollah, the guerrillas who fought the Israelis in southern Lebanon for 22 years and have taken effective control of the border area after the Israeli withdrawal.

Guerrilla leaders have pledged to cooperate with the Lebanese government and UNIFIL.

About 5,000 UNIFIL peacekeepers are sta-

tioned in areas further north from the border in southern Lebanon since a 1978 Israeli invasion. They have been waiting to move to the border region in line with U.N. resolutions after Israeli troops ended their occupation of a buffer zone in southern Lebanon in May.

Lebanon has been refusing to consent to the U.N. to deploy to the border, maintaining that Israel first must end violations of Lebanese territory.

On Saturday, a U.N. statement said president Emile Lahoud authorised deployment of the U.N. force to four locations along the border. On Friday, Irish and Ghanaian peacekeepers took over two border hills at Manara and Yaroun that have been the site of recent Israeli violations of Lebanese territory. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

31 JUL 2001

	ON THE MEND	
1948	25/6 11	India, as a friend of the Arabs, opposes the creation of Israel
1950		India allows the opening of the only Israeli consulate in Bombay
1982		Israeli Consul in Bombay expelled for a newspaper interview
1988		Rajiv Gandhi meets a powerful Jewish lobbyist in the United States
1991		Refuelling of American planes in India during the US war on Iraq signals change in India's position on west Asia
1992		India establishes diplomatic ties with Israel
1993		Foreign minister Shimon Peres visits India
1999		Tel Aviv offers New Delhi equipment for Mirage fighter aircraft during the Kargil War; around 150 joint ventures signed to help Rajasthan develop arid zone agriculture; some 25,000 Israeli tourists visit India and around 15,000 Indians go to Israel, over four times the number less than five years ago
June 2000		Home minister L.K. Advani visits Israel, to be followed by foreign minister Jaswant Singh and West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu

India's battle against terrorism gets foreign help

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 27

HOME MINISTER L K Advani said that joint working groups are being set up with other nations particularly those facing terrorism to wage a coordinated fight against militancy. Briefing reporters about his tour to Israel, France and the United Kingdom, he announced that an Indo-Israel working group is likely to be set up soon.

Describing his visit to Israel as a "step forward", he said the two countries are poised to step into an era of greater technological, technical and intelligence co-operation.

Discounting theories that his Israel visit indicated a shift in India's policy towards the Arab world, Mr Advani said that the Vajpayee Government was only pursuing the policy of its predecessors as far as Israel was concerned. "My visit to Israel at best can be described as a progressive step. The previous governments had initiated the move to improve relations with that country and we are only carrying forward that policy."

He described cross-border terrorism as a curse to humanity because it has caused more damage than conventional wars.

His three-nation tour was an

endeavour to build international opinion against State-sponsored terrorism. The Governments of Israel, United Kingdom and France shared India's concern on international terrorism and have agreed for greater coordination in the area.

Mr Advani said he was able assess first hand Israel's border management techniques. The integrated border management system followed by the Israelis has an in-built advance warning system, which enables defence forces to prepare well in time for the impending threat.

Mr Advani criticised Pakistan for misconstruing India's genuine concern for its security as an attempt to emerge as a regional power. Being victims of cross-border terrorism, both India and Israel have agreed for greater cooperation to face fresh challenges in this field.

The Indian delegation felt that the international community should take seriously any country, which promotes, abets or supports cross-border terrorism.

Responding to another query regarding purchase of modern equipment and arms from Israel to fight terrorism, the Home Minister said that his prime task was to work towards forging greater understanding between India and Israel on security related issues.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 JUN 2000

Bilateral trade to be focus of Israel trip

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, June 27

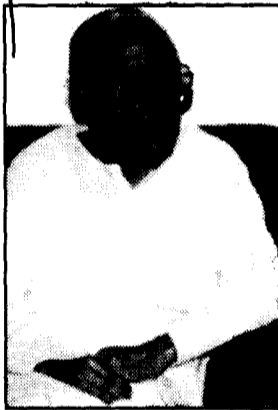
WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, who is leaving on a three-week overseas tour from June 29, will lead an eight-member business and industry delegation to Israel to explore opportunities for technological assistance and financial investments.

Basu is being accompanied by top government officials, including the Industry Department Secretary Jawhar Sircar, WBIDC Chairman Somnath Chatterjee, CII President (Eastern region) Sumit Mazumdar, ICC President K K Bangur, Honorary Consul of Israel in Calcutta Harsh Neotia and industrialists S K Bajoria and S K Todi.

Other members of his team include Haldia Petrochem Vice-

President (Marketing) Shankar Banerjee, WEBEL chief S K Mitra, Jems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council chief (eastern region) Pankaj Parikh. The Haldia Petrochem vice-president was included with the objective of seeking Israeli investments in HPCL downstream projects, said an official source.

The visit, which is being jointly organised by the Israeli Chamber of Commerce and WBIDC, will also provide Basu with the opportunity to seek Israeli assis-



tance in such spheres as biotechnology, information technology,

food processing, horticulture, dairy and agro-based industries.

Expansion of bilateral trade between West Bengal and Israel will be a major thrust area. Trade has been virtually non-existent though Indo-Israel trade has already touched nearly \$ 1 billion as against \$ 202 million in 1992.

Trade and business circles in the State lamented that while India's exports rose sharply from \$ 75 million in 1992 to \$ 455 last year,

West Bengal's share in it was abysmally low.

The State has fared poorly despite having a competitive edge in respect of export earnings from leather goods and jems and jewellery items. It accounts for over 20 per cent of India's forex earnings from these items, asserted an industrialist.

Basu will, on the conclusion of his visit to Israel, leave for London on July 5. He will speak at a few seminars and public meetings there. Apart from attending an important meeting of Indo-British Partnership, he will deliver a keynote address at a seminar on globalisation at the London School of Economics.

Basu will also be present at the wedding of his eldest granddaughter, Payel, on July 8, which incidentally is also his 87th birthday.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 JUN 2000

U.S. to supervise Indo-Israel radar deal

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) JUNE 28. The rumpus between Israel and the United States over the sale of an airborne radar warning and command system (AWACS) to China is likely to have repercussions for agreements between Israel and India for military supplies. India is reportedly among the 27 countries whose arms purchases and contracts the U.S. wants to be briefed about. Specifically, the Israeli "Oren Yarok" AWACS system the Government of India is evaluating could be subject to the new U.S. supervisory mechanisms.

According to a report in *Haa-retz* the U.S. has demanded and obtained Israel's agreement to consult with officials in Washington before supplying the whole radar system to India. The Israeli AWACS system is, according to sources in New Delhi, currently being favoured over the Russian system which was being looked into earlier. Trials of the Israeli phased array radar system have reportedly been conducted. The radar system, according to *Haa-retz*, uses technology identical to that of the Phalcon system that Israel is under contract to supply to China and mounted on a Russian-built IL-76 platform.

Israel had informed the Pentagon about its China contract four years ago but it has come under scrutiny in the recent months. The House of Representative passed a resolution expressing its disapproval of the contract. This was a milder punishment than what the head of the relevant appropriations committee had apparently wanted to impose. At one point this Congressman had threatened to cut off interest benefits from the annual military aid package the U.S. gives to Israel. This aid cut would have been roughly equivalent to the value of the China AWACS deal. But the pressure continues and the Israeli Government is said to be contemplating only two options: either cancel the contract or supply just the one unit and no more though the contract does envisage further purchases.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, is reportedly biding time hoping that a change in circumstances will make the U.S. look more favourably on the China contract. He can either wait till the U.S. presidential elections are over and staunch opponents of the China deal, the Defence Secretary, Mr. William Cohen, for instance, leave office. Mr. Ba-

rak can also hope that a possible breakthrough in the negotiations with the Palestinians will leave the U.S. administration so happy that they will overlook this controversy. In either case the resurrection of the China contract might have nothing to do with the supervisory mechanism for the India-related deals that Israel has also agreed to.

As it is the U.S. administration supervises arms supplies from Israel to India to ensure that such supplies do not entail transfer of technologies of U.S. origin or those jointly developed by them and Israel. The additional supervisory mechanism will now cover the sale of technologies indigenously developed by Israel as well. This represents a climb-down in the Israeli position. Their earlier stand was that they would not transfer any technology which the U.S. had a hand in developing but at the same time had insisted on the right to transfer indigenously developed technology without external intervention. However, the current climb-down might not be the end of the matter.

Israel believes that the United States' declared justification for its opposition to the China contract is an eye-wash. The U.S. argument is that the supply to China could jeopardise its ally Taiwan, and even possibly U.S. troops and fleets. The Israelis apparently believe that the real reasons are not strategic but commercial. U.S. defence contractors are prevented from selling arms to most of the 27 countries on the "problem state" list. These countries are also among the most avid purchasers of arms in the world. Israeli arms though expensive are competitive compared to U.S. weaponry and technologically near equal. The real point, the Israelis feel, is about protecting market share than anything else.

Besides depicting the U.S. pressure as stemming from commercial rather than strategic considerations the Israelis can also appeal to their supporters in the U.S. through another argument. The supplies of arms to India or China provide the funds without which indigenous weapons production in Israel would be impossible. This argument, that Israel needs to develop its own cutting edge in weapons technology despite the U.S. aid package, is one that has had resonance amongst Israel's American supporters over the years.

THE HINDU

29 JUN 2000

Jaswant's Israel visit is aimed at giving ties a major boost

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The Vajpayee government's love affair with Israel is growing, and how! Within a space of ten days, two of the most powerful ministers in the cabinet are visiting Israel.



Jaswant Singh External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's trip, the first by an Indian foreign minister, is being billed as an important milestone signifying a change in the political equation between the two countries. Mr Singh was scheduled to be in Israel in January, but the trip was postponed because U.S. President Bill Clinton had asked both Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and former Syrian president Hafez Assad to come to Washington in a bid to resolve their differences.

Home minister L.K. Advani, who was in Israel a week back, claimed that there was a "forward movement" in the ties between the two countries. Mr Singh will begin his visit to the region on Friday. He will first call on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in the Gaza Strip. Mr Singh will spend the night there and visit the Nehru library and the Gandhi Centre, two projects in Gaza funded by India. Also in the itinerary are visits to the Dome of the Rock, the third holiest shrine in Islam, and a hospice in East Jerusalem, run by a Indian family from Saharanpur.

Although Mr Singh will be in Israel on Saturday, no official talks are on cards as Sabbath is strictly

observed. Mr Singh is scheduled to meet all the top leaders in Israel, including the president, prime minister, former PM Shimon Peres and Ariel Sharon and foreign minister David Levy.

Indian officials say the visit will give a fillip to the existing friendly ties between the two countries. "We value our relations with Israel and we want it to expand in all spheres," an Indian official said. To a question on whether the Arab future would be perturbed by the growing closeness between India and Israel, the official said, "India's relations with Israel is independent of its ties with other countries in the region." Considering Israel's excellent equations with Jordan, Egypt, Turkey and a number of other Islamic countries, the old fears of displeasing Muslim countries are no longer valid. The foreign minister's talks with his Israeli counterpart will be a political dialogue, with each side giving its views on the developments in their region — Israel on the West Asia peace process and India on the situation in the region and the uneasy relations with Pakistan. According to officials, there will be no discussion on the nuclear issue with Israel.

Though officials insist that India can be friends with Israel as well as with other Muslim countries, New Delhi has taken care to do a fine balancing act. An official pointed out that even as Mr Singh is visiting Israel, his junior Ajit Panja will be travelling to Kuwait and Muscat soon. Omar Abdullah, minister of state for commerce and industry, was in Algiers recently.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

JUN 2 2000

Advani Israel trip for tips on terror fight

FROM CHANDAN NANDY

On board the home minister's aircraft, May 31: At the receiving end of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, India and Israel have decided to exchange extensive notes on strengthening internal security.

During his visit to Israel next month, home minister L.K. Advani and the officials accompanying him will hold talks on cooperating with the West Asian country's internal intelligence agency, Shin Bet, and its external secret service, the Institute of Special Operations and Intelligence — popularly called Mossad.

Later, when he goes to London, the home minister will hold similar discussions with British home secretary Jack Straw on receiving assistance from the country's security services — MI-5 and MI-6 and Metropolitan Police and Scotland Yard. Advani will also visit France during his 11-day foreign tour.

Advani will be the first Indian home minister to visit Israel. He will spend five days in the West Asian country, which, in his words, has "developed expertise in the field of counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence".

The minister will be accompanied to all three countries by home secretary Kamal Pande, Intelligence Bureau director Shyamal Dutta and CBI chief R.K. Raghavan.

The home minister was speaking to reporters on his special aircraft while returning from Goa, where he inaugurated the Padre Conceicao College of Engineering at Agnel Ashram in Verna village.

Though India will take tips on "some of the finer aspects of intelligence gathering from the Israelis", the thrust of his visit would be on seeking cooperation from the Ehud Barak government

on fighting Islamic terrorism in the sub-continent. In return, India will share information with Tel Aviv on Islamic terrorists and organisations.

"It may be a small country encircled by Islamic terrorism and it has and continues to fight the menace throughout the world," Advani said.

The formal signing of treaties of mutual assistance will take place later, during foreign minister Jaswant Singh's proposed visit in June or early July.

Advani, who has years of association with Jewish communities throughout the world, had been to Israel in 1994 when he was leader of Opposition. At that time he had rekindled friendship with two classmates who studied with him in St Patrick's School, Karachi, in undivided India. "Time permitting, I may look them up," he said.

At Lyons in France, the home minister will meet senior Interpol officers and impress upon them that Delhi could do with tips from the organisation on international crimes and criminal syndicates. He will also thrash out details on how Interpol could expedite the process of executing red corner notices. With the government proposing to categorise certain crimes as "federal", Advani will expect to pick up tips from Interpol on how such crimes could be tackled.

The last leg of the home minister's visit will be London where he will arrive by the Eurostar from Paris. Apart from his discussions with Straw, Advani will meet the chief of the Special Airborne Services (SAS), the elite anti-terrorist force engaged in Northern Ireland. India has its own National Security Guard (NSG), but Advani is a proponent of a specialised anti-terrorist force which can function exclusively in areas like Jammu and Kashmir.

THE TELEGRAPH

1 JUN 2000

Advani's crucial shopping in Israel

By Vinay Kumar

HD-13
NEW DELHI, JUNE 11 Mr. L. K. Advani leaves here on Tuesday on a three-nation tour, his first after taking over as the Union Home Minister. The 12-day trip will take him to Israel, France and Britain.

The latest techniques of border management, sophisticated gadgets for electronic surveillance, working of intelligence agencies will be the focus of Mr. Advani's visit to Israel, being dubbed by officials here the most crucial.

Procurement of surveillance equipment, small arms and protective gear for security personnel involved in counter-terrorist operations is likely to top his agenda during his four-day sojourn there.

Apart from the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, the Minister's team consists of top police and intelligence officials. The Director-General of the Border Security Force (BSF), Mr. E.N. Rammohan, the CBI Director, Mr. R.K. Raghavan, the Intelligence Bureau Director, Mr. Shyamal Dutta, and the Joint Secretary (Security) in the Home Ministry, Mr. Vinay Kumar, will be the other members.

The delegation is expected to interact with Israeli intelligence agencies, Mossad and Shabak, and learn from their experience in dealing with the counter-terrorism measures.

Israel's experience in manning its turbulent border with Lebanon, likely to be thoroughly studied by the team, could come in handy in patrolling India's infiltration-prone border in

Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan as well as in the Northeastern region which has a long running border with Bangladesh.

The Israeli expertise could also be put to use in internal security, personal protection and acquisition of gadgets to step up surveillance and making anti-terrorism warfare more effective, sources said.

During a recent meeting on left-wing extremism, the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu, floated the idea of deployment of the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in naxalite-infested districts for surveillance. The UAVs, in the use of which the Israel Aircraft Industries Limited, claims a 25-year expertise, would also help in detection of infiltrators along the J&K border.

Of particular interest to the Indian delegation will be Israeli experience in the southern Lebanon 'security zone' from where it withdrew its troops after nearly 18 years. With the pullout, the task of sealing the border and mounting a near-foolproof surveillance against attacks by Lebanese militia will be performed by high-tech gadgets and defence systems including new lasers, eagle-eyed snipers, rockets, giant shields and observation blimps.

The design and manufacture of the UAV systems is entrusted to the MALAT division of the Israel Aircraft Industries Limited. Talks will also be held with the Integrated Security Systems Group which specialises in making fighting gear for security personnel. The Indian team will have discussions on Israeli expertise in low-intensity conflict, urban warfare

and hostage release, areas in which National Security Guard (NSG) commandos in India have also put their skills to good use.

Mossad and Shabak experts are likely to apprise the Indian team of their expertise in agents recruitment, operation, tailing, eavesdropping and information processing. The Home Ministry has recently set up a Central Intelligence Processing Unit (CIPU), headed by a director-level officer, to process the intelligence inputs being sourced from various agencies as well as keep itself abreast of the latest on the intelligence information front globally, particularly in the cyber-age.

In Lyon, France, Mr. Advani will visit the headquarters of Interpol, which is represented in India by the Central Bureau of Investigation. The international police organisation plays an important role in putting out alert and lookout notices for fugitives and international criminals. The organisation also has a massive data bank on international drug syndicates, terrorists and their sympathisers.

In Britain, Mr. Advani and his team will see the functioning of Scotland Yard and also acquaint themselves with the working of intelligence agencies. British cooperation with India in extradition of wanted criminals and a recent ruling by a British court, which overturned Pakistani description of a Kashmiri terrorist as a "freedom fighter", have been of greater interest to the Minister. Bilateral cooperation in extradition and criminal matters is likely to deepen after the delegation's visit to Britain.

THE HINDU

12 JUN 2000

Pak, Iran sign oil pipe deal for supply to India

BY MRIDULA KRISHNA

Dubai, June 11: Pakistan and Iran have signed a long-awaited deal on a pipeline that will pass through Pakistani territory, carrying Iranian gas to India, Pakistan's Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf has been quoted as saying.

A report by the Iranian news agency Irna cited Gen. Musharraf as saying the deal had been signed recently. Gen. Musharraf was in Teheran on a two-day visit to attend the summit meeting of the 10-member Economic Cooperation Organisation.

Earlier, reports had speculated that Iran and Pakistan are likely to reach an agreement on the proposed 1,500-km-long Iran-India gas pipeline project during Gen. Musharraf's visit to Iran. Pakistan would receive \$600-700 million annually for providing transit service for the pipeline.

Iran had reportedly offered to increase the transit fee if a clear-cut guarantee was offered by the Pakistani government for the safety and security of the gas pipeline.

The massive pipeline project was conceived in the early 1990s when Iran found large quantities of oil and gas and Teheran decided on exporting to Pakistan and India.

But the project has been hanging

fire due to security concerns expressed by Pakistan to allow its territory for supply of natural gas to India.

It is believed here that the construction of this pipeline will allow Pakistan to get most of the Iranian gas to meet its own needs and leave the remaining part for India.

In Tehran, Musharraf told the ECO summit that Islamabad wants to see strong cooperation among ECO member countries in the energy sector.

He called for the establishment of an ECO Development and Reinsurance Bank. Such a measure would help commercial development of member-countries, he added.

Gen. Musharraf also thanked host Iran for its efforts to restore peace in Afghanistan.

"My government supports measures aimed at preventing foreign interference in Afghanistan," he added.

"Our collective views are based on development of the region, therefore, we should make use of time and face the challenges we are confronting," said Gen. Musharraf.

The Pakistani Chief Executive met Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on Friday.

(India Abroad News Service)

THE ASIAN AGE

JUN 2000

Israel launches countrywide hunt for childhood friend

Search for Advani's Solomon

40-1 r/b

FROM K.P. NAYAR

Washington, June 11: Beneath the intense national security talks which will mark L.K. Advani's four-day visit to Israel this week, the home minister's first overseas trip after taking office will offer a rare testament to secularism in sharp contrast to the public image of the man popularly associated with the hardline school of thought in the BJP.

In preparation for Advani's visit, the Israelis are scouring the length and breadth of their country for a Jewish immigrant to Israel from Pakistan who studied with the home minister in school in pre-Partition Karachi.

Rubin Solomon was Advani's classmate and his best friend in Karachi's St Patrick's Convent, but fate took them in different directions of the globe after the traumatic events of the sub-continent's Partition.

Advani left Karachi for India with his family while Solomon and his parents emigrated to Israel, obviously unable to live in the new Islamic state. The two boys lost contact and all that the home minister now knows about his one-time classmate is that he migrated to Israel some time after Partition.

The Israelis want to arrange a reunion betw

vani during the latter's trip to Israel as a special gift to their honoured guest. If it takes place, the reunion of a Hindu and a Jew who together studied in the Muslim city of Karachi will be a rare tribute to the secular traditions of the sub-continent.

But officials in Jerusalem said that so far they have been unable to trace Solomon despite the fact that personal details are extensively recorded and documented in Israel.

Officials said that if they are unable to find Solomon, there could only be two reasons. One, he adopted a totally new Hebrew name according to religious traditions after moving to Israel and is no longer known in official records as Solomon. Two, he could have migrated elsewhere from Israel: many Israelis, for instance, go to the US, especially in old age, to be with their children who may have gone there.

During Advani's last visit to Israel in 1995 — when he was BJP president — he told one of the officials escorting him about his long-lost classmate from Karachi. The Israelis made a hurried attempt to locate Solomon then, but time was short and the effort was unsuccessful. That effort resulted in locating another immigrant from Karachi, who also studied with Advani in St Patrick's Convent.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

Advani

► FROM PAGE 1

However, there was no time for the two old boys to meet and Advani talked to this friend on the phone while he was in Israel.

Yehoaida Haim, now ambassador to India, was then deputy head of Israel's Centre for Political Research when plans were being made for Advani's trip. Haim remembered the home minister's desire that time to meet Solomon. And he set Israeli officials to work on locating the long-lost friend.

It is not only the human touch, not popularly associated with the stern image of Advani, which makes his visit to Israel unusual. The Israelis are delighted that the first overseas visit being made by the strongman and pre-eminent strategist in the BJP-led government, is to their country.

What is more unusual is that in 1995 also, the trip to Israel was Advani's first foreign visit in four years. "We are glad that after four years of not going overseas, Advani travelled to Israel before any other place. He is doing it again after three continuous years of stay in India," said an official in Jerusalem.

In Tel Aviv, the Israelis are arranging an itinerary for Advani similar to that of a head of state or government. He will meet Israel's President. A meeting with the Prime Minister, who is also defence minister, although not fixed yet, will take place during the visit. Advani will have a string of other key meetings.

Part of the reason why the Israelis are investing so much in Advani's trip is the goodwill that his visit generated in 1995. After the formation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, this goodwill translated into security and defence cooperation between India and Israel.

The result of such cooperation was particularly evident during the Kargil conflict. The Israelis hope to build on it next week and later during external affairs minister Jaswant Singh's trip to Tel Aviv in July.

Notwithstanding the friendship and cooperation between the two countries, the difficulties of access and problems posed by geography in dealing with Israel are underlined by the home minister's itinerary.

THE HINDU

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Advani seeks Israel help on terrorism

Harsh Dobhal

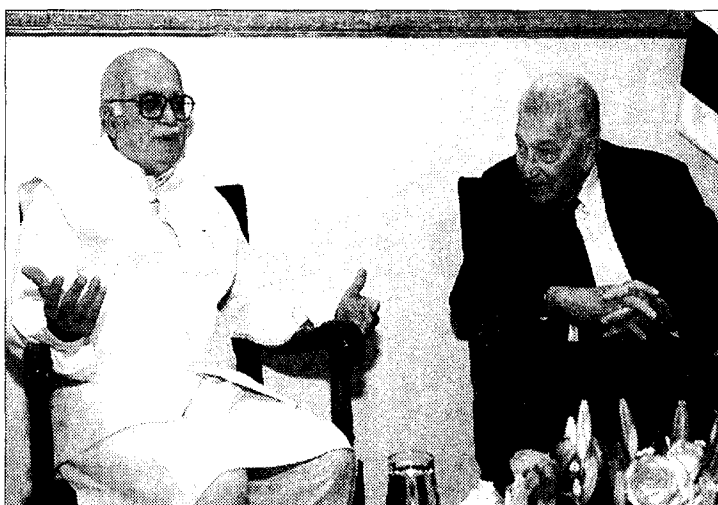
TEL AVIV 14 JUNE

FACED WITH the challenging task of countering terrorism, home minister L.K. Advani on Wednesday met Israeli President Ezer Weizman and discussed with senior police personnel the various techniques employed by them to tackle a similar menace in their country.

During his meeting with Mr Weizman, who visited India a few years back and had earlier spent a number of years in Bangalore as an Air Force pilot, the two leaders discussed a number of issues of bilateral importance.

Mr Advani later said Mr Weizman was among those Israeli leaders who had played a key role in improving Indo-Israel relations.

The home minister said India had been facing various problems of internal security and terrorism for the last 15



MEETING OF MINDS: Home minister L.K. Advani with Israeli president Ezer Weizman in Jerusalem on Wednesday

AP

years and "in this context, during my meeting with Israeli police chief Yehuda Wilk and other officials, we discussed a number of counter-terrorism techniques, particularly bomb detection devices in which

Israel has gained remarkable expertise."

Mr Advani, who is on his maiden foreign trip after assuming office, is the first senior Indian minister to visit Israel since the establishment of diplomatic ties

between the two countries in 1992 and a great political significance is being attached to his trip here.

Mr Advani, who arrived here late on Tuesday night on the first leg of his three-nation tour that would also take him to France and the United Kingdom, paid a visit to Yad Vashem, the holocaust memorial to commemorate the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi regime.

"When human beings become bereft of humanity, they become more beastly than beasts," he wrote in the visitors book after laying a wreath and paying solemn tributes to millions of Jews who perished at the hands of Nazi Germany during World War II.

Mr Advani was particularly moved after visiting the portion of the memorial which recreates images of horror of one and half million Jewish children.

Mr Advani is scheduled to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and former premier Shimon Peres, — PTI

The Economic Times

15 JUN 2000

15 JUN 2000

Advani meets Israeli President

TEL AVIV, JUNE 14. Faced with the challenging task of countering terrorism, the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, today met the Israeli President, Mr. Ezer Weizman, and discussed with the top Israeli police brass, various techniques employed by them to curb terrorism.

40-13 15/6
During his meeting with Mr. Weizman, who visited India a few years back and had earlier spent a number of years in Bangalore as an Air Force pilot, he discussed issues of bilateral importance. He later said Mr. Weizman was among those leaders who had played a key role in improving Indo-Israel relations.

The Home Minister said India had been facing various problems of internal security and terrorism for the last 15 years and "in this context during my meeting with Israeli police chief, Mr. Yehuda Wilk, and other officials, we discussed a number of counter-terrorism techniques, particularly bomb-detection devices, in which Israel has gained remarkable expertise."

Mr. Advani, who is on his maiden foreign tour after assuming office, is the first senior Indian Minis-

ter to visit Israel since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1992. Great political significance is being attached to his trip here.

Mr. Advani will also meet the Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, former Premier, Mr. Shimon Peres, the Interior Minister, Mr. Natan Sharansky and top police and security officials, during the course of his five-day tour.

The Home Minister will also pay a visit to Palestinian areas and hold discussions with the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. His Israel visit will be followed by a trip to the United Kingdom and France to study security systems there.

Mr. L. K. Advani today met the top brass of Israeli Intelligence Agency, Mossad and the Internal Security Agency, Shinbet and discussed issues relating to counter-terrorism, border management and intelligence-gathering systems.

Advani was accompanied by a high-level team of his Ministry.— PTI

THE HINDU

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Israeli connection

There's no better place to learn anti-terrorist tactics

LAL KRISHNA ADVANI is one of several Union ministers taking advantage of the summer recess in Parliament to attend to business abroad. It is a pity there has been no proper official briefing about the objectives of the Home Minister's trip to Israel (and later to France and the United Kingdom) which appear to be as weighty as they are mysterious. Unlike ministerial visits which fall into the goodwill, exchange-of-views category (Finance Minister Yeshwant Sinha's, Defence Minister George Fernandes' and Law Minister Ram Jethmalani's, for example), there seems to be definite purpose and gravitas in Advani's. On his first trip abroad since he became a Union minister, Advani has taken along a delegation that reads like a who's who of this country's internal security apparatus: the home secretary, Intelligence Bureau chief, director-general of the Border Security Force, chief of the Central Bureau of Investigation and other senior officials. Such an assemblage has rarely been seen outside the crisis rooms of the Union Home Ministry.

Speculation is rife about the purpose of this extraordinarily heavyweight team. For one, it is highly unlikely the top brass would go on a mere exploratory trip. A shopping expedition after prior research sounds more probable. In Israel the team is said to be interested in software and hardware, and to be looking at the techniques and technology used by Mossad and Shinbet, organisations responsible for external and internal intelligence operations, respectively. Particular emphasis is being placed, apparently, on the following: bomb detection devices

and methods, training and equipment for commando units in counter-insurgency (CI) operations and the latest array of listening devices. It is believed the delegation is keen to look at ways of improving the interface between regular police and special CI units. In the absence of official confirmation, one guess about the delegation's agenda is as good as another. But one thing is clear: the Union government is giving internal security topmost priority and so it should. Open societies like India's are specially vulnerable to violence unleashed by well-trained and well-equipped terrorist groups. The message that India will not tolerate an escalation of violence should be heard in every training camp and safe-house for terrorists and militants all along the arc from Afghanistan to Myanmar.

Israel is a logical choice for anyone wishing to learn more about how to combat terrorist violence. Not only does it have valuable experience to share, its private and public sector produce sophisticated electronics and other high-tech goods. Closer cooperation between India and Israel in internal security matters would be an extension of the now well developed relationship in the area of defence supplies. A certain amount of secrecy surrounding these matters and defence and internal security preparedness generally is understandable. Nonetheless, there is no harm in informing the people about what is going on. Apart from the principle of it, it is necessary after recent setbacks to rebuild public confidence about the capabilities of the intelligence and other internal security agencies.

INDIAN EXPRESS

17 JUN 2000

arms-buying spree during Israel trip

or 16 Hunter and Seeker Remotely Piloted Vehicles for over \$32 million and 208 hand-held thermal imaging systems for the infantry and 56 T1 systems for the artillery worth Rs 80 crores, the contract for which was signed last year.

Unfortunately, the Army and defence ministry miscalculated badly as the RPVs had a ceiling of 11,000 feet, rendering them useless during last summer's Kargil conflict. The Israelis, however, were overjoyed as India is now closing negotiations for a fresh set of hugely expensive RPVs capable of operating above 15,000 feet from where they can direct artillery fire and relay the enemy's ground position back to its control station

through a sophisticated set of sensors. In March, the defence ministry signed a contract with Israeli artillery maker Soltam to upgrade 180 130mm M46 field guns to 155mm/39 and 155mm/45 calibre for around Rs 105 million (\$250,000) each.

Under the contract, which took nearly seven years of paper evaluations, trials and extended negotiations, the 180 field guns would be upgraded in Israel.

In the follow-on contract, still to be signed, Soltam will provide kits to Ordnance Factory Board factories at Kanpur and Jabalpur to further retrofit 220 to 250 guns to equip around 25 artillery regiments for deployment in static formations to provide covering fire to advance-

ing infantry and armoured columns. Israel also supplied around 40,000 rounds of 155mm howitzer ammunition for around \$1.200 apiece and 30,000 rounds of 160 mm mortars for around Rs 17,000 each at the height of the Kargil conflict.

Israel has also supplied the Navy three Super Dvora Mk II fast attack craft for around \$4.30 million and several of its electronic firms were involved in revamping the electronic control systems aboard INS Viraat, India's sole aircraft carrier, nearly three years ago.

The Navy wants one more Super Dvora boat besides negotiating the purchase of Barak missile to arm the three locally-buit Brahmaputra class frigates, the first of which

was commissioned two months ago.

The Barak quick reaction surface-to-air missile, with a range of eight to 10 km, will be deployed aboard the frigates in place of the locally-developed Trishul, which is still undergoing tests and faces technical problems.

For the Indian Air Force, Israeli firms are working on upgrading the MiG-21 Bis fighters in Russia. Two MiG-21 aircraft are at present undergoing test flights after being retrofitted by MiG-Mapo in collaboration with French and Israeli companies.

Upgrade kits for the remaining 120-odd fighters have already started arriving at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited in Kanpur. Of

Israeli projects in the pipeline, many of which are at an advanced stage of negotiation, include VHF radios for Russian T-72 tanks produced by Tadiran, fire control systems to upgrade T-72 tanks and hi-tech fencing for sensitive cantonments in Kashmir for Rs 15 lakhs per km.

Other Israeli defence deals under serious consideration include upgrading Jaguar fighters and possible involvement with electronic systems above Admiral Gorshkov, the 44,500-tonne Russian aircraft carrier the Navy is planning on buying for the cost of its refit.

Initially, the fear of alienating Arab states, which provide the bulk of India's oil imports, was

into any defence deals with Tel Aviv after diplomatic ties were resumed in early 1992. But the spate of peace initiatives and the climate of negotiation in West Asia changed New Delhi's perceptions, giving India the confidence to buy defence equipment from Israel without risking adverse reaction from its Arab allies. Israeli defence companies, aided by officials of Sibat, the Foreign Defence Assistance and Defence Export Organisation, have appointed scores of agents in India to sell their wares to the government.

Almost all negotiations with Israeli defence manufacturers at some point involve undercover Sibat officials posted at the Israeli

Advani not buying arms on Israel trip Tel Aviv already big supplier

BY RAHUL BEDI

AA 17/6

New Delhi, June 16: Contrary to media reports, Union home minister L.K. Advani will not be returning from Israel with his bags crammed full of military contracts signed with Tel Aviv.

He does not need to; Israel's military industry is already a well-established supplier of equipment to India's three services and its influence is proliferating.

Official sources said Mr Advani's visit to Israel — his first-ever trip overseas as home minister — is merely an "affirmation" of well entrenched bilateral defence and security relations between New Delhi and Tel Aviv.

Over the past four years Israel has managed to successfully worm its way into India's defence establishment, not only to sell new equipment, but also to retrofit obsolete hardware. "The Israelis offer a range of battle-tested and upgraded equipment which India requires," officials said. They said most of Israel's equipment was indigenously retrofitted, facilitating transfer with no end-user problems of being subjected to any international arms control regime. Israeli sales to the Army since 1996 include two control stations and two troops

Turn to Page 2

THE ASIAN AGE

Advani signs off with Barak one-to-one

9-10 AM 147

ERIC SILVER
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JERUSALEM, June 16. — Mr LK Advani ended a two-day visit to Israel this afternoon with a 40-minute-long private meeting with Mr Ehud Barak.

The senior-most minister to visit Israel since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992, Mr Advani will return home satisfied with the outcome of his visit which focused on countering cross-border terrorism.

After touring the troubled Israel-Lebanon border, the Union home minister said India would now be able to handle its security more effectively. "We discussed infiltration, border management, cross-border terrorism and I

feel happy that the purpose which brought me and my officials here has been served.

At his arrival here, he told Israel Radio that he is for co-operation with Israel in all areas, including nuclear programmes. But if this delicate matter was discussed in any substantial way, no one mentioned it.

The minister feels the visit was most useful and enlightening and that he greatly benefited from what he saw and heard



Mr LK Advani: Fruitful visit

about Israel's experience, particularly in border management, said Indian Ambassador, Mr Ranjan Mathai

Mr Advani today met the Deputy Defence Minister, Mr Ephraim Sneh (former commander of Israeli special forces in South Lebanon) and senior defence officials.

He also met Mr Barak's Chief Security Advisor, Gen Danny Yatom, who briefed him on Israel's strategic outlook, foreign policy and security perspectives.

Mr Advani lunched with the Minister of Regional Cooperation and his official host during the visit, Mr Shimon Peres, yesterday. Mr Peres is known as the father of Israel's nuclear programme. Mr Advani was briefed by the head of the Mossad external security service, Mr Ephraim Halevi, and the new head of the Shin Bet internal security service, Mr Avi Dichter.

He toured Israel Military Industries and Israel Aircraft Industries facilities. According to a report in the *Haaretz*, India is Israel's third largest export market — after China and Turkey — for arms and defence equipment. Purchases, it says, amount to half a billion US dollars and may increase in the future.

17 JUN 200

Ties with India are stronger than friendship: Arafat

GAZA CITY: Notwithstanding the ever-growing Indo-Israeli ties, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has said that relations with India were much stronger than friendship.

"It is not friendship, it's stronger than friendship, it's brotherhood, it's very old," Mr Arafat told journalists here on Saturday night after his meeting with Union home minister L.K. Advani, who concluded the first leg of his visit to the region on Sunday. During the meet, both leaders discussed bilateral issues and the ongoing peace process in West Asia.

Earlier, Mr Arafat specially advanced his return to Palestine from the U.S. by two days to meet Mr Advani.

Praising Mr Arafat for making the meet possible, Mr Advani said decades-old friendship between India and Palestine would continue and hoped that the Palestinian leader would succeed in his struggle for peace.

Mr Advani had earlier held meetings with the President, Prime Minister and top brass of security agencies of Israel on its security systems, and it is understood that Mr Advani's visit would pave the way for further cooperation in new areas.

Israel Prime Minister Ehud Barak during the meeting had shared India's concern over cross-border terrorism and offered all cooperation to tackle the menace. (PT)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 JUN 2000

49-12
20/6

SEEKING ISRAEL'S HELP

UNLIKE MANY OTHER ministerial visits abroad, the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani's mission to Israel was clearly focussed. The very composition of his delegation gave a clear message. Heads of the intelligence and investigative agencies and the Home Secretary were part of the team that toured Israel to assess what Tel Aviv had to offer to India in its continuing fight against terrorism and insurgency. Though the Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, is also going to Tel Aviv shortly, the Advani visit was basically intended to enlist Israel's cooperation in reformulating India's counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. His meetings with the President, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Defence Minister, plus his visits to the border and the Israel Aircraft Industry, were related to this central issue — how to deal more effectively with cross-border terrorism and the spate of insurgent movements in the northeast as well as central regions. Obviously, Israel has a lot to offer and has acquired considerable expertise and experience in dealing with similar problems, with quite some success. Its very survival, despite frequent violence and explosions, depends on its ability to counter terrorist threats.

India will need to acquire the latest in technology and equipment to deal with the threats to security in Kashmir, to counter the insurgency in the northeastern States and meet the challenge posed by naxalites in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Bihar. The problems and the motives of the terrorists and insurgents may be different, but they seem to be adopting similar, violent means to achieve their ends. In very specific terms, the security agencies and the police in the affected States need better equipment and training to detect bombs or explosives and to track down

the hideouts of the militants. Israel may be able to help on both the fronts, since it has been constantly exposed to these problems. Checking infiltration along the borders and movement of militants within the country, easier detection of hidden bombs or explosives, defusing bombs and devices and combing operations are some areas in which India can certainly benefit from Israel's expertise. The Chief Ministers of the naxal-infested States have been asking the Centre to acquire low-flying, reconnaissance aircraft that can help the security agencies undertake hot pursuits in jungle terrain. Though no deals have been clinched during this visit, Israel has promised all possible cooperation.

Agencies such as the Intelligence Bureau and the Central Bureau of Investigation must follow up on this visit to evolve a concrete action plan for cooperation on the security front. The States which need special training in counter-insurgency operations can now be sounded on finalising a programme. It is perhaps to offset criticism from some quarters that the Home Minister also met the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. Renewing diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992 was a well-thought-out strategy and when the Arab world was itself trying to make peace with Israel, it made no sense for countries like India to remain cut off from Tel Aviv. In the post-Cold War era, the focus clearly shifted to economic cooperation and building a new world order. India and Israel can work together in countering the pressures from the nuclear powers and seeing this period of transition through, besides enhancing cooperation for peace and security. International terrorism, Interpol and Scotland Yard will receive top billing during Mr. Advani's visit to France and Britain.

India assures Arab world on Advani's statements

40-13
28/6
By K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22. With notable promptness, India today sought to dispel the concern felt in the Arab countries because of the reports of the Home Minister, Mr. L K Advani's statements during his Israel visit.

It emphasised that efforts to strengthen cooperation with Israel would not affect its traditionally friendly relations with the Arab world.

A statement issued by the Indian High Commission in the U.K. (Mr. Advani was in London today) reiterated the "categorical denial" by the Indian embassy in Tel Aviv that cooperation in the nuclear field figured in his discussions in Israel.

It, thus, set the record straight on his talks with the Israeli leaders in order to remove misunderstandings and to ensure that specific meanings were not read in his generalised remarks, as quoted by a news agency.

The High Commission's statement is as follows: "The Home Minister's attention has been drawn to an item which appeared

in *The Hindu* this morning which refers to some concern having been expressed in the Arab world about some statements made by him during his recent visit to Israel.

"India's traditional approach to diplomacy has been predicated on seeking closer bilateral relations with friendly countries without these being allowed in any way to impact on India's relations with other friendly countries.

India's bilateral relations with Israel, which are being strengthened on a continuing basis since the establishment of full diplomatic relations in January 1992, will encompass across the board cooperation in areas of mutual interest to both countries.

This process will not effect India's traditionally friendly relations with countries in the Arab world, or elsewhere.

"Insofar as the specific issue of cooperation in the nuclear field is concerned, the Embassy of India in Tel Aviv had issued a categorical denial on this issue having been discussed. This is now reiterated."

THE HINDU

23 JUN 2000

Soft state, hard line ^{HC-17}

THERE WAS really no need for India to be in such a hurry to deny newspaper reports in the Arab world about L.K. Advani having discussed nuclear cooperation with Israel during his recent visit to that country. It is within the sovereign competence of any government to discuss all subjects of mutual interest with any friendly state, and the nuclear question cannot be an exception. It is another matter that this issue lies quite outside the domain of concerns of an Indian Home Minister. This became clear enough from the nature of the delegation which accompanied Mr Advani. It comprised nothing more 'sinister' than chiefs of internal security-related official agencies.

By his own admission, Mr Advani visited Israel in the hope of learning a trick or two about border management and dealing with religio-political terrorism aided and abetted by foreign sources. Tel Aviv has a formidable reputation in this area, but it is doubtful if it can teach India anything at all in this sphere. The simple reason is that no two situations are alike when it comes to a threat of this kind. The histories are different. The social and political complexities within which governments operate are rarely the same. And the specific international context in which anti-terrorist actions of governments are located are also not always identical.

In Israel's case, the preservation of the Jewish state was central to Western strategies for the Middle East, in particular that of the US whose unstinted support was enjoyed by Tel Aviv. Very often, the enemies of Israel were also the enemies of America. This left the former free to employ the hardest military options against those who made trouble for it. Hot pursuit into territories of neighbours was no problem at all. It is plain enough that none of this is of relevance to the situation that confronts India.

India too by now has considerable experience of handling terrorists, insurgents and religious fundamentalists who threaten the democratic order. If there are failures in Kashmir, New Delhi needs to ask and answer its own questions. For instance, how are terrorists able to cross over and bring with them highly sophisticated military equipment? Are the political and administrative leadership free from blame? Countries like Israel can help with intelligence-sharing and assessment since terrorism cannot survive without international linkages. But, more fundamentally, we will have to consider whether we are constrained by a weakening moral fibre and insufficient operational and political imagination in fighting terrorism rather than by the lack of hardware which Mr Advani might want to acquire from Israel.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 JUN 2000

Arab envoys to seek clarifications on Advani's remarks

P Jayaram
NEW DELHI 23 JUNE

ENVOYS OF the Arab League nations based in New Delhi have sought a meeting with the Indian government on the high-profile visit of the home minister, Mr L.K. Advani to Israel and his statements there.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) ambassador Mr Ahmed Abdulla Al-Musally, senior-most among the Arab envoys, has written to foreign secretary Mr Lalit Mansingh, seeking a joint meeting by the Arab League envoys with him.

The sources said the envoys will seek clarifications on certain statements made by Mr Advani during his visit there last week, which had received wide media attention in the

Arab world.

An Arab envoy told IANS that he and the others met on Friday and reviewed the statements made by Mr Advani in Israel.

"While we recognise the right of all sovereign nations to decide on relations with another country, and some Arab countries also have diplomatic relations with Israel, it should not lead to destabilisation of another region," he said.

He was referring to Mr Advani's reported remarks to journalists, favouring nuclear co-operation between New Delhi and Tel Aviv. "I will certainly favour increasing co-operation with Israel in all fields, including this one (nuclear)," he was reported to have said in response to a



Advani: Kicking up dust

Delhi's opinion, the problem it faced in Jammu and Kashmir is the form of cross-border terrorism, allegedly sponsored by Pakistan, is similar to what Israel faced along its borders.

"What we have seen and understood (during the visit) will help us strengthen India's security," Mr Advani had said.

The Arab envoy said India

and the Arab countries have historical relations and "we are keen to maintain that relationship." He said Israel was only using India to get out of its international isolation.

The focus of Advani's visit was to study Israel's order management technique and to draw on them to deal with the problem in Jammu and Kashmir.

Observers said India should do everything to dispel the misapprehensions among the Arab countries, which appreciated the problem it faced in tackling the low intensity conflict forced on it in Jammu and Kashmir, allegedly by Pakistan.

There has been an intensification of high-level political contacts between India and

Israel of late. Before Mr Advani's visit, Ms Najma Heptulla, chairperson of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament) and president of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) had visited Tel Aviv, where she had the honour of addressing the Knesset (Parliament).

External affairs minister Jaswant Singh is scheduled to pay a four-day visit to Israel from June 30, though he will balance it with a visit to the Gaza Strip for a meeting with the Palestinian President, Mr Yasser Arafat.

The West Bengal chief minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, will also be in Israel at the same time as Mr Singh, leading a 20-member delegation of businessmen and officials.

— IANS

'Jaswant's visit will boost Indo-Israeli ties'

By Seema Guha
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: When the BJP-led coalition came to power in India there was a general expectation that the country's ties with Israel would improve. The BJP's admiration for Israel was clear, even when other parties, including the Congress' were hesitant to displease the Arab states and the Muslim electorate at home.



Jaswant Singh when other parties, including the Congress' were hesitant to displease the Arab states and the Muslim electorate at home.

But after the cold war, when ideology took a back seat in deciding foreign policy, Congress prime minister Narasimha Rao went ahead and upgraded ties with Tel Aviv.

Things have looked up since those early days. Trade ties are better, cultural and economic relations thrived but political relations which give a major thrust to overall bilateral ties remained static till just two months ago. The "political gap" is now being closed, says Yehoyada Haim, Israel's envoy in New Delhi.

A number of important political leaders cutting across the political divide have visited or are scheduled to visit Israel in the next few days. Home minister Advani has just been there, external affairs minister Jaswant Singh is to follow, Najma Heptullah, deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, was there, and Marxist chief minister of West Ben-

gal Jyoti Basu will follow Jaswant Singh.

"These visits will upgrade our political relations and also expand the areas of co-operation," Mr Haim, who is leaving India told reporters in Wednesday. Jaswant Singh's four-day official visit from June 30 to July 3 will set the political framework for co-operation. Mr Singh will hold talks with President Ezer Weizman, Prime Minister Ehud Barak and foreign minister David Levy.

Though Mr Haim talks happily of India-Israel ties, he is hesitant to speak of the defence links between the two countries. The Americans are none too happy about arms sale by Israel to India. Israel is already under fire for providing Falcon aircraft to China. India has been buying equipment from Israel even before the Kargil intrusions. But since Israel provided much needed supplies during the Kargil flare up, defence links have been further cemented.

"It is better for both of us if we speak and write less about it," Mr Haim said amid indications that negotiations are on for the purchase of a variety of military equipment, including AWACS planes from Israel.

Mr Advani's visit to Israel was to exchange notes on tackling terrorism. But the Israeli envoy noted that the problems faced by the two countries are different: while the Israelis had to guard its desert borders, India faced the problem in the Himalayas.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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3 Indian warships to visit Israeli port

Tel Aviv, March 13

KT-14 AT
THREE INDIAN warships would visit Israeli port of Eilat next month as guests of the Israeli navy and defence ministry, signalling growing military ties between the two countries, Indian embassy officials said today.

About 1,000 officers and sailors aboard the three ships would be led by an admiral, who would hold talks with senior Israeli defence officers, they said.

The last visit by Indian warships to Israel took place in 1995, but received little attention here in the wake of assassination of the then

Premier Yitzhak Rabin. The renewed defence ties between India and Tel Aviv assume significance following Indian intelligence reports that Pakistan has decided to infiltrate more militants into Jammu and Kashmir in a fresh bid to create disturbance and cut off army formations along the LoC.

Israeli media said the scheduled visit by Indian warships reflected the close defence cooperation between the two countries. The visit marked a return to the close military ties between the two nations "which were partly scaled down during last year's clashes in Kashmir. (PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 MAR 2000

3 Navy ships visit Israel port

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 27

INDO-ISRAEL defence ties have come a step closer with three Indian Navy ships, led by guided missile destroyer INS Ranvir, paying a goodwill visit at Eilat Port, south of Israel.

Naval Headquarters sources said the visit of INS Shakti, a tanker, INS Gomiti, a guided missile frigate, and INS Ranvir is expected to boost military co-operation between the two countries. The three ships entered into Israeli waters last evening under the overall command of Rear Admiral

Suresh Mehta. Rear Admiral Mehta is the Fleet Commander of Western Navy. It is understood that Vice Admiral Madhavendra Singh, Flag-Officer-Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command, is also among the senior naval officials on a visit to Israel.

These officials are scheduled to hold talks with senior Israeli defence officials during their two-day stay. Official sources here said that while the Western Naval Fleet had embarked on a goodwill visit to Israel and Egypt, the Eastern Naval Fleet, led by Rajput-class destroyer INS Rana, is all set to leave for a goodwill visit to

Malaysia and Thailand. Senior Naval officials said the goodwill visits were planned at the same time as the recently concluded Springex 2000 manoeuvres.

Although senior officials at the Naval Headquarters chose to describe the visit of Indian ships to Israel as routine, the event is of significance in the wake of increasing defence co-operation between the two countries. India is the second largest export market for Israeli defence industry. The last visit by Indian warships to Israel was in 1995 but received little attention due to the assassination of then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
28 MAR 2000

India all set to woo Turkey

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MARCH 28. In an effort to reach out to the Islamic world, India is getting ready to build a new political partnership with Turkey which has long been an important ally of Pakistan.

After successfully persuading the United States to end its historic tilt towards Pakistan last week, India is now all set to receive the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Bulent Ecevit.

Mr. Ecevit's visit, much like the extended sojourn of the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, will reflect the emerging transformation in international perceptions of the subcontinent in India's favour.

The entente between India and Turkey could signal that leading Islamic countries are beginning to put a new value on their relationships with India, and their linkages with Pakistan are beginning to lose some of their traditional

significance. As Pakistan becomes an economic basket case, there is little commercial content in Islamabad's ties with the major Islamic countries. Having become a breeding ground for forces of extremism, terrorism and destabilisation, there is a growing wariness across the Islamic world about the *jehadi* politics of Islamabad.

No one is in a better position to highlight this new trend than Mr. Ecevit, a well-known scholar and Indologist who has long pined to come to India.

Mr. Ecevit arrives here on Thursday night accompanied by a huge business delegation for a three-day visit that is expected to consolidate a new political and economic relationship with India.

To skip Pakistan

Despite strong entreaties from Pakistan that he should stop over

at least briefly in Islamabad, Mr. Ecevit has refused to yield. Mr. Ecevit's decision comes despite the fact that Gen. Musharraf chose Turkey as the first country for his travels abroad after he ousted the civilian Government last October.

During Mr. Ecevit's trip, India and Turkey are likely to declare their shared concerns about terrorism, and build on their common commitment to democracy and moderation in the volatile region stretching from Europe to the subcontinent.

India's relations with Turkey had languished during the Cold War because it was part of the U.S.-led alliance systems in Europe and Asia. It became a leading ally of Pakistan and lent it support over the Kashmir dispute.

Since the mid-1970s India sided with Greece in its dispute with Turkey over Cyprus, and Turkey's

positions on Kashmir appeared to harden in favour of Pakistan.

However, now, fortunately tensions between Greece and Turkey are beginning to ease as international diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus problem have intensified.

As a big emerging market that is looking towards the Asian giants — Japan, China and India — for mutually beneficial economic cooperation, Turkey no longer needs to define its approach to India in terms of Pakistan.

As a nation preparing to join the European Union and enhance its democratic credentials, Turkey has little inclination to dance around with the military dictators in Pakistan.

Committed as it is to secularism, moderation, and modernisation, Turkey is certainly not enthused by the jihadis in the Pakistani establishment.

Turkey PM declines Pakistan's invitation

Apratim Mukarji
New Delhi, March 28

9-NRSE
11-29

THIS IS another visit that Pakistan wanted badly but will now miss. Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit will be visiting India from March 31 to April 2 and not Pakistan, despite strong overtures.

For one who has fought military interventions in the Turkish democracy intermittently, a visit to Pakistan under military rule would perhaps be more than an odd thing to do. Prime Minister Ecevit's life, apart from his striking erudition in English, Sanskrit and Bengali, is a refreshing instance of life-long commitment to secularism and democracy.

He fought military interventions in 1960, 1971 and 1980 onwards faced numerous trials in military courts, went to jail thrice, suffered physical assaults and survived assassination attempts. Democracy is clearly much more than a mere political term for him.

It is therefore only natural that Prime Minister Ecevit visiting India and not Pakistan at one go symbolises the new configurations that are taking place in international relations with far-reaching consequences, with countries moving closer to chosen collaborators in building strategic relationships.

India and Turkey are two secular democracies intent on quickening their development through eco-

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conomic cooperation and on promoting a shared political vision for the world, where sectarian violence is strongly discouraged, disputes are sought to be resolved peacefully and all energy is channeled towards growth.

Thus, after the India-US Vision statement will come the India-Turkey joint statement, nothing "as grand as the former one but a realistic one", as one characterisation goes. Not mapping out an ambitious relationship over the next three decades or so but visualising a modest achievable one for the coming 5 to 10 years, perhaps.

The statement, to be issued by Prime Minister Vajpayee and Mr Ecevit, will set the agenda for developing bilateral relations in the near future.

The common fight against terrorism will find a powerful echo in the joint statement, in yet another addition to India's quest for strengthening a global campaign to eradicate the scourge being used increasingly as a weapon to promote political and nation-state agendas.

While Turkey shall be looking for avenues for a participatory role in building infrastructure in India, such as roads, airports and sea ports, it is beginning to realise India's strength in information technology. Indians, on their part, are already evincing interest in seeking joint ventures in third countries.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 MAR 2000

Ecevit visit to bolster Indo-Turkish ties

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 29. — By opting for an India-only visit, the Turkish Prime Minister, Mr Bulent Ecevit, has sent a clear signal of his country's desires to build relations with India.

Turkey's shift away from the pro-Pakistan tilt of the Cold War years received an added impetus after the coup in Pakistan, with the Bulent Ecevit government giving a cool reception to General Pervez Musharraf when he made Turkey one of the first stops on his itinerary after assuming power.

The military dictatorship had found little favour with Turkey, say diplomatic analysts, and it has not come as a surprise that Turkey turned down repeated attempts by Islamabad to make Pakistan the second leg of his tour.

Pepped up by Turkish overtures, India is now looking ahead to a closer political and economic relationship based on common economic and political interests. India also views Turkey as an ally in the fight against terrorism and obscurantism.

Mr Ecevit's visit comes at a time when both countries are viewing each other as natural destinations for economic partnership. India's focus is on infrastructure development and Turkey's is on integrated projects in irrigation, agriculture and railway expansion.

Describing the visit as very important, external affairs ministry officials said today that it would see the two countries signing MoUs on agriculture, foreign office consultations and a cultural exchange programme. The two sides would also issue a joint statement on the future orientation of the bilateral relationship.

India has been identified by Turkey as one of the three important countries in its "look East" policy. The other two countries are Japan and China.

Turkey's membership of the NATO and the OIC, and the likelihood of its entry into the European Union makes it a potential ally for India. A reorientation of political priorities following the end of the Cold War have helped overcome several hurdles that dogged the relationship in the past as have the changes in the relationship between Greece and Turkey since last year.

Mr Ecevit himself is an Indophile and will travel to Santiniketan on Sunday. There he will be honoured with "Deshikottam", an honorary degree of literature, by Visva-Bharati university.

THE STATESMAN
30 MAR 2000

149-14
9/12

India, Turkey to improve trade

9-11-00

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 8. India and Turkey today initiated measures to improve and increase bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Bilateral trade between the two stood at only around \$ 273.04 millions during 1998-99.

The discussions took place during the eighth Indo-Turkish Joint Commission meeting where the Minister for Commerce and Industry, Mr. Murasoli Maran, stressed the need for the two countries to broad base and expand trade, economic and technological cooperation.

Mr. Maran urged Turkey to lift restrictions on spices, meat products and textiles being exported from India. The session was co-chaired by the Turkish Minister of State of the Republic, Mr. Abdulhaluk Mehmet Cay.

Mr. Maran said one of the ways to improve ties would be by promoting joint ventures. He noted that Turkish companies with vast experience in construction activity had shown an interest in the building of dams, tunnels, highways, bridges, industrial plants as well as civil engineering works in India. "We have also noted that both sides have agreed to build structural frameworks for estab-

lishment of joint exploration and drilling company for cooperation in third countries," Mr. Maran said and added "we would like to build on this understanding and replicate it in other sectors."

Kumaratunga begins talks with moderate Tamil parties

COLOMBO, FEB. 8. The Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, today began talks with moderate Tamil parties to get their seal of approval on her Constitutional proposals to grant autonomy to regions, particularly the Tamil-dominated north and eastern provinces.

Ms. Kumaratunga, along with senior Ministers, held discussions with the leaders of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP), which together have 16 members in the 223-member Parliament.

After the meeting, the president of TULF, Mr. Ananda Sangari, said that his party would insist on exclusive meetings with the President in view of its differences with other Tamil parties. — PTI

THE HINDU

9 FEB 2000

India, Morocco sign pacts

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 22. India and Morocco today signed four agreements to cement their ties in key areas. The two sides, in the presence of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the visiting Premier of Morocco, Mr. Abderrahamane Youssoufi, signed these agreements which institutionalised cooperation in the fields of agriculture, communications and transport. Morocco and India also agreed to establish a Joint Business Council.

Both sides discussed possible joint forays in pharmaceuticals, trade, information technology and mines. Morocco is India's largest supplier of Phosphates. The visiting dignitary also met the Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Mr. Suresh Prabhu.

23/2/10 .14
Earlier in the day, Mr. Youssoufi, who arrived last evening, was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He was received this morning by Mr. Vajpayee, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, and the Lt. Governor of Delhi, Mr. Vijai Kapoor, as well as senior diplomats and officials.

During the day, Mr. Youssoufi called on the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, and the Vice-President, Mr. Krishan Kant. Mr. Jaswant Singh also called on him before the delegation-level talks took place later in the evening. PTI reports:

The Congress president, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, today called on Mr. Youssoufi and exchanged views on vital issues.

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2000

India to maintain status quo on Saharawi recognition

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 23

INDIA HAS reiterated that it supports the United Nations (UN) process in a resolution of the Western Sahara question and intends to maintain the status quo in its recognition of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

The reiteration was made during the talks between visiting Moroccan Prime Minister Abderrehmane Yousoufi and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee here last evening. The talks were followed by the signing of four agreements, one of which facilitated the setting up of a joint business council of the two countries.

Indian Ambassador to Morocco I S Rathore said that Morocco wanted India to have "a look" at the question of its recognition of the SADR. But India said that it was maintaining the status quo on the issue. "We have not withdrawn our recognition of the SADR," he said.

Both the External Affairs Ministry spokesman

Western Sahara issue

and the Ambassador, however, failed to explain why India had downgraded the SADR representation in New Delhi from that of an ambassador to a charge de affair. "It is not unusual for a mission to be headed by a charge de affair," he offered by way of an explanation.

Ambassador Rathore said that the UN-sponsored referendum on the Western Sahara ques-

tion (whether it remained with Morocco or became independent) could now be held only in 2002 as the review of all the rejected applications for eligibility to participate in the proposed referendum would take that much time.

Morocco, on its part, supported the resolution of the Kashmir issue through bilateral negotiations, he said.

The underlying theme in the first ever prime ministerial visit from Morocco was, however,

Western Sahara issue

the "dynamic momentum" that had characterised the bilateral relations since Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit a year ago.

During the talks, while Prime Minister Vajpayee spoke of developing "close and intense" partnership with Morocco, Prime Minister Yousoufi responded by talking about developing a "solid" partnership. "Morocco is serious about engaging us," Rathore said.

He said that the impressively fast completion, "in a period of two years", of the joint venture between the K K Birla group (at \$230 million, one of the largest Indian investments abroad) and a Moroccan monopoly for manufacturing phosphoric acids had created a deep impression about Indian corporate capabilities.

The Oberoi chain of hotels was also exploring the possibilities of setting up 5-star hotels in the country.

Morocco was also showing keen interest in accessing the Indian information technology (IT) industry, he said.

149-13
24/2

India, Morocco agree to intensify exchanges

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 23. India and Morocco have decided to intensify exchanges between their leaders, diplomats, technical experts and businessmen.

Alluding to the new momentum imparted to bilateral ties during the visit of the Moroccan Prime Minister, Mr. Abderrahmane Yousouffi, the Foreign Office spokesman today pointed out that both countries would now hold an annual political dialogue at the Foreign Ministers level. These talks would cap the regular official consultations.

Mr. Yousouffi's visit witnessed a definite economic thrust given to the relationship. According to India's Ambassador to Morocco, Mr. I. S. Rathore, the two countries are looking to expand the capacity of their joint venture plant to produce phosphoric acid. With India contributing \$ 230 millions, it is the country's largest joint venture project overseas.

Information Technology was yet another area of common interest and members of the Moroccan IT export promotion organisation are in Bangalore to identify the common areas of cooperation.

Keen to work together in the agriculture sector, members of the Moroccan Prime Minister's team

visited the Indian Agriculture Research Institute here today. A team of Moroccan specialists is expected at the institute shortly to finalise details.

On the political side, India refused to be drawn into commenting on the differences between the Moroccan government and the Polisario front on the status of Western Sahara. Though New Delhi recognised the Polisario regime in 1975, it later veered to the view of abiding by the results of an on-going U.N. initiative for settling these differences. The U.N. is currently engaged in an exercise for holding a referendum over the status of Western Sahara. According to the Foreign Office spokesman, the Moroccan side asked India to review its recognition to the Polisario during talks yesterday. New Delhi, however, reiterated its position of backing the U.N. mandate.

India sees Morocco as a stabilising force in the Arab world and wants Rabat to actively exercise its moderating influence in fora such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference. During talks with the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, both sides exchanged views on the West Asia peace process and the resource-rich Persian Gulf.

THE HINDU
24 FEB 2000

India, Israel must work against terrorists

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 10. India and Israel should jointly mount a global campaign against international terrorism, the Israeli Ambassador to India, Mr. Yeho Yada, has said.

Addressing a press conference on the eve of the first-ever visit by an Indian Foreign Minister to Israel, Mr. Yada said both sides should work together to counter terrorism in all forms including state-sponsored terrorism. Mr. Jaswant Singh will pay a two-day visit to Israel from January 20.

The geographical distance between the two countries was an obstacle to forging a joint mechanism to counter terrorism, Mr. Yada said in response to a ques-

tion. While terrorism in both countries found common expression in bomb blasts and hijackings, its ideological and historical well-springs were diverse. ^{ND-11}

Elaborating on the various dimensions of counter-terrorism, Mr. Yada laid emphasis on the need for international coordination on denying funding to cross-border insurgents. Banking laws should permit probes into the financial accounts of suspected terrorists. Lack of these provisions could lead to an unwitting seepage of financial help. Ways and means should also be found for locating the end-use of donations, sometimes made for religious purposes.

He said a global set up against terrorism, on the lines of Interpol, was urgently required. Asked about the Israeli stance on Kashmir, Mr. Yada said his country favoured direct negotiations for easing India-Pakistan tensions.

The Palestinian peace process was irreversible and the on-going talks with Syria were crucial, he observed. Mr. Singh, during his stay in Tel Aviv, will meet the President, Mr. Ezer Weizman, the Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and engage his counterpart, Mr. David Levy, in extensive discussions. Mr. Singh is also slated to visit the Gaza strip as well as the memorial for the victims of the Nazi holocaust in Jerusalem.

THE HINDU
11 JAN 2000

Israel offers cooperation in fighting terrorism

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 10

ISRAEL WOULD like to cooperate with India on fighting international terrorism, Israeli Ambassador Dr Yehoyada Haim said here today.

Addressing the media ahead of External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's Jan. 20-21 visit to Israel, the Ambassador pointed out that both countries had called for an international campaign against terrorism.

There should be some kind of an international organisation to fight terrorism which is often state-sponsored, he said.

Bilateral cooperation between India and Israel was quite likely to be discussed during Mr Singh's visit, he indicated.

Arriving from London after the 10th round of India-US dialogue with Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, Minister Jaswant Singh will be holding talks throughout Jan. 20 with the Israeli leaders.

While substantial talks will be held with his counterpart and Deputy Prime Minister David Levy, he will also be meeting President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister and Defence Minister Ehud Barak.

Apart from bilateral issues, the prevailing situation in India's neighbourhood

would be discussed during the talks, the Ambassador said.

Mr Singh's visit will be followed by Culture Minister Ananth Kumar's visit in February. Israeli parliamentarians too might be visiting India sometime later in the year.

Speaking of the remarkable advance made in bilateral relations, considering the fact that the two countries recognised each other a mere eight years ago, Ambassador Haim said, "We are doing superbly."

Israeli exports to India grew by as much as 40 per cent during the first nine months of 1999 compared to the corresponding period in 1998 while Indian exports to Israel increased by 30 per cent during the same period.

The two-way trade was worth \$ 695 million compared to \$ 670 million transacted in the whole of 1998.

There were as many as 150 joint ventures functioning in India of which 50 were in agriculture, he said.

Defence cooperation was one subject on which the Ambassador chose to be incommunicative. "There are compulsions on both sides (not to speak)," he said, adding laconically, "We have pressures on us." Further questions failed to elicit any elaboration.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 JAN 2000

'Israel may sell arrow anti-missiles to India'

Washington, January 29 ^{HT-10}

ISRAEL IS trying to lift the ban on the sale of arrow anti-tactical missiles to India and Turkey against the wishes of the United States, 'Defense News' reported.

Former Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai had passed an order against the sale of the arrow anti-tactical missile, to satisfy the United States, who did not want it sold to India or Turkey, the weekly reported.

"Defense News" said that the Israeli Defence Ministry has now authorised industry executives to begin discussions with a US aerospace firm on potential partnership arrangements to cover future production and export of the arrow defence system.

²⁰⁰ "It is not known whether arrow was ever offered to India but the Americans apparently wanted to take no chances and wanted to take precautions against that possibility," the weekly said in its latest report.

Israel had to defer to the US on the issue as arrow's development was partly funded by the US, which thus secured a veto over its exports.

Analysts said that what the US action means is that on major defence matters, India has to be self-sufficient both in manufacture and technology. Three US companies -- Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Boeing are each potential prime contractor partners for the Israeli aerospace industry, the weekly said. (PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 JAN 2000

Jaswant's Israel visit may strengthen ties

Tel Aviv, January 9 49-14

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Jaswant Singh's upcoming four-day visit to Israel is expected to give a fillip to Indo-Israel ties even as the bilateral trade in the first three quarters of 1999 registered an all time high at over \$700 million.

While the full year's trade between the two country is expected to go further higher, Indian exports to Israel increased by 28 per cent over last year's exports and diversified into new areas, according to figures made available by Indian embassy here.

The increase in Indian exports reflected mainly in the export of chemicals (+68 per cent) polished diamonds (+38 per cent) and textiles (+10 per cent).

Israel, the ninth largest foreign investor country in India in terms

of approved investments, registered an increase of 40 per cent in exports over its last year's exports, primarily due to increase in the export of raw diamonds (+100 per cent).

There are over 170 collaborations and joint ventures between the companies of two countries, mostly in agriculture and high-technology areas.

Israel's famous drip irrigation systems are jointly manufactured in three different locations in India. Q-U Asu

In 1998 total trade between India and Israel stood at 670 million US dollars, more than three times over the trade in 1992 when the full fledged diplomatic ties were established between the two countries.

Bilateral trade between the two countries has steadily shot up since 1992. (AFP)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
10 JAN 2000

Indo-Iraq accord will not hit sanctions: U.K.

By Hasan Suroor

HD-13

11/12
LONDON, NOV 30. Even as the India-Iraq agreement signed in New Delhi on Wednesday was seen in some circles as yet another blow to the UN sanctions against Iraq, the official British Foreign Office rejected this view. It said the agreement was consistent with the relevant UN resolution and would not weaken the embargo against Baghdad. One official said the deal appeared to be a part of the food-for-oil programme and Britain did not think there was a cause for concern.

Significantly, however, an Indian foreign office spokesman in New Delhi went to some length to clarify that it was a "bilateral contract" and fell outside the food-for-oil arrangement though the UN sanctions committee would be informed. In New Delhi the view was reported to be that the agreement, envisaging import of Iraqi crude oil by India and wheat exports from India to Baghdad, did indeed amount to "skirting" the UN embargo.

The Guardian in a report from New Delhi said Iraq's Vice-President, Mr. Taha Yassin Ramadhan "hailed" the agreement as a sign that the UN embargo against Baghdad had lost its meaning. "We shall sell oil to any country which wants to buy it", he was quoted as saying confirming the impression that the deal tilted at the sanctions.

Meanwhile even as Britain is under pressure from what are called "moderate" Arab countries to lift the sanctions against Iraq and some of its own European allies are finding ways to beat the embargo, the British Government has no intentions of abandoning its "commitment" to the UN resolution on sanctions.

Foreign Office officials say that though Britain would like to see the sanctions go it is possible only if Iraq allows the UN weapons inspectors back into the country as demanded in the UN Security Council Resolution 1284. Once Iraq fully complies with the resolution, the sanctions would be suspended within six months. "I want to see sanctions suspended so that everything can move forward. Iraq can move forwards, the region can move forward but the only vehicle for that is 1284", the Foreign Office minister Mr Peter Hain recently told *The Times* which interpreted his remarks as implying a softening of Britain's attitude.

Foreign Office sources, however, clarified that Mr Hain had simply reiterated the official position and there was no change. The point that the Minister, they said, wanted to make was that Britain was bound by the UN security council resolution and that Iraq must cooperate in implementing it in order to pave the way for sanctions to be suspended. Mr Hain, it may be pointed out, is credited with a tough line on sanctions. He believes that it is an effective way of dealing with undemocratic regimes.

THE HINDU

1 DEC 2000

Arafat urges India to support Palestinians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JERUSALEM, Dec. 5. — Mr Yasser Arafat has appreciated Indian support for his people and urged New Delhi to use its "influence" on Israelis and in international fora to support the Palestinian cause.

Following his meeting with the secretary in the MEA, Mr KV Rajan, in Gaza yesterday, Mr Arafat thanked Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee "for sending a senior representative for talks."

Mr Rajan, leading a high-level delegation, delivered messages to Mr Arafat from Mr Vajpayee and Mr Jaswant Singh, expressing concern at the developments in the region which have claimed over 300 lives. Mr Rajan announced an additional Indian aid of Rs 50 lakh for relief work.

Both Israelis and Palestinians attach importance to New Delhi's role after the recent developments in the region. Earlier, Mr Zvi Gaby, an Israeli foreign ministry official who led a team during negotiations with the Indian team, said he

hoped "all our friends, including India, would try and get Palestinians to the negotiating table".

'War possible': The UN special envoy in West Asia, Mr Terje-roed Larsen, said almost 10 weeks of clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians could rapidly deteriorate into a regional war, adds Reuters. He urged Israel to lift a blockade of Palestinian areas and called for Palestinian and Israeli leaders to revive the peace process.

More killings

A Hamas leader, Awad Selmi, yesterday died during an attack on Israeli targets. He was an activist of the Izz el-Din al-Qassam, armed wing of the Hamas, Reuters adds from Gaza. A report from Jerusalem says Israeli soldiers shot dead two Palestinians in West Bank today. Israeli troops also shot and wounded a Lebanese teenager whom they suspected of trying to infiltrate into Israel, a Lebanese source said.

THE STATESMAN

6 DEC 2000

India opposes continued sanctions against Iraq

By K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, DEC. 21. India has sounded the members of the U.N. sanctions committee for Iraq for their support to its strong case under a special provision of the world body's charter for purchase of larger quantity of crude from that country than is possible under the present limited arrangement. Under the existing oil-for-food programme, India gets 1.5 million tonnes at the normal OPEC price, while its requirement of Iraqi crude is of the order of 14 million to 15 million tonnes. The five permanent members of the Security Council constitute the committee.

As a result of recent discussions, the final round of which was held during the Iraqi Vice-President, Mr. Taha Yassin Ramadhan's recent visit here, Baghdad is willing to meet India's needs to a very large extent, at lower than the prevailing market rates. This, however, is possible only if the sanctions committee gives clearance, under Article 50 of the U.N. Charter. Under it, if the U.N. sanctions against a state create special economic problems for any other country, the latter "shall have the right to consult the Security

Council with regard to a solution of those problems". So far Jordan is the only country which takes Iraqi crude under the special provision, while some other countries clandestinely get supplies from Baghdad. This is done at a sizeable scale and, as such, could not have escaped the notice of those responsible for enforcing sanctions.

The possibilities of Iraqi supplies were first explored during the visit to Baghdad of the Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Ajit Kumar Panja. An official delegation, which went there soon after to pursue the encouraging response, was able to arrive at an understanding which was confirmed during Mr. Ramadhan's visit here.

The "special economic problems", confronted by India because of the U.N. sanctions against Iraq, have been brought to the notice of some of the sanctions committee members at length. India, it was pointed out, had suffered heavily because of the embargo on Iraq, the cumulative effect of the lost trade and project opportunities being to the tune of \$20 billion to \$30 billion, apart from the blocked funds of \$one billion of Indian

enterprises that had taken up projects in Iraq. Then there was the heavy burden cast by the steep hike in the international price of oil, so much so that India's export bill this year may go up by \$six billion.

As against that, India had a large surplus of food grains which could be bartered for Iraqi oil. Some 27 million tonnes of wheat, costing Rs.6,000 crores, were stored in warehouses in various parts of the country. Iraqis like Indian wheat and its supply to them would, on the one hand, meet a major humanitarian need and, on the other, enable India to make use of the stored stocks to meet its oil requirements. While seeking to invoke the special provision of the U.N. Charter, India continued to voice its opposition to the continuation of the sanctions against Iraq which had caused untold suffering to the people there. Mr. Ramadhan's discussions here centered on the establishment of the framework for strategic and long-term relationship with India. Iraq had invited India to take part in developing an oil field there — a highly promising proposition with immense potential of gain to both the countries.

THE HINDU

22 DEC 2000

Arafat sees active role for India

By K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, DEC. 22. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Palestinian President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, has made a case for India's active help at regional and international levels to resolve the present crisis resulting from Israel's "aggression". Described in diplomatic circles as detailed in content and highly warm in tone, the letter specifies ways in which New Delhi could play a useful role. The issues arising out of the letter have since figured in informal exchanges through diplomatic channels.

Mr. Arafat lists three areas in which India could use its weight and influence for resolving tensions in West Asia — one, it could be of help in the Non-Aligned Movement and at the U.N. in ensuring expeditious functioning of the fact-finding mission, set up at the October summit in Egypt; two, it could use its influence in the creation of an observers force (or the protection force) under the auspices of the U.N.; and, three, it could throw its weight behind efforts for honest implementation of the U.N. resolutions on

the Palestine-Israel problem and, thus, help revive the peace process.

The letter is a sequel to inquiries by India as to how it could help resolve the crisis, as had repeatedly been stated by Mr. Arafat in his statements. Some time back, Mr. K. V. Rajan, Secretary, External Affairs Ministry, during his visit to West Asia, called on Mr. Arafat and gave him a letter from Mr. Vajpayee. The Prime Minister's letter, it seems, sought elaboration of the Palestinian leader's suggestions about India's role.

The decision to set up the fact-finding mission was taken at the summit in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, brokered by the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, in response to Mr. Arafat's demand for establishing the cause of the latest round of violence. The five-member commission, headed by a former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchel, had started its work but was caught up in Israel's domestic political turmoil. The consequent slow-down in its functioning was not to the liking of the Palestinians who had counted on it for hauling up the Israelis before a war crimes tribunal.

The idea of establishing a U.N. protection force, too, was mooted by Palestine but it was strongly resisted by Israel, which launched a major diplomatic offensive to stall its creation. In any case, this issue has been overshadowed by the renewed efforts of Mr. Clinton to use the last few days of his presidency to stabilise the fragile ceasefire. The Palestinian leader would like India not only to support the move for the protection force but also to take part in it, when it is set up.

Mr. Arafat has often stated that he regards India, because of its standing and influence, as morally a *de facto* member of the U.N. Security Council and would like it to throw its weight on the side of restoration of peace in West Asia.

India has repeatedly stated that it would associate itself with any effort that helps to build confidence-building measures. It will take part in any exercise seeking to end violence and restore the peace process that has the approval of the two sides. This point has been conveyed to them through diplomatic channels and during bilateral contacts at various levels.

THE HINDU

23 DEC 1993

India and the Palestinian people

An older covenant

SAID HAMLET: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a God!" This is half the truth. If you wish to know the other half, turn to Palestine where the people's urge for freedom and independence is trampled upon by the Israel government. Today, Israel's legitimacy as a nation state is not in question, but its military occupation and the denial of basic human rights to the Palestinian people.

The inescapable fact is that Israel, having illegally occupied territories and violated numerous UN resolutions, is eminently qualified to be a "rogue" state. The stark and painful reality is that the Jewish people, having been brutalised by the Nazi regime in Germany, have not learnt their lessons from history — the virtues of religious tolerance and the futility of fanatical beliefs. Instead of realising that the continuation of Arab-Israel conflict is disastrous to both, and that the gain to both to be derived from concord is one of immeasurable magnitude, rulers in Tel Aviv have unleashed a reign of terror in the territories they have occupied since 1967.

Yes, few are moved by the live images of Palestinian mothers mourning the death of their youthful children, by the destruction of homes, and the dispossession and displacement of thousands of people. Though Israeli soldiers and warplanes continue to mow down Palestinian youth with the hope of ultimately reducing the other side to impotence, the international community is quietened by the weight of Israel/Jewish propaganda. Major powers act in unison against Iran and Iraq, but Israel's outrageous conduct is not even mildly censured. Arab governments, having vacated the moral ground they once occupied, have also abandoned the beleaguered Palestinians. Strange

are the ways of the world we inhabit. Cynical observers may well argue that India, tied to a globalised economy and poised for a major economic breakthrough, should eschew involvement in the Israel-Palestinian imbroglio. Such a myopic view needs to be contested. It is true that, in the realm of foreign policy, India must demonstrate a modicum of flexibility and common sense. At the same time a nation staking its claims in the comity of nations, including a berth on the UN Security Council, needs to take a resolute stand against Zionisation, the belligerence of ultra orthodox groups in Israel, and the ill treatment of minorities, notably the Palestinians,



MUSHIRUL HASAN

Engagement with Israel may well be a political and economic compulsion, but we will lose face with the international community if we let down our Arab friends

by their government. The old shibboleths of the Cold War are shorn of meaning and significance, and yet there is still some space, despite the premature demise of the non-aligned movement, for principled positions in international affairs.

For these reasons Yasser Arafat's recent letter to the Indian prime minister, in which he has urged India to use its weight and influence for resolving tensions in West Asia, is timely. Admittedly, the Government of India cannot broker a peace deal in West Asia. Yet it is possible for us to take the position that the situation requires a different line of conduct, no longer governed by the motives of the contest for power, but by motives appealing to the common welfare and the common interests of the rival parties. Above all, the for-

eign minister must join hands with his like-minded counterparts in other countries to ask for a change of mood and a change of aim in Israel's policies towards the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. After all, it is no longer possible for the Jewish people, or some of them, to desire a world containing no Palestinians. We will do well to recall our long-standing moral and ideological commitment to the Palestinian cause. Is it now the case that our national interests conflict with that covenant?

The Arabs have been our natural allies, a point underlined by Arafat, and it would be a mistake to abandon them in preference to a regime that wields the big stick to

Mahatma wrote to C.F. Andrews in October 1938.

Let us not forget that leaders of the Indian national movement were not just concerned with the country's independence but with freedom struggles all over the world. During the inter-war years, in particular, home and international affairs were closely intertwined. The Spanish Civil War — a battle between fascism and democracy in Europe — dominated the attention of the Congress party. The gates of Madrid had become the symbols of human liberty, Nehru organised the collection of funds to send foodgrains from India and an ambulance unit.

Nehru's initial interest in international affairs, kindled as early as 1927, a good 20 years prior to independence, developed in the 1950s around two vital issues — decolonisation and disarmament. To him, both of these issues had pragmatic and moral components to them. Thus he campaigned for the abolition of nuclear weaponry — "these frightful engines of destruction" — because the emergent arms race between the superpowers would have disastrous consequences not only for the newly decolonised countries in general, but for India in particular. In short, his crusade for decolonisation and disarmament and his articulation of an explicit vision for India's foreign policy and his moral crusade enhanced the country's stature worldwide.

The world is no longer cast in Nehru's image. Yet the Congress, claiming a part of his heritage, needs to learn a few lessons from his record on international affairs. At the same time, we need to know if the party has, in the light of post-Cold War developments, prepared a blueprint for guiding the foreign policy of the nation. If the studious silence on the Palestinian crisis is any indication, the Congress leadership appears to have relegated major foreign affairs into the back-ground. This is bad news for a national political party.

Indo-Iraq panel meet ends

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 28. After a gap of several years, India and Iraq have concluded the meeting of their joint commission and are getting ready for a fresh round of talks.

Iraq's visiting Vice President, Mr. Taha Ramadhan, who is second in the political hierarchy, held discussions today with the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh. India sees Iraq as a player in fulfilling its energy requirements. Not surprisingly, the Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Mr. Ram Naik, called on Mr. Ramadhan. India is keen on acquiring Iraqi crude which is best suited for its industry on the

west coast. The recourse to Iraq for oil follows a policy decision to diversify the procurement of its petroleum needs. Besides countries in the Gulf, India sees key countries in Central Asia, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nigeria as future suppliers of oil.

Given the thrust on economic ties, Mr. Ramadhan met the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Mr. Omar Abdullah.

India has decided to give top priority to Mr. Ramadhan's visit. The visiting dignitary will call on the President and Prime Minister and address members of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on Wednesday.

THE HINDU

29 NOV 2000

14710 30 Iraq on a roll 9/1/82

IT DOES not take a Vice-President to sign an oil exploration agreement. But Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadhan had more than oil in mind when he came to India to sign a deal between the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation-Videsh and the Oil Exploration Company of Iraq. The accelerating diplomatic activity between Baghdad and New Delhi is part of Iraq's recent campaign to chip away at a wall of sanctions it rightly perceives as being vulnerable. India sensibly keeps strictly to the letter of international law in its dealings with Iraq. Unlike sanctions-busters like France, China and Russia, New Delhi cannot veto any future United Nations punishment of violators. However, India can safely look the other way when Iraqi officials use illegal flights to come here. The Indian Government is opposed to sanctions in principle and the punitive measures aimed at Iraq in particular.

The sanctions Washington enforces against Baghdad look increasingly like a punishment seeking a crime. Even the US has given up on trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Its secondary goal of ensuring Mr Hussein never develops nuclear or chemical weapons is fraying at the edges. Washington continues with sanctions seemingly for lack of an alternative policy that it can sell domestically. The US needs to dilute its policy goals and broadly ensure Mr Hussein is not a threat to regional or international security. This is a target that neither India nor most Arab nations will denounce. This goal has largely been accomplished. Iraq's nuclear and chemical weapons infrastructure has been more or less dismantled. Iraq, in part because of the severe social consequences of the economic sanctions and Mr Hussein's cynical manipulation of their effects, is in no position to threaten its neighbours for decades.

However, there is still enough bellicosity and unpredictability in Mr Hussein's behaviour for there to be a case against completely lifting sanctions. Iraq has shown little contrition for invading and pillaging Kuwait. It continues to press its claim to the sheikhdom. Such medieval tendencies cannot be condoned or overlooked. Iraq is now just a few hundred thousand barrels short of the 2.6 million barrels of crude oil it produced before its attack on Kuwait. Even with the war reparations Baghdad pays, the recent rise in oil prices has filled its coffers. The only real concern left of the international community is seeing to it that whatever Iraq earns is not spent on rebuilding Mr Hussein's military machine. This means maintaining UN controls on the oil sales and export earnings of Iraq. But the sun should now set on the inspection programmes, the no-fly zones and the bans on civilian economic movement between Iraq and the world.

Iraq to defy UN on oil price

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 29. — Iraq has reportedly proposed to sell crude to India at a differential pricing formula which, if implemented, may affect international crude oil prices.

Iraq won't cut crude production but go ahead with its pricing formula even if the UN's sanctions committee rejects it.

India and Iraq today agreed on a cooperation framework for a long-term strategic partnership as Baghdad urged New Delhi to look beyond UN sanctions and help in rebuilding its economy. A tentative bilateral agreement has been worked out that would enable Iraq to import food items, especially wheat, from India and export oil. The pact will take concrete shape after consultations with the UN.

The agreement won't be under the Food for Oil programme. ONGC Videsh will explore oil in Iraq within UN sanctions.

The Iraqi Vice-President, Mr Taha Yassin Ramadan, today held talks with Indian leaders.

Cyclone kills one

CHENNAI, Nov. 29. — The cyclone that hit the coast between Pondicherry and Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu this evening claimed at least one life in the Union territory. — PTI

■ Details on page 8

THE HINEL

30 NOV 2000

Iraq seeks 'mechanism' for bilateral ties

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 29. Iraq seeks to develop a wide-ranging relationship with India to withstand the pressures and 'special circumstances' prevailing in both the countries. It is also in favour of a 'clear mechanism' to overcome future problems in the proposed closer strategic relationship.

The visiting Iraqi Vice-President, Mr. Taha Yassin Ramadhan, today stressed that the proposal for a 'strategic' relationship was not because of the circumstances currently facing his country.

The suggestion had been made in 1974 when the Iraqi president, Mr. Saddam Hussein, visited India 'in the heyday of Iraq's economic revival'. Even at that time, Mr. Hussein had sought new avenues for combining bilateral strategic interests in the long term.

Mr. Ramadhan who was addressing a meeting organised by the Federation Of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), said the tensions and pressures on India and Iraq could not be encompassed in ordinary bilateral relations. "Therefore it is incumbent on us to establish the kind of relationship which will cater to the challenges of the future," he said.

He felt the relationship should not have any constraints and instead should lead to 'an opening of doors'. For this purpose, a mechanism was needed.

Mr. Ramadhan urged the business community not to focus on the oil-for-food programme under the aegis of the U.N. because it would not help to achieve the aim of closer economic ties. He described it as a 'temporary necessary measure' which would disappear after some time.

In this context, he said Iraq's declared policy is to accord 'priority' to countries which take pos-



The Vice-President of Iraq, Mr. Taha Yassin Ramadhan, with the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, at the Hyderabad House, New Delhi, on Wednesday. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, is also seen. — Photo: S. Arneja

itive steps towards cooperation even during the sanctions regime. But this did not apply to countries which functioned only under the ambit of the U.N. controls.

It had to be a wider relationship of economic cooperation. In the case of India and Iraq, he said it had to reflect the huge potential of both the countries.

As for Iraq, he said it not only had the second largest oil reserve in the world, it also sought more diversified economic cooperation beyond merely sale of oil to India.

This was largely in the area of joint venture projects, training and transfer of technology as well as areas of the new economy.

Joint ventures could be in oil exploration, petrochemical complexes, provision of oil equipment, know-how exchange, training and development.

Similarly, power generation projects could involve transfer of technology, training and building of cadres. "We do not need quick results, as this should be viewed in the long term," he said.

India has been invited to participate in developing an oil field in Iraq. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) will also prospect for oil in Iraq's Tuba field as part of an international consortium. India has also decided to supply raw material and

equipment and as well participate in Iraq's telecommunication, transport and power sectors. These decisions were taken during a meeting of the Indo-Iraq joint commission which was held prior to Mr. Ramadhan's visit.

Mr. Ramadhan also took the opportunity to urge the Indian industry to improve the quality of their products. "We will not compare your products with the best in the world.

For instance, we will not compare with Japan because politics does enter into it," he said. At the same time, he said quality improvement was essential in view of growing global competition.

THE HINDU

30 NOV 2000

Steps for economic tie-up with Iraq

By K.K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, NOV. 29. Measures to enhance economic cooperation with Iraq, finalised during the current discussions of the visiting Vice-President, Mr. Taha Ramadhan, are seen here as demonstrating a pragmatic approach by India, that had been evident of late — among other cases, in dealings with the military regime of Myanmar (despite obvious differences in the two cases).

Mr. Ramadhan is the first top-level dignitary from Baghdad to have come here in the last ten years.

Because of the groundwork already done, there was no difficulty in achieving results — private entrepreneurs, under the auspices of FICCI, signed memoranda of understanding with the Iraqi side, apart from agreed decisions at the official level.

Mr. Ramadhan was the guest at a formal dinner hosted by the Vice-President, Mr. Krishan Kant, met the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and held talks with the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jas-

want Singh — all suggesting a high protocol rating of the visit.

Because of the Security Council sanctions against Iraq, its contacts with India, both political and economic, had been limited. India, like most other countries, supports removal of the embargoes which had continued far too long and caused acute sufferings to the people of Iraq.

Meanwhile, New Delhi has chosen to augment economic dealings with Iraq within the framework of the sanctions.

In two ways — in the "food for oil" programme, under which Iraq could buy foodgrain, medicines and other essential items against the sale of its crude, and, two, under a provision of the U.N. Charter, which entitles any other country, adversely affected by sanctions, to approach the Security Council for relief.

In the first case, Iraq has been asked to increase its imports from India, which are a mere three per cent now and, in the second case, a package has been given shape which, with clearance from the U.N. Council, could help ease

pressures on India because of the ever-increasing cost of oil in the world market.

Under Art. 50 of the U.N. Charter, "if preventive or enforcement measures against any state are taken by the Security Council, any other State, whether a member of the United Nations or not, which finds itself confronted with special economic problems arising from the carrying out of those measures shall have the right to consult the Security Council with regard to a solution of these problems".

New Delhi faces a serious problem because of the abnormal rise in its import bill for oil, while Iraq is in a position to supply crude of the type best suited to India's requirements on terms helpful to it.

New Delhi's initiative, resulting in the current visit of Mr. Ramadhan's, came at a time when most countries, including major powers and Arab nations, have augmented their ties with Iraq, either by choosing not to go by rigid and, in some cases, unwarranted interpretations of the sanctions regime or by re-interpreting its

provisions or by using the loopholes in the U.N. mandate.

"Delegations" from Russia, China and France and political figures from Malaysia and Indonesia recently visited Baghdad, at times ignoring the no-fly zones, enforced by the Americans. New Delhi could play a major role in the re-construction of Iraq and has told Baghdad about it.

As such, India would like to position itself to be able to use the opportunities after the removal of sanctions. Indian officials recall the support extended by Iraq to India on Kashmir and related matters.

In deciding to expand its relations with Iraq, India did not have to face the dilemma of the type, it experienced while deciding to invite Gen. Maung Aye, number two in the military government in Yangon.

New Delhi made a difficult choice in favour of pragmatism in the clash between it and ideology (support to the leader of the democratic forces, Ms. Aug San Suu Kyi).

Egyptian Foreign Minister likely to visit in April

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 3. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Amir Moussa, is likely to visit India in April next year, the Egyptian Ambassador in India, Mr. Madi, told the Bharatiya Janata Party president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman, at a meeting between the two here today. Mr. Madi was hopeful that a fertilizer project would come through making India the fifth largest investor in Egypt.

Mr. Madi said that Egypt was looking forward to the visit of the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to Cairo in February when the Indo-Egypt Joint Commission is to meet.

The crisis involving Palestine and Israel was discussed during the meeting and Mr. Madi was reported to be appreciative of the Indian position.

Mr. Laxman said that India was interested in seeing the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East.

THE HINDU

4 NOV 2000

Jaswant Algeria trip begins on Monday

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 20: When external affairs minister Jaswant Singh visits Algeria on Monday, he will have a lot to explain regarding India's decision to de-recognise Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

New Delhi's move to de-recognise SADR, was seen by the north African nations as a shift in its foreign policy. Algeria, which borders Western Sahara, has natural interest in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic's dispute with Morocco.

During his three-day visit Mr Jaswant Singh beginning from October 23, he will discuss with Algerian leaders about the situation in West Asia and other international issues.

The talks will cover a whole range of issues. India and Algeria maintain good relations and are working closely in various international fora like the non-aligned

movement, G-77 and G-15.

India de-recognised SADR on June 26 without giving any reason. While recognising SADR, it had allowed Polisario to open office in New Delhi. SADR stakes claim on the Western Sahara region west of Africa. Morocco, situated north of Western Sahara also has territorial claims over the region.

India and Algeria have had little contact over the years. The last meeting of Indo-Algerian joint commission took place in Algeria in June.

Mr Jaswant Singh met Algerian foreign minister Youcef Yousifi during the UN General Assembly meeting.

He will call on President Abdel Azia Bouteflika and the Prime Minister besides minister for state for foreign affairs Abdel Aziz Belkhaden.

Secretary (East) K.V. Rajan had also met Mr Youcef Yousfi in July at Organisation of African Unity conference in Lome.

THE ASIAN AGE

21 OCT 2000

India's West Asian stakes

By C. Raja Mohan

40-13
16/10
For nearly four decades, India could find nothing right about Israel. Now it seems New Delhi cannot say anything critical about Tel Aviv. The unfolding crisis in West Asia has exposed the difficult challenges facing India's new diplomacy towards the volatile region.

Caught between the imperatives of a new cooperative relationship with Israel and the traditional friendly ties with the Arab world, India found itself flat-footed in responding to the latest explosion of political tensions between Arabs and Israelis. It appeared that New Delhi was hoping the crisis would just go away quickly.

For nearly a decade, the forward movement in the Arab-Israeli peace process allowed India to undertake much needed adjustments to its West Asian policy. From total support to all the Arab positions and a refusal to engage Israel until the early 1990s, India has worked hard over the last decade to rebalance its position in the region.

But the new bonhomie between India and Israel has tended to give the impression that India might be moving from one extreme position to another. The Government needs to quickly correct the growing misperception among the Arab nations that India's new engagement with Israel has stifled New Delhi's political voice in West Asia.

The peace process has ground to a halt. Tensions in the West Asian region are beginning to boil over. A new and difficult phase in Arab-Israeli relations has begun. If India sees itself playing a larger role in the world, it just cannot ignore developments in West Asia. It will have to take public positions on important developments.

India has a huge stake in sustaining the peace process in West Asia. There is a big danger today that extremist forces on both sides will push the region into a renewed conflict that will undermine the Indian interest in pursuing good relations with both Israel and the Arab nation.

Despite calls on the Government to reinvent the past ideological approach to West Asia, there is little reason for India to return to the

old ways of doing diplomatic business in the region. India needs to stick with some broad principles, support pragmatic moves to defuse tension, and lend whatever support it can for a restoration of the peace process.

* * *

Politics has never been absent from the decisions on Nobel prizes for peace and literature. Cynics have always pointed to the Western ideological interests that coloured these decisions during the Cold War. The pattern might have begun to change somewhat since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This year's literature Nobel to a Chinese dissident writer, Mr. Gao Xingjiang, may be seen as fitting the old pattern of anti-communism. But there can be no doubt that the award of the peace prize to the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae-jung, is a deserving one. A life-long democrat who fought against authoritarianism in his country and has now boldly engaged the

DIPLOMATIC NOTES

North Koreans, Mr. Kim is an appropriate choice for the prize.

Ideological biases, however, are not a monopoly of the West. They are equally evident in the Indian decisions on the Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi prizes. They have mostly gone to third world leaders who could be certified here as carrying impeccable non-aligned credentials. India's "anti-imperialist" orientation during the Cold War meant that Western personalities, as a rule, did not fit the bill. The only exception one can recall is the American civil rights leader, Rev. Martin Luther King.

It does not appear that the wise old men who make these decisions in New Delhi have entirely gotten over the Cold War mindset. Otherwise, could they not have thought of Mr. Kim as a candidate for the Nehru prize?

The unavoidable politics associated with high-profile prizes often create serious problems for the conduct of foreign policy. Recall India's decision a few years ago to award the Nehru prize to Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi who has been fighting to overthrow the military rule in

Myanmar. The announcement came right in the middle of a joint campaign by Indian and Myanmar armed forces against the militants in the North East!

Indian policy towards Myanmar over the last decade was torn between the desire to support democratic restoration in that country and the importance of dealing with the military rulers. Eventually, however, India worked out a policy of "engaging" the military leadership constructively without "endorsing" their domestic politics.

* * *

Diplomacy is all about words. In announcing the last minute change yesterday in the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh's travel plans to Saudi Arabia, the spokesman of the Foreign Office refused to use the word "postponement". He preferred instead to talk about the Saudi request to "defer" the visit. Even better was his phrase about "rescheduling" the trip.

The spokesman was determined not to generate any misperceptions about postponing a highly sensitive visit that had been in the works for more than a year. It was to be the first-ever trip by an Indian Foreign Minister to Saudi Arabia; a lot of diplomatic footwork went into arranging it, and would hopefully take place sooner than later.

Words may be the basic tools of trade for diplomats, but their jargon is often confusing, and needs to be translated into normal language. Take for example the phrase "non-paper". What in the world could a "non-paper" be?

A non-paper is an informal but accurate way in which a government could communicate with another in a written form about a particular issue. A non-paper usually presents a summary of points that have been made or will be made by a diplomat to officials of the host government in an oral presentation. The objective of the non-paper is to aid the memory of the other side, but is not meant for quotation or attribution as an authoritative statement of the position of the diplomat's government.

THE HINDU

16 OCT 2000

India should condemn Israel for violence: CPI(M)

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 14. The CPI(M) today said New Delhi should demand a meeting of the U.N. Security Council where Israel should be condemned for sponsoring violence in the West Bank and Gaza against Palestinians.

In a statement here, the CPI(M) polit bureau demanded that the Vajpayee Government "immediately come out in clear-cut terms denouncing the Israeli Government-sponsored violence." The party charged that the BJP-led Government has reversed the traditional Indian policy of firm support to the Palestinian people for self-determination against Israeli repression.

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BJP-led Government, it said, has entered into close ties with the Israeli Govern-

ment including security cooperation and was even seeking assistance from that country for internal security matters in Kashmir.

"The Vajpayee Government cannot take a position of neutrality on the future of the Palestinian people, a cause which India has upheld ever since independence" the statement said. The CPI(M) said Israeli security forces have been conducting an undeclared war on the Palestinian people for the past three weeks and over a hundred Palestinians had been shot dead by Israeli forces in the West Bank and Gaza.

It said the Israeli Government was refusing to implement important provisions of the peace agreement and had now embarked upon a policy of "brutal repression" which has sabotaged the prospects of a political settle-

ment to ensure an independent state of Palestine.

Cong. attacks Israeli action

The Congress has criticised the Israeli action against the Palestinians at Ramallah as "unwarranted and highly deplorable."

In a statement issued by the AICC spokesperson, the party says that "the Palestinians are entitled to their rightful place and to a life of dignity in their own land, and the process of resolving the issues through peaceful means should be expedited." Urging the Israeli authorities not to resort to violence, the party wants that such a recourse to violence against "innocent civilians will spell the death knell to the peace process and prevent it from reaching its logical conclusion."

THE HINDU

15 OCT 2000

Jaswant's Saudi Arabia visit crucial

Shishir Gupta
New Delhi, October 13

THREATENED BY instability in the region and soaring oil prices, India is taking concrete steps for forging a long-term bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia.

In the first high-level political contact between the two countries in 20 years, Mr Jaswant Singh will be India's first External Affairs Minister to visit Saudi Arabia from October 17-19. During the visit, an agreement that envisages regular interaction between the foreign offices of the two countries will be signed. A protocol on drug trafficking will also be initiated.

Mr Jaswant Singh is scheduled to meet King Fahd, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal, Interior

Minister Prince Naif, Defence Minister Prince Salman and Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz.

Saudi Arabia is crucial to India's energy requirements. About 7.5 million tonnes of crude oil worth around \$750 million from Saudi Arabia every year.

India is keen that Saudi Arabia exercises its influence with OPEC to evolve a regime that leads to stable oil prices. The timing of Mr Singh's visit to Riyadh is of considerable significance. With the tussle between "moderate" and "radical" elements in the Saudi elite coming to a head, India sees an opportunity to break common ground on regional security issues.

New Delhi is also keen to weaken the Saudi-Pakistan alliance. Riyadh exercises tremendous influence on

Pakistan's ruling elite. It has also made inroads into mujahideen groups from Pakistan. Even though Saudi Arabia was among the first to recognise the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it has started looking afresh at the negative impact the Afghan developments have had on its own security.

Continued support to the Taliban also brings Saudi Arabia at loggerheads with its prime ally, the US. Washington has declared its opposition to the Taliban, which it feels are backing Saudi fugitive Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect in the bombing of the US missions in Tanzania and Kenya. So, there is pressure on the Saudis to distance themselves from the Taliban.

However, there appear to be some contradictions within the

ruling elite as the country's security set-up, headed by Intelligence Chief Turki Al Faisal, continues to advocate the Taliban cause.

India, on its part, would like Saudi Arabia to distance itself from the Taliban and in the process choke its financial source. While the Saudi Government is not officially funding the Taliban, there are religious Wahabi foundations in that country which are reportedly funneling funds to the Taliban.

The agreement on drug trafficking is important to both India and Saudi Arabia, who want to check smuggling of narcotics from South-East Asia. Heroin from Thailand and Myanmar is routed via Chennai and Colombo to Jeddah, from where it makes its way to European and American markets.

Govt is anti-farmer: Scindia

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 13

CONGRESS DEPUTY leader in the Lok Sabha Madhavrao Scindia today said the NDA Government's anti-farmer agenda had reached new heights with its decision to stop procurement of paddy in Punjab and Haryana.

In a Press statement, Mr Scindia slammed the Government for literally giving up the minimum support price policy which was meant for encouraging farmers to pro-

duce more foodgrains. "But the Vajpayee Government seems to be reversing this policy and trying to make the country again dependent on import of foodgrains," he said. Stating that the NDA Government's economic policies

were only meant for the rich, Mr Scindia said its failure to procure paddy is the culmination of a series of onslaughts on the farming community. "The farmers have been specially hit hard by the economic policies. First, the budgetary provisions for farmers were slashed then fertiliser and diesel prices were hiked within six months.

Moreover, the lifting of restrictions on import of agricultural goods has dealt a crushing blow to them," he said.

Mr Scindia said the Food Corporation of India was refusing to buy paddy on the plea that 80 per cent of it was sub-standard. "But laboratory analysis has clearly established that FCI charge is baseless. The government is actually misleading the farmers since

its main intention behind not procuring paddy is to abandon the present foodgrain policy," he charged.

Dwelling on the plight of the farmers, he said it was sad that the farmers were being driven to commit suicide. He demanded that the government should immediately start paddy procurement.

Meanwhile, the Congress today set up a five-member committee, headed by Balram Jakhar, to propose measures for tackling this crisis. The committee's report will be submitted to party president Sonia Gandhi by October 15 after which the Congress Working Committee will meet to deliberate on it. The other committee members are Arjun Singh, Shivraj Patil, S.C.Jha and Mani Shankar Aiyar.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 OCT 2000

India's help sought in derailed West Asia peace process

The Times of India News Service
and Agencies

NEW DELHI: The Indian government on Friday announced its decision to rush some medical supplies to Palestine, claiming that its intervention had been sought in the West Asia peace process prior to the escalation of violence, even while it steered clear of taking a stand on developments in the region.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has sent two letters to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in the last few days—one of them arriving on Thursday—explaining recent developments from the Israeli perspective. The Palestinian leadership was also in touch with India.

Using generalities to spell out its non-committal stand on the spiralling violence between Israel and the Palestinians, the ministry of external affairs called on both sides to desist from provocative acts, use of indiscriminate force and encouragement to violence. "This is not simply an Israel-Palestine or even a regional issue, it is a matter that concerns all humanity," an official statement by the ministry said.

While India has begun to show signs of intervening in the West Asia peace process, U.S. President Bill Clinton has "now more or less given up" his West Asia peace efforts, dealing yet another blow to hopes of reviving the peace process in the violence-torn region.

Mr Clinton on Thursday "reject-

ed" a summit meeting which Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak had belatedly agreed to hold to bring the U.S. President, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak together, *The New York Times* reported.

The Palestinians on Thursday accused Israel of declaring "war" and appealed for UN security council action, as Mr Barak announced he would form a crisis cabinet with the right-wing opposition.

With the region on the brink, Mr Clinton called for an immediate cease-fire. "While I understand the anguish of the Palestinians, there can be no possible justification for mob violence," he told reporters at the White House.

On the trouble front, Israeli gunships made five raids on the West Bank town of Ramallah where soldiers were lynched just hours earlier, hitting the Palestinian authority's local office, police headquarters and other targets. At least 30 peo-

ple were injured, medical officials said.

Israel sent helicopters to blast Palestinian targets in a step closer to all-out war, and decided to set up an emergency government with hardliners after three of its soldiers were lynched.

On the diplomatic front, the U.S. said it would strongly oppose any moves to raise the West Asia crisis in the UN security council despite Palestinian appeals.

17 U.S. sailors die in Yemen blast

ADEN (Yemen): Seventeen U.S. sailors died in an apparent bomb attack on the 'USS Cole' while it was refuelling in Yemen, U.S. officials said on Friday. American military planes evacuated 22 of the injured from Yemen to Germany for medical treatment.

Navy officials in the U.S. said the explosives experts who examined the ship's damaged hull had concluded that the blast came from an external source, adding to evidence that it was deliberate.

Western diplomats in Yemen said the explosion seemed to be the work of a well-organised group, with good connections in the port of Aden, who might have provided the bombers with some logistical support. (Agencies)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 OCT 2000

7-year bid for peace in shreds

Jerusalem, Oct. 13 (Agencies): Seven years of efforts for peace in West Asia lay in tatters with Israel and Palestine ignoring calls for restraint and continuing to battle each other.

As escalating violence raised the spectre of all-out war in the region, the US said it did not have any conditions to holding a West Asia summit, apparently dropping its insistence that the warring sides first commit to ending their 16 days of clashes.

Israeli tank crews fired machine-guns in a clash that erupted today during a Palestinian "march of rage" in Ramallah, the West Bank town which Israeli helicopter gunships rocketed yesterday.

There were no reports of casualties in the exchange of gunfire at a junction in Ramallah, where two Israeli soldiers were lynched by a mob yesterday. Thousands of Palestinians, some chanting for militants to bomb Tel Aviv, took to the streets of West Bank towns in similar marches.

In Gaza City, a mob set fire to a hotel and shops which, they said, sold alcohol.

A protester was shot in Hebron, raising the toll to 98 in the renewed spell of violence that has torpedoed the peace process.

In Washington, White House spokesman Jake Siewert said the US was not "setting any conditions" for a meeting between Palestine leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

But, Siewert added, President Bill Clinton is yet to take a decision on convening the meeting. Egypt has been mooted as the potential host for a summit as early as Sunday.

The US has closed public operations at all its embassies and consulates in West Asia for three days.

West Asia warriors at Delhi door

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Oct. 13: Both Israel and Palestine have requested India to help broker truce in West Asia and save the peace process from collapse.

The twin requests have placed Delhi in a piquant situation but they are also an index of the growing respect it commands in the region. While Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak telephoned Atal Behari Vajpayee twice in the past few days, Palestine leader Yasser Arafat has sought Delhi's intervention through its representative in the Gaza Strip.

India has so far taken care not to tilt either way, only issuing a plea to the warring groups to give peace a chance in the embattled region. It also sent a Rs 25-lakh relief package for Palestinians wounded in the violence.

Delhi will now have to do some tightrope-walking. It has traditionally been a friend of the Palestinians, but of late its ties with Israel have deepened, specially after the unconditional support it received during the Kargil war.

Jaswant Singh will take up the issue of the crumbling peace talks with Riyadh in the first-ever foreign ministerial visit to Saudi Arabia next week. The talks will aim at finding ways to salvage the collapsing peace process. (See Page 9)

The foreign ministry today issued a statement condemning the escalating violence in the region. "...deliberate acts of provocation, excessive use of force, wanton killings of innocents, including most sadly, children, desecration of places of worship, tak-

ing hostages and retaliatory killing of soldiers... directly cause a descent into uncontrollable disorder."

But Delhi took care not to take sides. "This must cease. We urge all sides to desist from provocative acts, use of indiscriminate force and encouragement to violence. Peace must immediately be restored, the West Asia Peace Process not permitted to collapse irretrievably. This is not simply an Israel-Palestine or even a regional issue, it is a matter that concerns all of humanity."

A foreign ministry official also said that Delhi was in touch with both sides and "we will do whatever we can to help improve the situation and send the two sides back to the negotiating table."

An earlier Indian statement urging both sides to restore normality did not go down well with the Palestinians, who felt India should have slammed the Israeli hand in the violence in stronger terms. Delhi, however, refused to issue a statement that may not have been satisfactory for Tel Aviv.

Though India began normalising ties with Israel during Narasimha Rao's term, there has been a distinct upswing in relations under the BJP regime.

Home minister L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh visited Israel in June-July this year, inviting much flak from Arab nations.

However, the critics fell silent a month later, with Arafat choosing to visit India in August. Israeli leader Shimon Peres soon followed in Arafat's footsteps.

THE TELEGRAPH

14 OCT 2000

98-6
16/10

Need to tap the goodwill in Riyadh

Bridging the Gulf

IT is the Middle East crisis that has forced the Minister for External Affairs Jaswant Singh to postpone his visit to Riyadh. The visit, whenever it takes place, will be the first high-level bilateral political exchange between Saudi Arabia and India after a gap of nearly four years. It will give more substance to our relations with Saudi Arabia which is the largest and most influential country in the Gulf region. The relations became tenuous during the last two decades because of Saudi Arabia's involvement in the Afghan conflict, with general support extended to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and due to the destruction of the Babri mosque.

The uncertainties and distances were basically of a political and strategic nature. India's establishing diplomatic relations with Israel also generated some reservations in the Saudi power structure. Nearly one half of the total of 1.5 to two million Indians working in the countries of the Gulf work in Saudi Arabia. It is one of the major suppliers of petroleum products to India. In the broader context of global and regional equations also, Saudi Arabia is and should be an important focus of attention in our foreign policy. It is one of the most influential countries of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC).

It would be relevant to take note of the overall foreign policy and strategic concerns of Saudi Arabia as they have evolved during the last two and a half decades. The foremost concern of the Saudi power structure is to sustain itself in power in the face of growing pressures of modernisation, democratisation and the political consciousness and aspirations of the people of the country. The overthrow of the Shah of Iran by Ayatollah Khomeini, revolution in Afghanistan backed by Soviet intervention in that country and the territorial and economic ambitions of Iraq in relation to the countries of the Gulf generated a range of threat perceptions in Saudi Arabia's ruling elite. A security

structure which the US had sought to put up on the twin pillars of its politico-strategic equations with Iran and Saudi Arabia crumbled with the revolution in Iran. This benefitted Saudi Arabia because the country became the focus of attention and cooperation for the US. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the tensions with Iran resulted in Saudi Arabia being the fulcrum around which the US built its strategic and security arrangements in the region.

Given the volatile situation in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Iraq and the difficulties being faced by the Middle East peace process, Saudi Arabia is becoming the most important military



J.N. DIXIT

Saudi Arabia's commitment to ensure safety and freedom of navigation in the shipping lanes and trade routes is of vital interest to India

power in the region. The responsibility for the security of the Gulf region should primarily rest with the countries of the region. While permanent military presence of foreign powers should be avoided, foreign military assistance should be allowed when necessary for regional security in the Gulf. The countries of the Gulf should remain committed to the territorial integrity of the states of the region. Mutual assistance should be arranged between the countries of the region against subversion and arrangements for cooperation should be established in intelligence matters. The countries of the Gulf should ensure freedom of navigation as it is of vital interest to them. No extra-regional power should be allowed to dominate the Gulf.

These elements of the Saudi security doctrine are undersigned by the

US's strategic position in the Gulf region which remains unchanged. President Carter initiated his doctrine on the subject in January 1980 when he stated: "Let our (US's) position be absolutely clear. Any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be recorded as an assault on the vital interests of the US and such an assault will be repelled by

any means necessary, including military force. Finally, we are prepared to work with other countries in the region to share a cooperative framework that respects differing values and political beliefs, yet which enhances the independence, secu-

urity and prosperity of all."

President Reagan elaborated US policies further in May 1987 when he stated: "The use of the vital sea lanes of the Persian Gulf will not be dictated by the Iranians. These lanes will not be allowed to come under the control of the Soviet Union, the Persian Gulf will remain open for navigation for nations of the world." The reference to the Soviet Union in his statement was in the context of the massive Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. This approach of the US backed the Saudi Arabian intentions of resisting the Soviet presence not only on strategic and political grounds but on religious grounds. The US and Saudi Arabia became operational supporters of the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. The Saudi intelligence agency and Saudi money were factors which sustained the resis-

tance to the Soviet Union which ultimately resulted in the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

There is a substantive mutuality of economic interests in spheres of trade and in the energy sector. India as an important source of skilled manpower servicing the Saudi Arabian economy is of interest to Saudi Arabia. The foreign exchange remittances of Indians working in Saudi Arabia constitute an important segment of India's foreign exchange earnings. Saudi Arabia's commitment to ensure safety and freedom of navigation in the shipping lanes and trade routes is of vital interest to India. The OIC secretariat is located in Saudi Arabia and cooperative relationship with Saudi Arabia would help India establish linkages with the OIC countries to influence them to some extent to temper Pakistan's adversarial attitude towards India.

One must acknowledge that the prospects of this will remain limited. On issues related to Jammu and Kashmir, the Saudi position has been ambiguous towards India and generally supportive of Pakistan. But given the shifts in the US policies since the Kargil conflict, Saudi Arabia would be marginally more receptive about our views on J&K which Jaswant Singh will no doubt articulate during his visit. It is on cross-border terrorism, the role of the Taliban and other religious extremists in J&K that India should undertake an in-depth discussion with Saudi Arabia. The chief of intelligence of Saudi Arabia has influence both in Pakistan and with the Taliban. India would like to discuss with the Saudi authorities its concerns about cross-border terrorism and relate issues as mutual understanding and some cooperation between Saudi Arabia and India in this sphere is of special interest and importance to India. One recalls that some doubts and misunderstandings have resulted from Jaswant Singh's visit to Israel this summer. Needless to say, these need to be removed.

INDIAN EXPRESS

16 OCT 2000

Jaswant's Saudi visit put off

15/10 By C. Raja Mohan HD-11

NEW DELHI, OCT. 14. As international diplomatic efforts to contain the explosive situation in West Asia moved into high gear today, the long-awaited visit by the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to Saudi Arabia has been postponed.

The request for deferring Mr. Singh's visit came from Riyadh this morning. Saudi Arabia, a crucial player in West Asian politics, is deeply involved in the intensified consultations among the Arab states to address the rising tensions with Israel.

Leaders from key Arab states have been arriving in Riyadh for talks with the Saudi leadership on how best to cope with the current confrontation in West Asia.

A wave of popular anger against Israel and the United States is sweeping across the Arab world and the leaders of the Arab nations are under some pressure to be seen as acting.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has already nudged the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and the Palestinian leader, Mr.

Yasser Arafat, to meet in Egypt on Monday. The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, and his Egyptian counterpart, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, are expected to attend the meeting.

Meanwhile, preparations are on for a summit of the Arab League in Cairo on October 21 and 22. The leaders of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia are meeting in Riyadh on Monday.

Mr. Singh was to reach Riyadh on Tuesday on a three-day visit. Both New Delhi and Riyadh had attached considerable importance to the visit, the first ever by an Indian Foreign Minister.

Official sources in the Ministry of External Affairs here say India and Saudi Arabia are likely to work out a set of mutually convenient dates for Mr. Singh's trip through diplomatic channels.

According to a spokesman of the Foreign Office here, the Saudi authorities have expressed regret at the inconvenience caused. The Government of Saudi Arabia has expressed hope that the visit, for which meticulous preparations had been made, could be rescheduled in the near future.

Jaswant Singh meets PM

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, OCT. 14. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, was today the lone visitor of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who is recuperating at Breach Candy Hospital here.

The doctors looking after Mr. Vajpayee did not allow any other visitor.

It is not known what transpired between Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Singh who has just faced criticism from his senior Ministerial colleague, the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani for accompanying terrorists released in exchange for the Indian Airlines passengers at Kandhhar.

The Union Information Technology Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, who briefed the press about the Prime Minister's health said that Mr. Vajpayee was doing well and had his physiotherapy and exercises.

The Prime Minister's left-knee joint was replaced in a surgery last Tuesday.

Ranawat leaves for New York

MUMBAI, OCT. 14. The U.S.-based orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Chitranjan Ranawat, who operated upon the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, will leave for New York late tonight.

Dr. Ranawat, who runs the Centre for Total Joint Replacement at New York's Lennox Hill hospital, is considered among the world's best orthopaedic surgeons.

He examined the Prime Minister during his visit to the U.S. and advised him to undergo surgery.

Since Dr. Ranawat is comfortable with the doctors at the Breach Candy hospital he preferred to perform the surgery here rather than in New Delhi.

He operated upon the Prime Minister and also performed a similar surgery on the Attorney-General, Mr. Soli Sorabjee. UNI

THE HINDU

15 OCT 2000

West Asia crisis tells on foreign policy consensus

By K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, OCT. 17. The Vajpayee Government's reaction to the latest West Asia developments has revived strains on the foreign policy consensus which appeared in the recent past with increased frequency. As a matter of fact, West Asia — or New Delhi's move to strengthen ties with Israel and the avoidably shrill overtones, acquired by it — evoked bitter exchanges between the ruling side and the Opposition, well before the eruption of violence and the current sharpening of confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis. In particular, the utterances of two Ministers during their visits to Tel Aviv led to bitter controversies over what otherwise was an unexceptionable initiative to expand options in international dealings.

New Delhi adopted a truly non-aligned posture when it called upon both Israel and Palestine to put an end to violence with a view to rescuing the peace process. Or when it said "the continuation, indeed escalation of violence, deliberate acts of provocation, wanton

killings of innocents, including children, desecration and damage to places of worship, taking hostages and retaliatory killings of soldiers contribute directly to a descent into uncontrollable disorder". India, on the one hand, did not apportion the blame and, on the other, avoided diplomatic involvement, not responding positively to calls for "intervention" by either side (before the situation took the present alarming turn).

The Congress and Left parties were quick to decry the Government for what was seen as a pro-Israel tilt and departure from the traditional pro-Arab stand. They linked the official stand to the decision to seek Israel's help in dealing with security matters in Jammu and Kashmir. The two parties were forthright in attacking Israeli actions.

On the other hand, those supporting the Government stand defended non-involvement in a prickly situation. Also, it was seen in line with the position that the traditional ties with the Arabs would not be allowed to suffer by the initiatives to enhance relations with Israel. Before the current spurt of

violence and the sea change brought about by it in the region, India was not apologetic about its Israel policy, drawing attention to most of the Arab countries mending fences with the Jewish state.

Then there was a third view which justified a neutral stand, referring to a lack of understanding by the Arab states, on their own, or through the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), of India's position on its problems with Pakistan and on Kashmir.

West Asia was the third major issue — dealings with South Africa and nuclear matter being the other two — on which the Opposition, the Congress in particular, demarcated itself from the official line. (At one stage, China policy too was included in this category). So strong were the reservations that the Congress planned parallel diplomacy, publicly mooted proposals for sending its delegations to China and South Africa. The idea was not pursued, however.

There was absolutely no basis for the misperception among a section of diplomats that Saudi Arabia sought postponement of the External Affairs Minister, Mr.

Jaswant Singh's visit, because of its pique at India's stand on West Asia. There was firm evidence to the contrary. Riyadh suggested a visit at a later date because it suddenly — and without warning, as it were — found itself involved in consultations over the present grave situation. From India's standpoint, the plan for the ministerial visit was of utmost importance.

Of all Arab states, Saudi Arabia had taken the hardest line against India: this stand was also reflected in the OIC — Riyadh called most of the shots in the functioning of the Secretariat of the organisation, from which had emanated the documents, based on Pakistani versions. A high-level interaction with Saudi Arabia could provide an opportunity for the two sides to know each other's position.

Mr. Singh's trip became a casualty of the timing of the West Asian crisis. That at a time of his discomfiture, caused by the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani's critical reference to his action in taking the freed militants in his plane to Kandahar during the Indian Airlines plane hijacking episode.

THE HINDU

18 OCT 2000

Lack of support strains Indo-Palestinian relations

Neutral India worries Palestinians, envoy to meet Bangaru Laxman to explain position

BY SEMA MUSTAFA

New Delhi, Oct. 16: The long-standing Indian-Palestinian friendship has come under severe strain following New Delhi's refusal to come out in categorical support of the beleaguered Palestinian people. The Palestinian ambassador to India, Dr Khalid El-Sheikh, is hard at work to make India issue a statement of open support but has not succeeded in getting anything more than an assurance of medicines worth Rs 25 lakhs for wounded Palestinians.

The ambassador refused to comment about this, but Palestinians in Delhi openly said, "This is nothing, we do not need it." The "sudden shift" in India's policy towards the Palestinians, they said, "has put a big question mark over our relations." Asked about the present status of relations with New Delhi, Mr Khalid El-

Sheikh tried to laugh off the question saying, "I do not want to say anything on the record, we have problems maybe, but I do not want to say anything."

The envoy has met foreign office officials, including the foreign secretary, several times to reportedly remind the policy-makers of the historical ties between the Palestinian Authority and India. He will meet BJP president Bangaru Laxman on Tuesday in a bid to convince him of the Palestinian position. India's "neutral" stand has worried the Palestinians who draw attention to the unprecedented support they have received from the world this time around. "It has never been like this, and most important is the unity being demonstrated by the Arab people and the Arab nations," the ambassador said in an interview with *The Asian Age*.

Mr El-Sheikh said that rightwinger Ariel Sharon had been "used as a tool by Israeli

Prime Minister Ehud Barak and the US, immediately after the failure of Camp David, to send us a clear, bloody message." He did not see Mr Sharon acting on his own, and maintained that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's refusal to succumb to the pressure had prompted Mr Barak and his US conspirators to use Mr Sharon to trigger off the trouble. Mr Sharon is the proverbial red rag for the Palestinians who regard him as the man behind the massacre of women and children in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1992.

The envoy said that the proposals forwarded by Israel and the US went completely against the UN resolutions that had been made the basis for the peace process. He said that the issues of Jerusalem, refugees, border, security, settlements and water had been under discussion, but on all these "their proposals did not even meet our minimum demands

and ran completely contrary to the UN resolutions." Mr El-Sheikh was pessimistic about the outcome of the Egypt summit, maintaining that the differences were too wide to be so easily resolved.

He pointed out that the Camp David meeting had been preceded by 18 secret meetings between Israel and the Palestinians. These had not resolved the differences between the two, and hence the failure of Camp David was a foregone conclusion. The envoy said Mr Arafat was being pressured to accept absolutely impossible proposals and his refusal led to what he felt was a deliberately engineered bloodbath.

The Palestinian envoy did not condemn the violence that has been attributed to Palestinian extremist organisations. "It is legitimate," he said, adding: "You cannot see yourself cut piece by piece." He pointed out that two deadlines for peace

had not been met by the Israelis. The first, of May 4, 1999, was passed because of the elections in Israel. The second, of September 13, 2000, was also not met. "How long do we have to wait," he asked, pointing out that the current "uprising was an accumulation of years of frustration and humiliation."

Mr El-Sheikh said that Mr Barak had been never committed to peace, and his track record on this front was far worse than his predecessor.

He agreed that there was tremendous pressure on Mr Arafat from his people not to attend the summit being hosted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. But that the world leaders had been telephoning Mr Arafat urging him not to back down from the peace process.

He quoted Mr Arafat as saying: "The road to Jerusalem lies through Sharm el-Sheikh."

THE ASIAN AGE

Ecevit frowns at Pak junta, looks through terror export

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 1. — The Turkish Prime Minister today expressed unhappiness over the military coup in Pakistan and called for an early return to democracy. But, he avoided identifying Pakistan as a source of terrorism and stressed on the need for India and Pakistan to have a dialogue.

While justifying his decision not to visit Pakistan on the grounds that he did not want to confuse his visit to India, which was to give an impetus to bilateral relations, Mr Ecevit said Turkey was not happy with the interruption of democracy in Pakistan and this had been conveyed to General Pervez Musharraf, when the latter visited Turkey soon after the coup.

Mr Ecevit, who has himself resisted military intervention in his country in the past and been tried in military courts and faced imprisonment thrice, said that while Turkey valued its relations with Pakistan, it could not support any military regime.

Expressing hope that dialogue would resolve all issues between India and Pakistan, including that of Kashmir, Mr Ecevit said he had been informed by the Pakistan ambassador in Turkey on the eve of his visit here that Pakistan wanted to take up the Kashmir issue through a dialogue without resorting to military measures.

Turkey and Greece too were solving their problems through dialogue.

While disagreeing with India's decision to carry out

nuclear tests, the Turkish Prime Minister emphasised that bilateral relations would not be affected by the differences.



Mr Bulent Ecevit inspects a guard of honour in New Delhi on Friday. — AP/PTI

Mr Ecevit said his country had suffered a great deal from cross-border terrorism and would try to increase international cooperation against terrorism. In response to a pointed question on Pakistan's export of terror, however, Mr Ecevit said Turkey did not specify any country.

Mr Ecevit described the present regime in Afghanistan as an anachronism and said it would not be able to continue for long. However, he said few were concerned about the modernisation of Afghanistan, viewing it only in terms of its strategic importance. Turkey and India should be able to discuss ways and means of helping Afghanistan become a modern state, he said.

While refusing to comment on Pakistan's role in Afghanistan, Mr Ecevit, however, said it was wrong and harmful for any country to encourage the Taliban regime.

The joint statement issued by the two countries dwells on the situation in Afghanistan with the two countries supporting UN efforts, expressing their opposition to any military resolution of the Afghan crisis, and calling for a cessation of external interference of all sorts including the supply of weapons.

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India wins over Turkey

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, APRIL 1. India has won a new political partner in West Asia. High-level consultations here with the visiting Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Bulent Ecevit, have helped consolidate India's burgeoning ties with a large Islamic nation at the crossroads of Europe, West Asia and Central Asia.

Reaffirming their common commitment to secularism, democracy and rule of law, India and Turkey have resolved to intensify their cooperation in the war against international terrorism.

The joint statement to be issued tomorrow at the end of Mr. Ecevit's three-day visit, the two sides will proclaim that the shared values of "secularism and democracy" are the foundations of a new political relationship between the two nations.

India and Turkey will also declare their "conviction" that the suppression of international terrorism, "regardless of its origin and motivation" is an "essential element" for maintenance of international peace and security.

The new bonhomie between India and Turkey and their proclaimed opposition to terrorism and extremism are likely to be viewed with dismay in Pakistan.

Turkey, a long-standing ally of Pakistan, is now seeking to build a new relationship with India discarding the baggage of the past. This is a signal to Pakistan that many of the leading Islamic nations are increasingly wary of the extremist course that Islamabad has chosen.

Mr. Ecevit left no one in doubt here about the waning significance of the historic ties with Pakistan and the need for modernity and moderation in the Islamic world.

'Not happy with Pak. rule'

At a press conference here this morning, Mr. Ecevit said Turkey was "not happy" with the military rule in Pakistan and called for an early restoration of democracy there. Asked about his decision not to stop over in Islamabad, Mr. Ecevit said his objective was "to give a new impetus to relations with India" and did not want to mix it up with a visit to Pakistan.

Referring to the new winds of democracy in the Islamic world, Mr. Ecevit said, Turkey has demonstrated that "Islam and democracy are compatible" and this should be "an example for the rest of the Islamic nations."

In an important move, India and Turkey have agreed to intensify their cooperation in Central

Asia and in finding a peaceful solution to the crisis in Afghanistan.

Expressing concern over the human rights violations in Afghanistan and the increased narcotics production there, India and Turkey have affirmed that there can be no military solution to the problems of Afghanistan, and demanded that all external interference should cease in that country.

Mr. Ecevit declared that "the present regime in Afghanistan is an anachronism out of tune with the modern world", and indirectly criticised Pakistan for supporting the Taliban. He insisted that India and Turkey must "find ways to help Afghanistan become a modern state."

As an Indophile who has translated parts of *Gita* and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, Mr. Ecevit has left here for a "sentimental journey" to Shantiniketan in West Bengal where he will be conferred the award of "Deshikottama".

Mr. Ecevit, who keeps translating verses from the *Gita*, said the book has been a valuable guide in his political life.

When confronted with many difficult choices in his long political career, Mr. Ecevit said he turned to Lord Krishna's sermon to Arjuna.

THE HINDU

- 2 APR 2000

Turkey signs MoU with India

Apratim Mukarji
New Delhi, April 1

TURKEY TODAY declared its uncompromising opposition to military dictatorship and hoped that democracy would be restored in Pakistan.

At the same time, Turkey said that it admired India's "attachment" to democracy and adherence to secularism despite severe problems.

India and Turkey signed a Memorandum of Understanding yesterday for establishing a political consultation mechanism

between their Foreign Ministries. Then other agreements signed were related to cooperation in agriculture and related areas and to a cultural and scientific exchange programme during 2000-2002.

Meanwhile, the visiting Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit told a group of journalists here today, "We are of course not happy about the interruption of democracy in Pakistan.

We hope that uninterrupted democracy should be established in the country ultimately. We attach great importance to our

relations with Pakistan but we cannot support any military regime for any purpose."

He added that he had personally expressed his wish for an early restoration of democracy to General Pervez Musharraf, the Chief Executive of Pakistan, and recommended that General Musharraf should announce the date of return of democracy to the country.

Speaking as the leader of a long-suffering victim of terrorism, he said, "We are against terrorism of any sort but we do not specify any country."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
- 2 APR 2000

West goes soft towards Gaddafi

Vijay Dutt
London, April 1



HF-12
214

THE WEST'S pariah for long, the Libyan strongman Col Muammar Gaddafi is within the striking distance of getting back into the good graces of European Union and thereby gain international acceptance.

He is about to recognise Israel and declare acceptance of norms for democracy and human rights.

9-18-ASUN

Col Gaddafi is slated to meet EU leaders at the first EU-Africa summit in Cairo starting on Monday. EC chief Romano Prodi had only a few weeks ago triggered a row when he fixed a meeting with the Libyan leader. Prodi was compelled to back down.

According to diplomats the meltdown had begun when Gaddafi agreed to hand over the two Lockerbie bombing suspects for trial and now he is reportedly willing to adopt a more conciliatory stance for an Euro-Med dialogue.

The West is more than ready to meet him halfway because it is convinced that Col Gaddafi has

renounced his help for terrorism.

Britain and other EU members are also encouraged by the mellowing of the US attitude towards Libya. A 20-member team is flying from Washington to the Libyan capital. The EU leaders are anxious to show at the Cairo meet, their concern for development in Africa, after over two-decade long pre-occupation in tackling issues in eastern and central Europe.

The lead for putting back Libya on international forums has been taken by Portugal, which holds the revolving presidency of EU. It has very good relations with Col Gaddafi.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 2 APR 2000

Not a Pipedream

Back to Iran Gas Pipeline Option

By R K PACHAURI

11-10 17/8

OPEC is in the news again as the world holds its breath wondering whether output will be increased and oil prices decline from the current level of around \$30 per barrel. Meanwhile, the oil import bill in India as in other major oil-importing countries, is straining the economy, with global oil prices having almost trebled in the past two years.

There is consequently renewed interest within the government in large-scale imports of natural gas from neighbouring countries, with active negotiations between India and Iran. In fact, a high-level Indian team is in Iran at present to discuss a proposal developed in 1989 for the supply of natural gas from the southern region of Iran to India through Pakistan. Gen Pervez Musharraf has also expressed his support for an onshore pipeline.

However, concerns about the security of supply of large quantities of gas to India, dependent on transit through Pakistan, remain high. Hence, several other options for import of natural gas are being explored. The ministry of external affairs (MEA) is taking a particular interest in this option mainly because Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh knows this subject well.

The question is often asked, why are we so eager to import natural gas when we have enough coal in this country? The answer lies in the fact that the Indian economy has to develop as a multi-fuel one. Given current trends, we can anticipate substantial increases in consumption of coal and oil, with the prospect of oil consumption itself reaching upwards of 350 million tonnes by the year 2025 and coal production in the range of one billion tonnes a year. Our interests in ensuring stable and secure supply of energy favour gas and moving away from the path of growing dependence on oil imports. There are also major environmental benefits in the use of natural gas, which could become a major source of energy over the next 30-40 years, by when renewable sources of energy should take up a large share.

It is Iran which is interested in the large-scale supply of gas to India. The geographical location of Iran's reserves makes India, perhaps, the only major market that it can service. It is in Iran's and Pakistan's individual interests to think of a gas pipeline all the way to India because the size of India's imports would allow for economies of scale.

India's options for a pipeline from Iran are not limited to the land route. Our current preference is for getting Iranian gas bypassing Pakistan's land area and preferably laying a pipeline offshore along a shallow sea route. The other option would be to lay a deep-sea pipeline far from Pakistani territory, but the technology for this and maintenance arrangements still raise many doubts, because deep-sea gas pipeline technology has not yet been tried on this scale anywhere in the world. Still another option for India is to import gas from Iran as LNG.

Our security establishment is naturally against the overland pipeline option involving Pakistan, but there are means by which our interests and the reliability of supply can be secured. First, the pipeline can and should be financed largely by international stakeholders, so that the financial loss, if any, from supply disruptions is borne by other players also, who are in a position to put

IN BRIEF

- India has renewed its interest in an onshore natural gas pipeline from Iran
- Opting for natural gas will reduce dependence on oil imports
- There are many routes we can opt for, but the land route through Pakistan is the most viable
- A mutually interlocking agreement with Pakistan on the pipeline would be beneficial to both parties

pressure on Pakistan. US companies would need to be engaged, even though current US sanctions against Iran make that questionable. Second, it is entirely possible for India to get into an arrangement for supplies larger than its own needs, and part of the gas received could be converted into LNG and supplied to Japan and Korea, making them major stakeholders. Also, an arrangement can be worked out whereby part of the gas that is supplied to India is used for power generation close to our western borders, and electricity produced supplied entirely to Pakistan.

Such a mutually interlocking agreement would prevent Pakistan disrupting the supply of gas. Also, the contractual arrangement

should be such that India pays only for the gas that is actually received, and the penalty clauses for disruptions on Pakistani territory could be severely punitive. Concurrently, Iran would also be in a position to pressure Pakistan, because it would lose revenue for supplies that do not take place. In essence, therefore, the option involving transit through Pakistan overland need not be dismissed outright. If Pakistan is serious about doing business according to international rules and ethics, it would have to withdraw sponsorship of terrorist activities.

Nobody can deny that with the current state of damaged relations between India and Pakistan, any bold initiative would hardly find favour among politicians and experts dealing with security issues, but the urgency of natural gas imports requires India to take every possible supply option seriously and to go the extra mile in exploring the finer details of how imports can be arranged. In fact, we have lost a lot of time over the last 11 years in not pursuing these options seriously. There are two reasons why our efforts in some of these areas have lacked determination and perseverance. First, the country has not elevated energy issues to a level of, say, economic reforms, and we really do not have an energy policy.

The other reason lies in the fact that for much too long it was believed that natural gas being in limited supply should be reserved only for petrochemicals, fertilisers and so-called value-added products, but not used as a fuel. It is curious that when committees chaired by distinguished officials were stressing this point, the former Soviet Union, at the height of the cold war, was going ahead with its massive pipeline deal to supply natural gas to western Europe.

The prime minister set up a group for Hydrocarbon Vision 2025, which has come out with a forward-looking report for the hydrocarbon sector. But this in some sense would be incomplete unless a similar matching vision with clearly identified actions is developed for the energy sector as a whole. Any such vision would clearly identify the benefits of India importing substantial quantities of natural gas from its neighbourhood, and this can become a part of the agenda and plans of the ministry of external affairs, the energy-related ministries and, of course, the finance ministry.

Delhi opens channel to Gulf with Jaswant visit

7/10
FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Oct. 6: After ignoring Saudi Arabia's existence for decades, India has finally woken up to its importance.

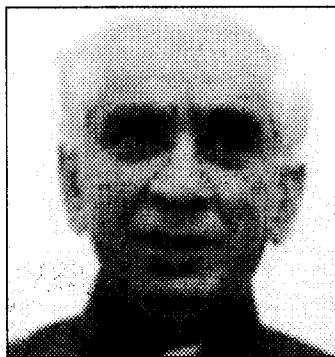
Delhi's decision to send Jaswant Singh to Saudi Arabia — the first-ever visit by an Indian foreign minister to that country — indicates its keenness to play a meaningful role in the Gulf and engage with all the key players in the region.

Singh will leave on October 15 for the three-day official tour. He will also visit Qatar after his Riyadh engagement is over.

The visit couldn't have been better timed. It takes place when Pakistan has already opened up channels with Russia, one of Delhi's closest allies. And though it may not have been planned that way, by engaging with Riyadh — Islamabad's main backer — Delhi can, to some extent, unsettle the Pervez Musharraf regime.

Foreign ministry sources said Singh is likely to interact with King Fahd, the ruler and Prime Minister of the country, and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, the deputy Prime Minister and commander of the Royal Guards, and other senior and important Saudi leaders. The foreign minister is scheduled to visit both Riyadh and Jeddah during his stay.

Saudi Arabia's importance in the region stems from a number of reasons. Not only does it have



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25 per cent of the world's oil reserves, it also has a substantial amount of natural gas.

Then, apart from being an energy-rich country, it is also home to more than 15 lakh Indian professionals who send back over four billion dollars every year.

The country is also an important member among Gulf nations and a key player in the Organisation of Islamic Countries, which has regularly come out with anti-India resolutions. The powerful Wahabi sect, to which even the ruling family belongs, has a strong influence in the Islamic world.

Moreover, the ruling family is the "custodian" of Mecca and Medina — the two most important Islamic places of worship — which draw millions of Muslims from all over the world.

So far, India's Saudi Arabia connection has been limited to

its energy requirements and the country's importance as a professional destination.

Delhi imports 7.5 million metric tonnes of crude oil and other petroleum products worth \$ 2.18 billion from Saudi Arabia every year. Its exports, mainly agro-based products, come up to only around \$ 766 million.

Saudi Arabia is also a key ally of the US in the region. Given its current camaraderie with Washington, Delhi can now tell Riyadh that their relationship needs to be re-interpreted, especially because of the changed world order in the post-Cold War period.

The visit could also correct a major flaw in India's foreign policy towards the Gulf.

In the past, Indian leaders have not shown much of an interest in Saudi Arabia. This was mainly because of Riyadh's pro-Pakistan stand on Kashmir and other issues on which the neighbours differed.

However, Singh has already embarked on a policy to make India play a more meaningful role in the Gulf.

Developments in Afghanistan, where the ruling Taliban militia is recognised by Riyadh, could also come up for discussion. According to sources, the situation in Iraq and Indo-Pak relations are some of the other key issues likely to come under focus during the foreign minister's discussions with the Saudi leadership.

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